

FREE

Issue 27 Summer/Autumn 2019



# London Mums



Will Smith



Cassidy Janson

**Star  
mum**

**Alysia Reiner**  
**Hollywood**  
**star opens up**  
**about her film**  
**Motherhood and**  
**her own views**  
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# HELLO...



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Welcome to our Summer and Autumn edition, a bumper look at fun travelling with and without kids as well as inspiring talents both from Hollywood and the West End.

I love London. After 21 years spent here, I still find it the most surprising and exciting city in the world, but as the Summer approaches and the sun does not shine, I start feeling a bit blue. It's time to escape a little. Escaping doesn't just have to mean exotic locations

and 10-hour plane journeys, so, with the Brexit deadline looming, I wanted to look a little closer to home with this issue: check out my guide to Amsterdam and Tuscany. If you need to get away, what are you waiting for?

The stars I have interviewed for this edition shine so much that they replenish us with enough vitamin D for the rest of the year. Hollywood legend Will Smith talks to me about his role as the Genie in Disney's live-action *Aladdin*, Netflix sensation Alysia Reiner from *Orange is the New Black* opens up about her film *Motherhood* and her own views on parenting in a heart-warming interview and last but not least West End star & singer Cassidy Janson chats about her debut album Cassidy during a night out to celebrate my birthday backstage of musical *The Man of La Mancha*.

In this issue you'll also find a few interesting health trends' features including a chat with Dr Michael Mosley, the intermittent fasting guru, on reverse ageing as well as ideas for alternative plant cakes.

The London Mums' shopping pages are crammed full of ideas for new fun and trendy products for this Summer and Autumn as well as tips on how to choose the right eyewear for you. For additional gift ideas check our London Mums' dedicated site [londonmumsmagazine.entstix.com](http://londonmumsmagazine.entstix.com) where you can get up to **60% OFF** tickets for West End shows and lots of London attractions. Check also our YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/londonmums](http://www.youtube.com/londonmums)

I hope you will enjoy reading this Summer and Autumn issue as much as the London Mums' team have loved making it!!

**Spread the word – London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!**

*Monica*

**Monica Costa**  
*Editor in chief, Founder of London Mums & mum of 12-year-old Diego*

**Let me know what you think of this issue**  
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## THE BIG INTERVIEWS

**Alysia Reiner and Will Smith**



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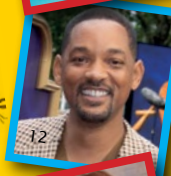
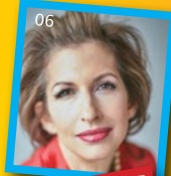
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# ALYSIA REINER

## EXCLUSIVE! HOLLYWOOD STAR OPENS UP ABOUT HER FILM MOTHERHOOD AND HER OWN VIEWS ON PARENTING

By Editor Monica Costa

**It doesn't happen every day to get an immediately strong connection with someone after a quick chat, but it happened to me with Hollywood actress and producer Alysia Reiner, best known for playing Natalie "Fig" Figueroa in Netflix comedy series Orange Is the New Black. I admire Alysia for her acting but also for her non-profit, charitable and humanitarian campaigns. I was honoured to interview her about her latest film Motherhood and her own views on parenting.**

**MC:** I enjoyed your latest movie Motherhood filled with lots of good conversations. What did you like the most about the script when you read it the first time?

**AR:** I like the fact that Motherhood handles sensitive and controversial issues that people are really afraid to talk about. I read it almost 10 years ago. It's odd to me that we're still not talking about some of these issues, particularly in this moment as we're, as a culture, redefining how we see gender and how we see sexuality, and yet we're tied very deeply to antiquated role structures around parenting, for the most part.

**MC:** There's so much talk about gender fluidity these days. Teenagers say that they're 'gender-fluid' but it's still a big taboo. It's a concept that for our generation is difficult to accept. But we have to, because times are inevitably changing. What is about your character that you find similar or very dissimilar to your own personality?

**AR:** That's such a good question. Tina (my character) is similar to me because she is trying to navigate what it means to be an artist, and to be in a relationship with a partner or with friends. But then dissimilarly, she is explaining a different way to be a parent than myself because I have chosen to be a mother while she hasn't. Interestingly enough, both Tina and I agree on the reason behind her thinking. She doesn't want to be a parent only because she doesn't want to make mistakes. Tina wants to give her child everything. It's interesting how some people see the movie and regard her as selfish while I see it as the opposite. I think she doesn't want to do it unless she can manage it in a way that she thinks is fulfilling to the child and the parent. So, she's found her way of doing that by changing the role structure.

**MC:** I like Tina a lot. I find some similarities to myself as well. She's a universally appealing character and will resonate with mothers. Tina essentially fights for equality and social justice. She channels this passion through her art. Motherhood is somehow penalising women who want a career,

as well as a family. How realistic, or how feasible is it for women in this society to reach true equality?

**AR:** As Gloria Steinem says the "personal is political". We have to do it one human at a time, and one situation at a time. I can't speak

to changing the world for women or making massive change for our society because I feel deeply powerless over that. But in my own life, as a woman, I can hire a woman and pay her as much or more than the men. That's one of the biggest things I could do. As a woman, I can choose an amazing partner who believes the same things I believe in and doesn't fall into traditional role structures, and is a true equal partner. Those are the two things I can do to create that kind of equality we speak of in the world. Of course, I am a huge social justice advocate and I do impact through a lot of work, making legal change. There are so many laws in America that I would like to change but I am not a lawmaker. That is not what I was called to do so I truly believe, one of the best things I can do is to live that change in my own life.

**MC:** That's right. Not everybody is cut for motherhood, but that does not make you less of a woman.

**AR:** That's why I made this movie.

**MC:** Is motherhood over-stated?

**AR:** I think we idolise it. In America it has been idolised it quite a bit. I feel that it's really important to let women have the courage and curiosity to make their own choices.

**MC:** What did you enjoy the most during filming Motherhood?

**AR:** Having so many women on the set and such an incredible group of women. Collaborating with women. We had 78% of crew and female heads of every department and it was ironically a very womb-like warm space, loving, hilarious environment. ▶







**MC:** It comes across. It's a lovely film. At the end of the movie, we see Tina left there doing her brilliant exhibition, watching over her ex-boyfriend holding a baby in the sling. How difficult is it for women to have a second chance in love after 40 or 50, after the fertile years are over?

**AR:** In the story Tina is younger than Alysia. Tina is in her early 40s but I am in my late 40s. The magic of movies is that you can play people who are not exactly your age. It's amazing that today women can have children later and I've read about a woman who had a baby at 64. There's a beauty in that. 64 is an age when a lot of women become grandmothers. It's about what's right for you and what's the right dynamic in your life. Many women I know have four children and a thriving career but I didn't think that I could do that. I felt that it would be too much for me. I didn't simply have the time in the day to be the kind of mother I wanted to be, and have the career that I wanted to have so I have one beautiful, spectacular child. Sometimes, people make me feel uncomfortable when they ask me, 'oh, just the one child?', as if they would grieve these three children that I didn't have. It is very important that we make our own choices and that we give our friends, and our fellow women the space to make their own choices.

**MC:** I have been asked the same uncomfortable question. The one child is perfect for me, but that question pops up all the time: 'Why don't you have other children?'. Why should I? You're totally spot on, Alysia.

**AR:** Environmentally responsible choice... we are depleting our resources.

**MC:** Good point. I'll, make sure I'll say that the next time I get asked the awkward question.

**MC:** Breastfeeding is also a topic discussed in the movie. I personally breastfed for 20 months which is quite a lot.

**AR:** Me too. I breastfed for two and half years.

**MC:** Is breastfeeding one of life's greatest experiences or a tough task? I mean, we've done it but, it was tough.

**AR:** Breastfeeding was one of the best things I've ever done in my entire life. It's magical that food comes out of your body. It is a great bonding experience and, if you are committed to it, it is imprisoning for women. I remember many times that I would run home to make sure that I was there in time for my daughter and then I recall being on the road at times and not having a pump. Oh my God, getting engorged and the pain of it

... It is beautiful, and magical and imprisoning, all at the same time. That's life! One of the most exciting things about this movie is that it talks about the realities that sometimes we forget about.

**MC:** All three leading ladies in this movie are seriously sexy and confident but with clashing views on motherhood. What's Alysia Reiner's personal view on motherhood?

**AR:** Motherhood is such a big word that I almost don't know where to go with that. I believe parenthood feels for me, personally, like my biggest job, which involves creating a safe, loving, nurturing environment where there are also boundaries, rules and consequences. I like to say 'yes' as much as possible. If it's safe, say yes. There's a danger in trying to make our child our playmate or our best friend, or our confidant, trying to make our child do the things that we wish we had always done and one of my biggest goals is to let my child be who she really wants to be and to nurture who she really wants to be and encourage and nurture that and keep my stuff out of the way. Interestingly enough,

that is a place where Tina and I agree and how we sort of end up with the movie.

**MC:** Alysia, you've just said out loud so many of the things that I've always believed in. It's nice to get a confirmation from someone else, someone I respect, like you.

**AR:** I think part of it is you. I feel very connected to you too.

**MC:** We belong to the same generation, we have lived through the '70s, '80s and '90s. We've seen the world go through great transformation. Greater than ever before and this probably forged our thinking. I'm an Italian now in the UK; you're an American and we seem to have similar views on life.

**AR:** I love that, yeah ...

**MC:** Overarching countries and cultural differences. I really enjoyed this chat. Thank you so much, Alysia.

**AR:** Thank you. Let's stay in touch!





# THE SPECTACLES THAT CHANGED MY LIFESTYLE

By Monica Costa



Whether you like it or not, after 40 eyesight changes. I have worn glasses or contact lenses since I was 17 so I am used to the process but changes in your vision are always annoying. When my regular examination was due this year, I decided to opt for more advance testing with independent opticians instead of using the high street chains. I went to Aston and Woods Eyecare founded and run by the lovely husband and wife team, Keval & Sona Thakerar, who opened their own practice in Tottenham Court Road in London where clients can experience a different side to eyewear, eyecare and service.

They offered me chocolates and prosecco and Sona carried thorough eye examinations before helping me choose the right glasses that met my criteria including fashionable, young and stylish features. I felt like a VIP. Unsurprisingly, they already have an impressive client base from well-known business people, high profile athletes to members of royal families.

My Platinum Eye Exam included eye muscle check, pupil reactions, fundus imaging (photographing the back of my eyes), eye pressure checks, visual field checks, OCT Scan (This scan determines optic nerve health and integrity, and is useful in monitoring glaucomatic changes). After analysing the results, I was given a new prescription for spectacles to bring my vision up to perfection. At the beginning of the examination, I explained that taking the spectacles off to read was a big hassle for me. The "fancy" word for these reading changes is presbyopia, and all it means is the lens within the eye that we normally

use for reading is starting to lose its focusing ability and some form of near correction is required. Most people start to pick up on these changes between 40-45 years of age and is a normal and unfortunately unavoidable change to vision that all will experience at some point. The option chosen for me were the digi lenses from Carl Zeiss Optical as an introductory varifocal/ progressive lens.

My favourite part in the process was choosing the eyewear. I tried at least 20 pairs and loved them all particularly from the range by Parisian designer Caroline Abram. My choice on the day for my new frames! Feminine, cat eyes and colour. I loved the story behind my new glasses, too. Caroline Abram has roots in Senegal where she spent part her youth. Keen to give back to the local community, she set up a woman's initiative programme and it is there that her spectacles are hand-made. Her stylish bicolour spectacles make me look sexy. These glasses have truly changed my lifestyle. They correct my short-sightedness, astigmatism as well as my recent far-sightedness. They also protect my eyes from harmful UV rays all year round. UV is damaging even in smaller amounts too (overcast days). It's about full-time protection as opposed to UV getting to a certain level that cause damage. One pair of glasses in the handbag is better than three! They are totally worth their £1000 price tag!

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What I loved about them was the fact that they made me feel relaxed so that I could enjoy my experience.





# WILL SMITH

## FIVE-MINUTE CHAT WITH THE HOLLYWOOD LEGEND ABOUT HIS ROLE AS THE GENIE IN DISNEY'S LIVE-ACTION ALADDIN

By Monica Costa



**I recently had the absolute pleasure to attend Disney's Aladdin press conference and meet the cast as well as film makers from this fast-paced live-action version of the classic animation: writer-director Guy Ritchie, Will Smith as the larger-than-life Genie; Mena Massoud as the charming scoundrel Aladdin; Naomi Scott as Jasmine, the beautiful, self-determined princess; and composer Alan Menken.**

**As always with events like this attended by hundreds of journalists from around Europe, I had to fight for my question for Will Smith but here it is.**

**Monica Costa:** Will, you talked a lot about the emotional side of this film, everybody crying on set. What about the funniest moment during filming? I can imagine only big fun moments with Will Smith:

**Will Smith:** The funniest moment ... Yeah, we had a really good time. There was a dramatic moment after Jafar had thrown Aladdin into the water towards the end of the film. We all walked back in and Jafar was with the Sultan, and saw that Aladdin was still alive. The Genie (me) walked in and we all knew Jafar tried to kill him. Mena had to walk right up the middle. He looked at Jafar and talking to the Sultan he was supposed to say, "He's not who he seems to be".

But his line was, "Him nom whom he seem him is". What?! Marwan had to respond ... "Oh, I'm not who I'm saying I is?"

**Mena Massoud:** And Will actually made T-shirts.

**Will Smith:** That's right. I got T-shirts to say "Him nom whom he seem him is". And that was one of those terrible acting moments, when you start laughing... it's this crazy thing that happens with actors and you start giggling. You can literally shut a set down for three hours. Like, you just can't, you never can say the line again. You can see a laugh in the eyes. But I was like, that was one definitely for the African-American

audience, we appreciate them. 'Him nom whom him seem him is.'

**Monica Costa:** It sounds like that might have been the funniest moment for everyone. Apart from you, Mena.

**Naomi Scott:** He was tired. It was towards the end of film.

**Mena Massoud:** No, it's all good. I'm glad I could make everyone laugh.

**Will Smith:** That was fantastic. ►





**Mena Massoud:** For me, you know, one of my funniest moments and something that I can cross off my bucket list is the improv scene Will and I had together. It's known as the 'jam scene' now. Guy (Richie) was kind enough to block this scene and create a lot of space between the royal family, Prince Ali and the Genie. He just let us riff a little bit, and I got to improv with Will. It was hilarious. We were playing with concepts and this actually made the film, but Will does a bomb dropping. And in my Aladdin brain, I went, "Aladdin wouldn't know what a bomb is", it's before that. So, we were just riffing off ideas like that. It was just great.

**Will Smith:** Yeah, that was very funny.

The press conference continued with great insights into making a live-action movie full of props, costumes, special effects and music.

**Question:** You must all be on a high after the reception the film had from everyone.

**Guy Ritchie:** Alan and I sat together last night when we watched it. And the truth is that, that's the first time I've seen it in its full incarnation. Alan and I cried five times. We held our hand throughout.

**Question:** Did you sing along?

**Guy Ritchie:** I had my daughter there who did.

**Alan Menken:** Guy's daughter was adorable. I was sitting a little bit down from them and she was dressed up as Jasmine. You know kids, they can't lie. She was up on her feet the whole time dancing, screaming. It was the cutest thing I've ever seen.

**Question:** What a wonderful new experience for you as a filmmaker though. It's a different type of film, and to get that reaction.

**Guy Ritchie:** The great thing about making a family movie, which I'm not familiar with, is the warmth that radiates from such a positive and generous spirited film. I've never had that reaction from a film before.

The film's not cynical, and leaves you with a sort of very positive taste, and that's my greatest takeaway from it.

**Question:** Will, there's so much to talk about your character, the Genie. We know that you can do it all: you can sing, dance, do the comedy, the drama ... But what is it like being given the opportunity to do all of that, in one role?

**Will Smith:** Yeah, that was spectacular. Just the singing, dancing, drama, comedy, action, the adventure is everything that I've cultivated as a performer for the last 30 years, to be able to do it in one film, and for a big chunk of it to be CGI. The great thing with the CGI is you get, two, three and four opportunities to make it right. You do it one time in rehearsal and if you like it, then you do it on set. Then you go into motion capture and try something different. So, there are many opportunities to be able to get it right. I loved it. The idea that Princess Jasmine wanted to rule, right? That was a new storyline that was added from the visionary mind of Guy Ritchie. That idea that she wanted to rule, was such a delicate and fantastic way to be able to create the modern element of this character, where she was in a world where that's ridiculous. A woman can't be Sultan. A woman isn't allowed to rule, and then she was fighting for that position. And then the song Speechless, I think, is the signature of this version of the film. And I just wanted to applaud you ...

**Mena Massoud:** Maybe the signature of a generation.

**Will Smith:** Yes, it is. "I will not go speechless". That was fantastic and that's when I knew that we were winning. The day you did that I was like, "Okay, this movie is going to work."

**Naomi Scott:** The song called Speechless was written by Alan Menken, who's won 8 Oscars. Do you want to say anything, Alan? How did you get any work done?

**Alan Menken:** I wrote the song with this team of Pasek and Paul, who wrote The Greatest Showman,

and La La Land, and Dear Evan Hansen. They are very talented. We wrote this song, and when we delivered it, it pushed everyone to go, "Okay, now if we can earn this song, we're going to have to really also lay into that journey of, of Jasmine, and how she's really kept silent, and how she has to find her voice". So, it was all of that came together in a pretty organic way.

**Naomi Scott:** It was weird the timing of when we filmed that song, as well. There was a lot going on in the world, that I felt like, related so much to that moment.

**Alan Menken:** Me too.

**Naomi Scott:** I definitely performed that song, I really took that on. I wanted it to be raw and angry. I didn't want it to be, kind of this pretty performance. So, it was a very emotional day. I remember that after the first take, I just felt emotional and you came up, but I had to do a lot more takes. So, I had to kind of conserve my energy and Guy came up to me, and he just looked at me and I went, "No, go away, go away, go away". Because you were about to start to cry. And I was like, "I can't". I was like, "I've got to do this three more times". So yeah.

**Question:** When I was watching the film, I definitely got a 90's hip hop vibe from the Genie. If he had any anthem, any song, what would the anthem be?

**Will Smith:** The anthem, the Friend Like Me is ridiculous. When we first went into the studio, I was really concerned about how I would get my signature onto the film. And then we started messing with, Friend Like Me which was the first song, and there's a hip hop breakbeat, by the Honeydrippers called Impeach the President. It's like a hip hop breakbeat staple. So, I had them grab the drum loop from that, and started messing with Friend Like Me over that. For me that song was essential to open the Genie up within me. That song was the one that really showed me that I could find the Genie in a way that would satisfy the nostalgic yearning of the audience, but also be able to add a new flavour.

**Question:** This role of the Genie is an iconic Disney character, made great by the late great Robin Williams. Did you feel this pressure to create homage for him? And how did you feel that you could put your own spin on it to where, audiences around the world would make this the new icon? ►







**Will Smith:** Yeah. You know, I was terrified with that. You know, it's like, when you get that call, "Hey, you know, we're gonna redo Aladdin Will, we want you to be a part of it". You know? It's like, "Hey Will, we're thinking of redoing the Godfather". You know, "We're thinking of you for the Al Pacino role". You know, like, dude, you know, you just, you don't want to go anywhere near those kinds of roles. It's like there's ... Robin didn't leave much room for improvement in the Genie. So, the first thing that I thought about was that it was going to be live action. I knew that would be some opportunities and it would look and feel different, being live action. And then the next thing, what I discovered in the process is that, you know, Robin Williams actually revolutionised what you could do in an animated film. It's like, before that time, nobody was really using that amount of current references and things like that. He sort of created this omnipresent Genie, who had been forward and backward in time and had the full scope and breadth of time, and human experience, to draw from for comedy. So that was revolutionary.

**Alan Menken:** Robin in animation, went into the studio, he would do one take, another take, another take, and they cut them together. You had to go and do it, right in real time.

**Will Smith:** They captured something that marked people's childhood. So, what I wanted to do was to find a way to create an homage to Robin into the performance that, with the songs and everything, that people would still connect to, but then be able to add that new hip hop flavour.

**Question:** We see you on the internet, you are partying this landmark, and you are doing your bucket list challenge, and you did also a party for charity. Is this landmark important to you? When you reflect on your career and your life, do you have any insights you want to share about being 50? The Fresh Prince at 50.

**Will Smith:** There's a big part of turning 50. I've turned a corner in my life, and this film marks a re-emergence from me. I took a little over two years off away from film, to study and learn and grow and sort of re-adjust my priorities. The bucket list really sort of illustrates how I want to be in the world. I want to be with people that I'd love to be with, in places that I love to be, doing things I love to do. And this is the perfect equation for me.



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Planet Mermaid was established in 2009, and a huge part of its success has been Magdalena Jovanovic's ability to see a gap in the market, create a product that fills the gap, then sell it. A string of celebrities has since joined the Planet Mermaid wave, including the Beckhams, Geri Halliwell and Leanne Brown.



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Cruising my way to

# AMSTERDAM

By Monica Costa

**My mantra has always been 'Carpe Diem' (Latin for 'Seize the day') because life's too short to miss out on the good things in life such as travel, food, films & love! And I live by it! My latest trip is a testimony to this mantra.**

I went to Amsterdam 16 years ago and I fell in love with it almost instantly. It is quirky and crazy enough to appeal to my wild side but also beautiful and watery.

Thanks to a well-organised press trip by the lovely P&O cruises team, I hopped aboard the gorgeous Azura ship in Southampton and 'sailed' away to Amsterdam with one of my besties for a four-day mummy retreat in which we made sure we enjoyed our childless well-deserved time-off.

Mums need a break from the school routine-driven life and spend time with girlfriends (apparently this is supposed to extend your life), getting pampered, eating good food, laughing at silliness, uninterrupted chitchats and sleep.

Cruising is an excellent way to appreciate the travelling itself as people used to do in the past – think Victorian age folks, for example. Spending quality leisure time while reaching the destination is something we seem to have lost as soon as flying has become the most popular means of transportation.

Up to this point, cruising was never my thing. I never thought I would travel on a ship because the idea of being in a confined space did not appeal to me. How wrong could I be! Not only I loved the fact that I could always look outside and see endless water around but I enjoyed falling asleep with the sound of the waves. I even loved the choppy waters of the North Sea on the way back – others seemed scared, but it was clearly safe so I immersed myself in an imaginary Titanic experience. How fascinating.

The cruising experience proved to be great for digital detoxing too, because the internet connection was not great once the ship went further away from the coast. Azura is a huge cruise ship and to move from my forward balcony cabin to the Manhattan disco at the back I had to walk at least 2000 steps each way.

There were three live bands playing twice a day, lots of restaurants to choose from, a gorgeous spa, warm swimming pool and a jacuzzi. I made sure I did not miss any of these activities including excellent cha-cha-cha lessons every day.

My friend and I were already excited when we boarded the train to Southampton from Clapham Junction, believe it or not!

Boarding a cruise is much less stressful than boarding a flight. The luggage is being taken care for you early on so the travel experience is smooth and relaxing. Our lovely cabin had a balcony on the forward side of the ship and felt proper luxury.

I always imagined very tiny cabins but this one had twin beds and was quite spacious for a ship accommodation.

I had a very relaxing one-hour long facial and an acupuncture session that seriously helped me rebalance my whole body after the long Winter.

After one day at sea, we finally reached Amsterdam. We almost did not want to leave the ship. It felt comfy there with so much entertainment. But we had an off-the-beaten-track tour planned with Urban Adventures Amsterdam so we took advantage of that.

Amsterdam is eclectic and has it all: It can be super romantic if you are there with a love partner, crazy if you are on a wild weekend seeking sex, drugs and rock & roll and extremely cultural if you look for art exhibitions. And – boy! – we had a mix of all these things in just the one trip.

On the first day we went on a three-hour walking tour and on the second day on a five-hour bike riding trip. I might not remember all streets' names or all historical facts but I got a great feel for the city vibe which is the one thing I only look for when visiting a new place.

The city centre is small enough to be explored on foot even without a map but you obviously need comfortable shoes. The vibe is rather cool, not elegant. ➤







During the bike tour, we rode through the Pijp, a buzzy area of the city, crossed lots of bridges, canals, and heard lots of funny stories about living on boats.

One final off-the-beaten track stop had to be the red-light district, the 'coffe shops' (where you can take drugs legally) and some sex shops along the way.

We also made a stop at one of the smallest and most unique places in Amsterdam: the Museum Photo where artist and photographer Britt welcomed us in her cosy photo-studio to portray our group in hand-made costumes – replicas of famous Dutch masters. I chose to wear the Flora costume.

Everything seems so petite in Amsterdam even the gin distillery we visited and where we spent a couple of hours of gin tasting. I cannot recollect whether we had 7 or 8 sips of gin. My mind seemed a bit clouded after the fourth. Each sip came with lots of history and anecdotes. One in particular stuck in my nebulous mind, the one named 'The boy in the basement', the kind used to celebrate the pregnancy

of a woman during a dinner. The mother-to-be was the first to drink it, of course! Jolly good times.

On that high note (literally!) we finished our visit to the Dutch capital and headed back to our Azura heaven, where we spent a full day at sea, being pampered in the Spa, and chit-chatting in the sauna and jacuzzi. Walking around the ship and watching movies outdoor on the top deck was also one of my special highlights. I love the sea so much and being just there was wonderful. Being able to simply watch the ocean and hearing the sound of the waves was a pleasure in its own right.

*This trip was made possible by P&O cruises' sponsorship.*

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# TUSCANY WITH KIDS

By Rita Kobrak

**Tuscany is the perfect holiday destination for families as there is so much to do in this one fabulous region where kids are welcome everywhere. Lots of pasta and pizza mean you don't have to worry about what the kids will eat while you enjoy your "Aperitivo". Here are just a few ideas to get you started!**

## Amusement parks

The Pinocchio park at the town of Collodi founded 100 years ago and recently renovated, is a perfect outing for the family. It is a very Italian park, combining nature and art, with workshops, statues and art exhibitions plus a zip line and a butterfly house close by and included in the ticket entrance price. If you are looking for rides, I suggest Cavallino Matto close to Livorno set in a pine forest and with roller coasters, boats, 4D movies and plenty of rides.

## Wildlife and nature

If your children are interested in wildlife you have Pistoia zoo, Poppi zoo (near Arezzo), the Livorno aquarium and at Viareggio the chance to see dolphins at the protected Pelagos sanctuary. Trips can be arranged to spot the dolphins by catamaran or sail boat with a marine biologist on board.

Horse-riding can be found all over Tuscany at a quarter of London prices.

## Culture

Don't miss the cultural sites too such as the leaning tower of Pisa. The kids will love taking silly photos pretending to hold up the tower. In Lucca families can hire bikes to cycle around the 4.9 km walls. Anghiari is a medieval town that looks like a castle. Close by is San Sepolcro where older kids will enjoy the Aboca museum, the only herb museum in Tuscany, while younger kids will love the water park.

## Where to stay

A family friendly villa is an ideal base to stay in Tuscany. Villa Radicata is family friendly family run villa is a less tourist part of Tuscany but within easy reach of the main towns such as Arezzo, Florence, Anghiari, Lucca. it is set in 2 acres of woodland with private pool and outdoor pizza oven. There are pasta making lessons and dinners. Plenty of games, table football and trampoline. Family yoga and Italian lessons can also be arranged. The villa sleeps 10 and the house is set on three levels with a large garden and outdoor eating area.

Closet airport Perugia or Florence  
Lucca accommodation can be arranged.

Read the full article online at  
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# My night-out with West End star & singer Cassidy Janson

By Monica Costa

On my birthday this year I was invited to one of the last performances of the West End show *The Man of La Mancha* starring iconic stars such as Fraser / Cheers TV front man Kelsey Grammer and Only Fools and Horses Nicholas Lyndhurst.

**I went backstage to celebrate with London-born Classical BRIT nominated singer, actress and star of London's West End Cassidy Janson whose debut album Cassidy is out now. Not only I was surprised with a special champagne and a birthday song but also with a big hug from Dr Crane aka Kelsey Grammer. I couldn't have asked for a better birthday finale. Cassidy's album features 14 new songs, 8 co-written by Cassidy Janson herself, and a new song written for her by legend and friend and iconic sing/song Carole King. In this interview she shares the reasons behind her personal selection of songs about life, love, laughter and longing.**

**Monica:** Your album voice is very different from your West End voice and reminds me of a merge between Barbra Streisand and Nora Jones.... What's your favourite song from the debut solo album and why?

**Cassidy Janson (CJ):** I have a very, very soft spot for a song that I wrote with a great songwriter called Anna Krantz, and it's the song Fairytale. I really, really love it and we, the writing session was very magical and she's a wonderful singer/songwriter, and we just sort of came up with this beautiful idea and I love sort of fantasy/adventure movie, something that I have close to my heart.

**Monica:** What's the song that Carole King wrote for you?

**CJ:** It's You Beat Me to Goodbye. She just had some

unreleased songs. So, I wrote to her just after she had come to see me in *Beautiful*. I said, "I don't suppose that I might, in my debut album, have any unreleased songs." And she sent me five tracks, straight away, which I was astonished at. We worked out which one would sort of suit the album, and we produced that. I'm very honoured that she gave me her songs. That was a massive compliment.

**Monica:** You did a musical about her, so why shouldn't she give it to you? You were special to her.

**CJ:** Well she said some very lovely things publicly about my performances that I will cherish 'til the day I die.

**Monica:** Where do you get the inspiration for your music? Is it not easy to write music and you must feel sort of in a special state of mine to be able to write, I suppose.

**CJ:** Yeah. It's often late at night that I come up with lyrics. Or a situation might be happening in my life I'm frustrated with. I think of a really poetic line and like "Oh gosh, I think this is a song" and I'll just have a list and list and list of lyrics in my phone of potential songs. I find it quite cathartic to turn a frustrating situation into something poetic. I quite like writing and playing songs with someone else playing on the piano or guitar, riffing around top lines together and working out a melody. That seems to be a way that works very well for me. ▶





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But sometimes I write the melody myself and, yeah. Or sometimes someone has a melody and they want me to write lyrics to it, it's really, I'm very fluid. I don't have a set way I like to work. I'm just kinda like, "I got this thing, what do you think?" Or someone else comes to me and I finish a song, or, it's very fluid and I enjoy the randomness. But I suppose the music, well the creative process in any sort of creative art is very fluid. It has to be. It has to be spontaneous. Sometimes songs happen quickly and sometimes they take a few sessions. They're all like unique little babies.

**Monica:** Out of all the roles you've played in the West End so far in all the shows, which one is your favourite and closest to your heart?

**CJ:** It is, without a doubt, it is playing Carole King. I found playing her really soothing. She's a very, very warm, loving human being. And embodying someone

**Monica:** Like you.

**CJ:** (laughter) yeah. Yeah like me. But she's particularly special and gentle, and to portray someone that – and also I'd never played someone that existed. Everyone, every character I played was either fictional or dead. I've never played anyone that is still a living, breathing human being so there's a sense of honouring that person a lot more than your own interpretation may be of a part. You kinda have to honour her, and I found it a really fascinating process. And also vocally, my voice sits very, very much naturally in Carole King's range. I have a very low voice naturally, so it was one of the most comfortable fits vocally and physically for me ever in a show. So I was gonna do another year in the production, but sadly we closed. Because I just, I couldn't, I never got bored of playing that part. I loved singing every single song. It was a great fit. And, um, it will remain, I think, it's gonna be a hard one to beat. I am also a big fan of Barbra Streisand.

**Monica:** And who else?

**CJ:** I love Lady Gaga. Especially the movie she just did, A Star is Born. I didn't know much about her before the movie and I really came around to her.

Her vocals are very special and I think she's a very important icon in the modern age. I think she's a really strong influence and I respect her a lot. But, but back to my roots, really, my roots, I love jazz. My first Idol was Peggy Lee. I stole my dad's Lee compilation tape, and he's never got it back. I just, you know, I wonder if in a past life I was a jazz singer in night clubs around Harlem. I don't know. But, you know, I was a very young kid listening to very old jazz and I just loved Peggy Lee's voice. She was a strong influence on me vocally from a young age. So she was a big, I still pop her on. I find her voice very unique. And I know a lot of people, Ella Fitzgerald found, and of course Ella had the most extraordinary voice, but for me, the big lady is Peggy Lee.

**Monica:** Kelsey Grammer seems a very charming man. His role in The Man of La Mancha was a bit rough and sweet, but when we saw him passing by and we stopped him, he's such a charmer, isn't he?

**CJ:** Oh he's a wonderful man! Very charming. Very well mannered. Very genuine as well. He's just, he's one of those people I think is just like, very comfortable in his own skin. Which means he can grant a lot of respect to others, you know, because he's got no qualms on himself. And he's wonderful to be around. And I have to say it's the most extraordinary experience acting opposite of him in these very heavyweight scenes and it's wonderful. I remember talking to him about some scenes and he just lets me do my thing and he needs nothing from me so we just go in, roll up our sleeves and have these wonderful scenes.

**Janson's debut solo album 'Cassidy' is out now.**



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With a fantasy Barbie doll popped on the top, girls just loved them.

**15 years later...**

Together with my 18 year old daughter we've created a small business called Roar cupcakes 'Just Raw'.

We started learning about using different ingredients and cooking together again.

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**With new knowledge it is interesting to compare these two concepts.**

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# REVERSE AGEING: A CHAT WITH DR MICHAEL MOSLEY, THE INTERMITTENT FASTING GURU

By Monica Costa

TV medic Dr Michael Mosley's new book *The Fast 800* was launched earlier this year but it took me some time to 'digest' the concept of intermittent fasting. I have never dieted or fasted before. As an Italian, I love my food. The concept of being deprived of food scares me. But I am keen on reverse ageing. I would do anything to keep myself healthy and young-looking for as long as possible. Even fasting. Dr Michael Mosley, best known for the ground-breaking BBC Horizon documentary, *The 5:2 Diet*, has been discussing how he reversed his own diabetes using the *The Fast 800* diet.

**Q:** Can you please explain in simple terms why intermittent fasting is good for us?

**Dr MM:** The idea behind intermittent fasting is that you give your body a rest from having to digest food right around the clock. Our remote ancestors did not have access to food all the time. Instead they would have eaten and then gone for long periods without. Our bodies evolved in a time of feast and famine. One of the main benefits of intermittent fasting is weight loss. A study of over 200 women showed that those who did 5:2 (eating healthily 5 days a week and cutting their calories down to ¼ two days a week) lost twice as much fat as those on a conventional diet; intermittent fasting has also been shown to

reduce inflammation (helpful for rheumatoid arthritis) and blood pressure. There is some evidence that it can also reduce your risk of developing dementia.

**Q:** How do we know which type of intermittent fasting is suitable for us?

**Dr MM:** Intermittent fasting isn't suitable for everyone (see [thefast800.com](http://thefast800.com) to check who should not do it). If you have a lot of weight to lose then I recommend starting with rapid weight loss (800 calories a day for a couple of weeks) before moving onto 5:2.

**Q:** How is *Fast 800* different from other types of fasting and why should we embrace it?

**Dr MM:** I also suggest you incorporate into your diet something called "Time Restricted Eating". It is a way of extending your overnight fast. So typically people who do it will stop eating around 8 pm and not eat again till 10 am the next day. That way you have 14 hours without eating, followed by 10 hours within which you can eat. Time restricted Eating has been shown to be an effective way to lose visceral (gut) fat and reduce inflammation. The great thing is you can combine Time Restricted Eating with rapid weight loss or the 5:2 approach and it will make either easier and more effective. The health benefits include losing more fat than on a conventional diet, and an improvement in mood.

**Q:** You have written many books about fasting. Is each new book a more advanced development on the previous method?

**Dr MM:** Yes.

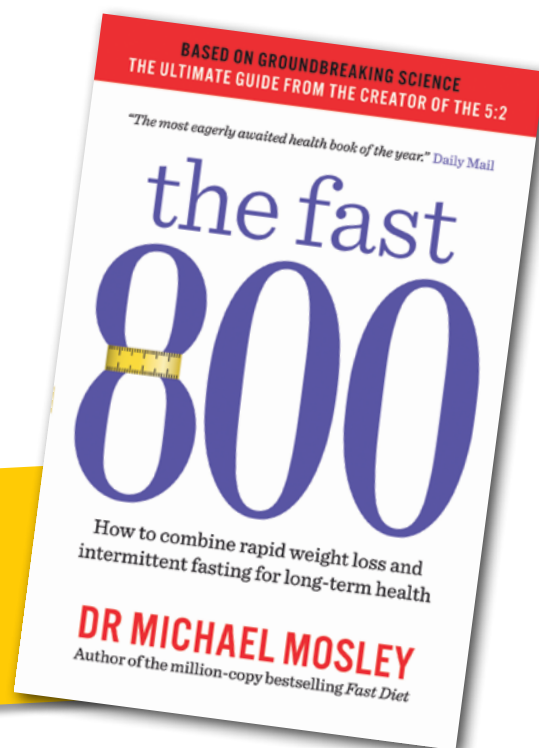
**Q:** What is your personal favourite fasting approach and why?

**Dr MM:** My book, *The Fast 800*, goes into this in great depth.

**Q:** Who should not follow any fasting at all and why?

**Dr MM:** Fasting is not suitable for everyone and should be avoided by pregnant women and those who are already underweight.

More info on Dr Michael Mosley's latest book can be found at:  
[www.thefast800.com](http://www.thefast800.com)



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# Zog flies into London this Summer

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Zog is known to families up and down the country as the keen young dragon who bumps, burns and roars his way through Madam Dragon's school in pursuit of a gold star. Over the last 9 years, he has become one of the best-loved characters in children's literature, winning a Galaxy National Children's Book of the Year Award, becoming a perennial bestseller, and even making his screen debut on Christmas Day 2018, when Magic Light Pictures premiered an animated film of Zog on BBC One featuring an all-star cast.

Zog is one of the many creations of Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, the UK's number one picture book pair, who have dreamed up countless stories for young children including modern classic *The Gruffalo*, which has been translated into in 75 languages.

Now Zog has made the journey from page to stage thanks to Freckle Productions, who have adapted many of Julia's best-loved titles including *Stick Man*, *Tiddler* and other *Terrific Tales* and *Tabby McTat*. Their brand-new adaptation has been touring the country, and will fly into London at Cadogan Hall for four

Photo Credit Helen Maybanks

weeks only this summer, from 31 July to 25 August. The production features a multi-talented cast of actors, musicians and puppeteers, who bring the world of Zog to life with handcrafted puppets and an original folk score played live.

To celebrate the arrival of Zog on stage in London, we have a fantastic Zog prize bundle to give away! The winner will receive a family ticket (four tickets) to see a performance of their choice at Cadogan Hall, plus a goody bag including an activity book, a plush toy and a DVD of the Magic Light/BBC animation.

To be in with a chance of winning, find this giveaway page in the competition section of the London Mums magazine's website and write the name of your favourite book by Julia Donaldson in the competition form. Deadline to enter is midnight on 25 July 2019.

[www.londonmumsmagazine.com/  
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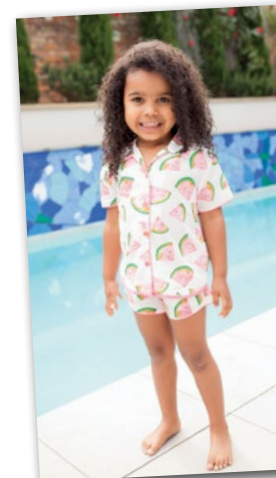
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