

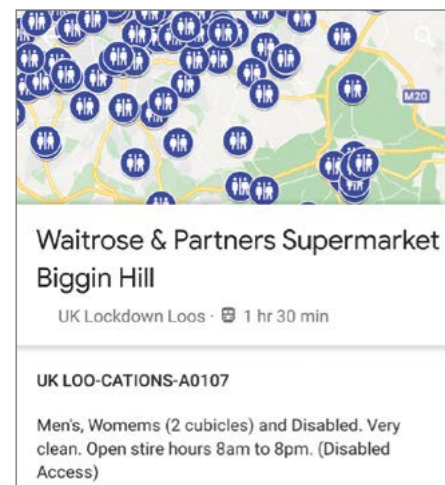
Survive life after lockdown

Restrictions may have lifted but the coronavirus is still affecting all our lives. Robert Irvine reveals the most useful web tools for adjusting to the 'new normal'

Find the nearest public toilet

Shops, pubs and restaurants may have reopened, but many public toilets haven't, either for safety reasons or because staff aren't available to clean and maintain them. This poses a problem with a capital pee for anyone caught short while out enjoying their post-lockdown freedom, but help is at hand from Lockdown Loo (lockdownloo.com). As featured in last issue's What's New Online – since when it's added thousands more 'loo-cations' – this lav-ly resource shows you where to find open toilets across the UK, including facilities in train stations, cafés, shopping centres, supermarkets and parks. For your convenience, many entries include details of opening times, cleanliness and disabled access, with options to submit your own loo-cations and correct inaccurate information (the site rejects duplicates and silly suggestions such as bushes).

With more than 5,000 toilets currently pinpointed, Lockdown Loo can be a bit fiddly to use on your phone,



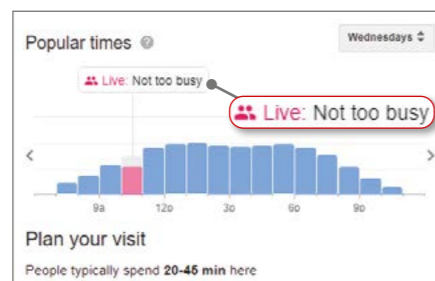
Lockdown Loo shows you the location of UK toilets open to the public around the UK

so its makers recommend opening its map in Google Maps for easier navigation, by tapping the square in the top-right corner. Alternatively, you could install the Toilet Finder app for Android (bit.ly/toilet506) or iOS (bit.ly/tfios506), although its results aren't guaranteed to be open.

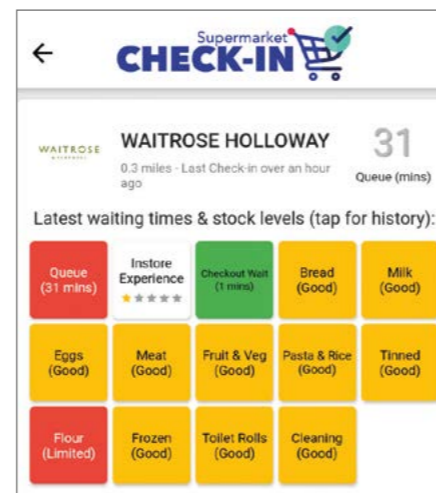
Avoid long queues at the shops

The hour-long wait to get into your local supermarket has thankfully gone, but with more shops now open you may find yourself queueing outside more often than you'd like. One way to avoid the socially distanced crowds is to use Google's 'Popular times' data. Search for the store you plan to visit, then scroll down the information panel on the right (at the top on mobile) to the 'Popular times' section. Here, you'll see a bar chart showing the busiest times to visit the shop throughout the day and week, accompanied by summaries such as 'Usually as busy as it gets', and details of how much time people typically spend there.

For bigger stores, you may also see live data sourced (anonymously) from Google users who are shopping there right now. Look for the pink bar and, if the status is 'Not too busy', then you probably won't have to queue. 'Popular times' data can also be viewed in Google



Google's 'Popular times' data helps you avoid having to queue outside shops



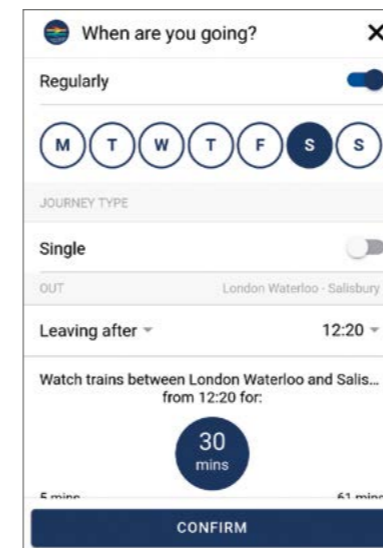
Check queue times and stock levels at local stores using Supermarket Check-in

Maps and, though it isn't available for all shops, it's certainly worth checking.

Additionally, there's a free app called Supermarket Check-in (Android, bit.ly/scdroid506; iOS, bit.ly/scios506), which predicts queue times and even stock levels for stores in your area. However, its information relies on other users 'checking in' to those places – so why not check in yourself to help improve the app?

Get a seat on public transport

During lockdown, buses and trains were virtually empty, but now that restrictions have been lifted, they're getting busy again. To ensure you remain safely social-distanced and preferably get a seat on your journey, you can check the 'crowdedness level' in the Google Maps app. Search for public-transport directions, select a bus or train route and look for predictions such as 'Usually standing room only'. This feature is only available in certain UK cities, and initially used data from



National Rail's Alert Me tool warns you about busy train services via Messenger

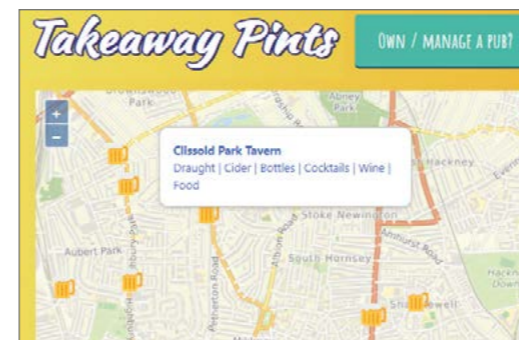
before the coronavirus struck, so you might not see updated info yet. However, you can still check station crowdedness using the 'Popular times' data mentioned in the previous tip.

To combat overcrowding, National Rail is now alerting passengers to busy train services to encourage travel at quieter times. Look for a red or yellow warning triangle when you check your journey on the National Rail website or app. You can also sign up for its Alert Me tool (bit.ly/alertme506) to receive information about crowded trains and stations, as well as delays and disruptions, via Facebook Messenger (WhatsApp alerts are coming soon).

Additionally, The Trainline has added a Crowd Alerts feature to its app that tells you how busy train carriages are – see page 7 for details.

Pick up a pint from the pub

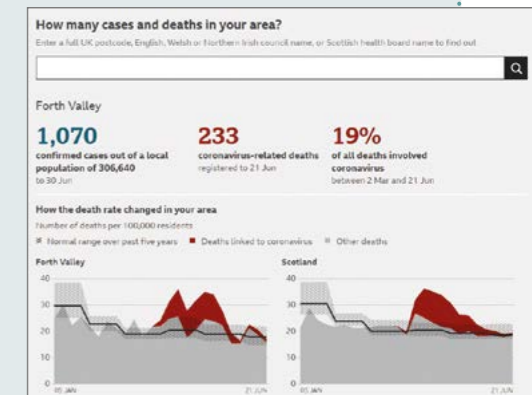
If you're apprehensive about returning to your local pub, whether due to health concerns or because of the strict new rules, why not pick up a pint to drink outside or at home? Takeaway Pints (www.takeawaypints.co.uk) provides a map of hostleries offering a collection service for draught and bottled beer and cider, wine, cocktails, hot drinks and food. Although originally



If you're unable or unwilling to sit in the pub, pick up a takeaway pint instead

CHECK COVID-19 INFECTIONS IN YOUR AREA

The government is reportedly planning to launch a web dashboard that displays coronavirus test results by neighbourhood and possibly even by street and postcode, to help identify local outbreaks (bit.ly/dashboards506). In the meantime (and we won't hold our breath), you can get general figures for infections in your area via the BBC's Coronavirus UK page (bit.ly/covidbbc506). Search for a UK postcode, English, Welsh or Northern Irish council, or Scottish health board to view the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths, how the



death rate is changing and how it compares to the rest of the country.

London-centric, it now covers counties across Britain, from Aberdeenshire to Yorkshire, and lets you submit details of pubs it's missed.

To find out which pubs are now open in your area, you can either check their websites and social-media pages or again turn to Google Maps. Search for 'pubs near me' and the map will pinpoint nearby venues and tell you whether they're serving again or are still 'temporarily closed'.

Similarly, you can find cafés in your area by tapping the Coffee option at the top of the Maps app, then choosing 'Open now', although Google does warn that "Hours or services may differ due to COVID-19".

Plan your post-lockdown holiday

The coronavirus put paid to most of our holidays this year, but if you're desperate to get away now that restrictions have eased, you could consider a 'staycation'. 101 UK Holidays (www.101holidays.co.uk/uk) offers hand-picked suggestions for post-lockdown breaks in Blighty, such as exploring the Jurassic coast, hiking in the Lake District and renting a shepherd's hut in Devon, while Cool



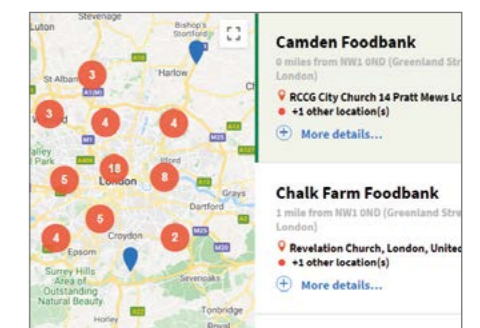
Learn which lockdown restrictions are still in place in countries across Europe

Camping provides a guide to COVID-19-secure camping (bit.ly/camping506).

If you'd prefer to holiday in Europe, Re-open EU (reopen.europa.eu/en) tells you the current situation in different countries, including travel regulations, healthy and safety rules, and whether shops, bars, restaurants, beaches and attractions are open.

Donate to local food banks

One upside to lockdown life was a reduction in food waste, as housebound Brits became more creative with their cooking and more casual about use-by dates. The downside was that food banks received less support, with many supermarkets removing their donation boxes. Now that shops and cupboards are fully stocked again, you may want to consider helping the needy by sharing your excess supplies. You can find food banks in your area via the Trussell Trust website (bit.ly/trussell506), which provides contact details for more than 1,200 centres across the UK. Tinned vegetables and toiletries, soup and fruit, pasta and rice, and tea and coffee are especially welcome, or you can make a financial donation online. ■



Help the less fortunate by donating your excess supplies to a local food bank