

# Reminisce News

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## March into the World of Crafting

Crafting is a \$44 billion industry in America, with people of all ages and backgrounds taking part in pastimes like knitting, scrapbooking, quilting, making homemade jewelry, and even reupholstering furniture. As both Craft Month and Knitting and Crochet Month, March boasts a number of crafting holidays, such as International Scrapbooking Day on March 4, Children's Craft Day on March 14, and Worldwide Quilting Day on March 20. Whether you craft as an outlet for your creative impulses or to earn money on the side, March provides ample opportunities to create something unique.

Personalization might be crafting's most alluring attribute. Even if two crafters follow the same pattern or set of instructions, no two people will knit the very same scarf or build identical birdhouses. Each and every handcrafted item is a unique reflection of its maker, and these personal touches are often what make handcrafted gifts so special. Crafting has long been considered the domain of older generations, yet younger generations, particularly millennials, are being drawn to crafting and other creative hobbies specifically because they can personalize their creations. In a world of mass-produced goods, millennials enjoy making unique items that bear their initials or display symbols or icons that are personally meaningful. And just as younger generations have started taking up crafting, the crafting industry is changing to accommodate a new generation of crafters.

The longtime fabrics and craft retailer Joann recently opened a new Creator's Studio store where young crafters can gather to take classes, share ideas, and rent machines to finish projects. Younger crafters have also inspired technological breakthroughs in crafting. It is not uncommon for crafters to sketch designs on digital tablets, cut materials with lasers, or create pieces on 3D printers. Yet no matter how newfangled the creative process has become, one thing has stayed the same: there is still nothing more thoughtful or special than a homemade gift.

## Valencia's Fire and Fury

The festival of Las Fallas in Valencia, Spain, is one of Europe's wildest spectacles. Valencians greet the arrival of spring on March 19 with music, humor, religious ecstasy, and a massive bonfire.



For millennia, fire has been used as a symbol of rebirth and cleansing during the springtime. The original meaning of the term *falla* was "torch." Over the centuries it evolved to mean the bonfires that were lit in the center of towns during periods of fiesta or religious gatherings. The very first Las Fallas celebrations were held by carpenters on the Feast Day of St. Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters, on March 19. Carpenters would create pyres out of *parots*, which were the wooden scaffolds used to hold the lamps during the darkness of winter. Over time, these parots were dressed in rags and made to resemble local characters. They were lit to both honor St. Joseph and welcome the light of spring. Today, *Las Fallas* refers to not only the festival but also to the fires lit to welcome spring and the massive effigies that are eventually burned on the festival's final day.

Today's festival of Las Fallas lasts for five days from March 15–19, but the excitement starts to build from the very first of the month. Starting on March 1, booming fireworks shows known as *mascleta* are set off at two o'clock each day. The parots of centuries past have evolved into *ninots*, enormous works of art, satirical floats that lampoon politicians, celebrities, or any other international target of derision. On the morning of March 16, the *ninots* are put on display all over the city, and prizes are awarded to the best ones. On the morning of March 17, the sculptures are paraded to the city square, where they lay in wait for two days. Finally, on March 19, *la Crema* begins, and all the *ninots* of Las Fallas are burned. Around ten o'clock, smaller neighborhood floats are set on fire throughout the city. Not until well past midnight is the largest fire set at the city square. *Ninots* stuffed with fireworks explode with raucous fury, starting a deafening inferno that burns until the dawn.

## Hold the Phone!

Research shows that on average, a person will spend up to 13 hours per year waiting on hold. That's 43 days of your entire life waiting on the telephone! The month of March, as On-Hold Month, wishes to honor the businesses that provide enjoyable music or other helpful information while we while the hours away. But if you'd rather skip the waiting entirely, here are some tips for avoiding the wait for customer service.

First, call during off-peak hours. Don't call at lunchtime, when reps are most likely to be busy, or on Mondays or Fridays, when calls are heaviest. If given the option, press 0 to be connected to an operator. This will prevent endless computerized menus. Another tip is to choose the "sales" or "place an order" option no matter what your purpose. This will likely get you to a live person who can put you directly in touch with a customer service representative. You can even download an app that will wait on hold for you, so you don't waste those precious hours.





## No Passport Required

If you've been putting off your dream vacation, March 30, Virtual Vacation Day, offers the chance to visit white sandy beaches, ancient city squares, and luxurious hotels all from the comfort of your computer desk. A virtual vacation means you do not have to spend thousands of dollars, take time off work, or be stranded in an unfamiliar airport. Technological advances also make virtual "traveling" more immersive than ever before: it is possible to feel as if you really are standing at the top of Mount Everest, gliding through the canals of Venice, strolling the halls of the Louvre, or even blasting off to outer space or the moon.

Virtual Vacation Day was conceived by noted travel writer Terrance Zepke in 2016. She realized how lucky she was to be able to travel the world and knew that many others did not enjoy the same opportunities. She created Virtual Vacation Day to inspire anyone with an Internet connection to explore the wonders of the world. Websites like EarthCam offer free access to live webcams of Costa Rican volcanoes, Caribbean beaches, European street corners, and rugged American landscapes. Many museums offer virtual tours of their collections, which can easily be accessed via Google Arts and Culture. You can even take a virtual train ride through the Alps or the Rockies. Or maybe you'd like to ride the Hogwarts Express from the Harry Potter novels? All aboard Scotland's Jacobite Steam Train as it crosses the Glenfinnan Viaduct!



For a truly immersive experience, don a virtual reality (VR) headset, which provides 360-degree views and realistic sounds of your surroundings. Some of the most beloved names in travel and exploration, such as National Geographic Explore VR, have offered their footage to make the experience feel as lifelike as possible. Other companies, such as ecosphere, Alcove, Flyover Zone, and Escape Now VR, offer virtual access to many of the globe's most important sights and cities. Best of all, you can even snap virtual photos as souvenirs.

## Thailand's Emerald Buddha

On March 22, 1784, the Emerald Buddha was installed in the *Wat Phra Kaew*, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, at the Grand Palace in Bangkok, Thailand. The statue's origins are mysterious. One story tells of how lightning struck a monastery in 1434 and the blast revealed a 26-inch-tall Buddha statue covered in stucco. The abbot took it home and noticed the stucco flaking off to reveal an emerald-colored Buddha statue beneath. Over the centuries, the rulers of Thailand have moved the statue from temple to temple, honoring the statue as a sacred palladion, a historical artifact essential to the success and well-being of the nation. Finally, in 1782, King Rama I moved the country's capital to Bangkok and ordered the construction of a new royal palace and temple. On March 22, 1784, the Emerald Buddha was moved into its new temple with great ceremony. While legends tell how the statue was created in 43 BC by the Buddhist sage Nagasena with the help of the Hindu gods Vishnu and Indra, art historians believe it was carved in Northern Thailand during the 15th century in the Chiang Saen style.

## That Was Awkward



If you dread embarrassment, then you won't be looking forward to March 18, Awkward Moments Day. The day exists to remind us that no one is perfect and we all suffer embarrassments from time to time. Embarrassment is the result of self-focus. When we do something wrong—call someone by the wrong name or make a mistake in public—we tend to focus only on our transgression. We suffer from what researchers call "empathy neglect." We are so embarrassed that we forget that others are kind and sympathetic to us. Of course, if someone else made a mistake, we would not shame them. So why should we feel awkward or embarrassed? Today, don't feel awkward, but instead, feel empathy.



Happy St. Patrick's Day

