

## 34

Let off steam

How can you not believe in Father Christmas when faced with 4,000 of them? The annual Santa Run in Newtown, Powys, set a world record in 2004 when 4,260 racers dressed as Santa Claus ran 4½ miles through the town. Join them this year to raise money for a charity of your choice – for a £10 entry fee you receive a free Santa suit and sponsorship forms ([www.c-r-y.org.uk/santa\\_run.htm](http://www.c-r-y.org.uk/santa_run.htm)). Alternatively, head to Edinburgh, Nottingham, Torquay or Leicester, which are all hosting Santa Runs in aid of the children's charity When You Wish Upon A Star. The routes in these cities are slightly shorter than Newtown, around 1-2 miles, but you still get that all-important Santa suit. Children who take part receive a Christmas hat ([www.thesantarun.org.uk](http://www.thesantarun.org.uk)).

## 35

Stick on a DVD – for him

**The Bourne Ultimatum**

The final part of the Bourne trilogy is also the best, with *United 93* director Paul Greengrass bringing his unique style of hyper-realism to the action movie genre with exhilarating results. Matt Damon, who initially seemed an unusual choice for the title role, completely justifies his position with another compelling performance, and the chases and thrills are so relentless they will leave you breathless with excitement.

**Deadwood: complete seasons 1-3**

Yet another defining piece of television from HBO, the creators of *The Sopranos*, *Sex and the City* and *The Wire*, this follows the mixed fortunes of a disparate group of people looking for a new start after the horrors of the American Civil War. Seth Bullock (Timothy Olyphant, most recently seen as the bad guy in *Die Hard 4.0*) arrives in the titular town, which is gripped by gold fever, and ruled with an iron fist by Al Swearngen (a brilliantly nasty Ian McShane). Violence, betrayal and bloody murder soon follow.

**Dad's Army: the Christmas specials**

Mainwaring, Wilson and the boys are back in this collection of their three festive specials. You know what to expect – gently mocking humour laced with a wicked sense of the absurd. Simply wonderful.

**Blade Runner: The Final Cut (5-Disc Ultimate Collectors' Edition Tin)**

It has been 25 years since the first incarnation of the ground-breaking science-fiction thriller was released to an unsuspecting public. Now, director Ridley Scott has headed back to the editing suite and put together the "Final Cut", his definitive version. Harrison Ford is the world-weary Detective Deckard hunting down five escaped androids – or are there six? Remastered with hours of extras including commentaries and behind-the-scenes documentaries, this is a truly unmissable collection.

**Amazing Journey: the Story of The Who**

Mixing archive footage and interviews with two surviving members, Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey, this is a reminder of the influence and genius of one of Britain's great rock bands, and a touching tribute to those who burnt out along the way.

## 36

Find some Christmas spirit

Whether you are religious or not, try going to church this Christmas – light a candle and remember people who have died, friends who are ill, relatives who are far away and even those who are close by. Or attend one of the following cathedral services and revel in the splendid surroundings and spectacular sound of the choirs.

The ship of the Fens, Ely Cathedral, is one of the many cathedrals that will hold two carol services to meet the demand: December 23 and 24 at 6pm. Neither is ticketed, but both will be busy (01353 667735, [www.cathedral.ely.anglican.org](http://www.cathedral.ely.anglican.org)). Canterbury Cathedral will also hold two services. The ticketed one, on Dec 24, is booked out, but no tickets are needed on Dec 23: doors open at 1.30pm and the service starts at 3pm. (01227 762862, [www.canterbury-cathedral.org](http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org)). Both St Paul's Cathedral carol services will see this London landmark bursting at the seams and its acoustics tested to the limits: December 23 and 24 at 4pm (020 7236 4128; [www.stpauls.co.uk](http://www.stpauls.co.uk)). Gloucester Cathedral's carol services are on Dec 23 and 24, but there is also an Advent carol service today (all at 6pm, 01452 414616, [www.gloucestercathedral.org.uk](http://www.gloucestercathedral.org.uk)). In Edinburgh, following the lighting of the capital's Norwegian Christmas tree, St Giles' Cathedral will host lessons and carols for Advent and Christmas on December 23 at 6pm (0131 225 9442; [www.stgilescathedral.org.uk](http://www.stgilescathedral.org.uk)).

## 37

Burst into song

Exercise your heart and lungs this Christmas, and not just your wallet, by going carol singing for charity. The 27th Help the Aged Carol Appeal is looking for people to go carolling. Call 020 7239 1922 to request a free fundraising pack, and the words to some of the UK's favourite carols, or go online at [www.helptheaged.org.uk/events](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/events).

If you're worried your singing is less than angelic, then maybe a carol-singing workshop could help. Wren Music is hosting a free workshop from 7.30pm to 9pm on December 9 and 16 in Okehampton, Devon, at The Plymouth Inn (01837 53754).



GETTY IMAGES



## 38

Tell some (white) lies

Not long ago, a mother wrote to a newspaper agony aunt, furious at her mother-in-law for telling her four-year-old son that Father Christmas didn't exist. The agony aunt gave both mother and mother-in-law short shrift for lack of subtlety. Why be so explicit either way? Why not leave the idea of Father Christmas happily in the "blurred grey area" in all children's minds at that age?

Imagination is the key to having all-round happy children at Christmas. Be economical with the truth about Father Christmas: plant the question about whether he exists (he may, he may not) and just in case he does, you need to leave out the supplies on Christmas Eve for him and his reindeer.

If your floor can take it (should be okay if it's wooden) take a pair of wellington boots, press the soles

into flour and create footstep impressions from the chimney to the plate of mince pie, carrot and sherry (if whisky, make sure it's a double) and back again. The children won't believe what they are seeing.

## 39

Hold open house

Unannounced visitors shouldn't send your stress levels into the stratosphere – in theory – but will if you are unprepared. The watchwords for dealing with unexpected arrivals are food, drink, spare presents and space.

A supply of easily opened nibbles is a must, as is a decently stocked drinks cabinet (including alcohol-free options for drivers and children). It would be bad form if your guests were to turn up without some offering, and it is worth being prepared with some stocking-filler-type presents to return the compliment: home-made biscuits personally wrapped perhaps, or a half-bottle of sweet wine ready with bow attached to slip into a presentation