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The no panic, it's Christmas, last-minute effective gifting guide

Marika Azzopardi

You may think you're the only one on the islands who has not already ticked off the items of their Christmas gift list. Unless you decide to take the easy way out and just buy cake, chocolates or wine for everybody in bulk, chances are you dream of giving each person you want to gift, something special, unique, particular and enticing to that person. Easier said than done of course, and when you find yourself with limited time for shopping, when you just can't face the traffic again, when somebody is down with the flu and needs attending to around the clock, you really need some invaluable resources such as this last-minute effective gifting guide. It is mostly based on services rather than actual products so all you need is some time to search for the contacts online or on the yellow book and make a few calls. Here goes:

• Grandparents are usually the ones who get the socks, pyjamas and talcum powder. It's as if we keep pushing home the misconception that they should retire to bed and stay put for the rest of their winters. How utterly boring. If they miss going out and meeting new people, if they constantly complain that nobody visits them.....how about enrolling them in a dance class from now until spring? Choose ballroom dancing which can be particularly easy on aching limbs and bones. If transport is the issue, book them a taxi to drive them to and from each class as well. It might not be as expensive as you think, especially if you pool in with other family members.

• Mother has everything - don't they all? So instead of buying yet another vase that sits around and gathers dust on a daily basis, how about some fresh flowers? A lovely bouquet is just a phone call away, gets delivered to her front door and turns into a lovely festive surprise. Then again, if yours (the mother) is slightly vain, try booking her in for some rejuvenating botulinum shots. She might resist the idea initially, but the results will certainly convince her otherwise.

• Dad typically gets car shampoo, travel guides, a new pen, bed slippers and a new leash for the dog. Don't torment the man any more. Book him in for a few sessions with a personal trainer to help him work off those abs and the extra calories mum feeds him. To complement his new look, get him a gift card from a reputable shoe shop or a funky menswear boutique.

• Sisters adore pampering. Look up a spa and book her a free treatment, a massage, or whatever else you might think she would fancy. Get her in a good mood to last her all year by alternatively getting her a three-month-long valid free pass to the manicurist.

• Nurseries will usually deliver live plants if you ask them to. Purchasing a lovely palm tree for your boss's office may get him or her in good enough a mood to let you take an hour off every so often. If your boss already has a green space around the premises, book a gardener to landscape it every three months for a whole year.

• Your vegetarian friend is always ranting on about protein this and protein that. Cut the calorie riddle and buy him or her a credit note for a year-long supply of fruit smoothies.

• Does your little brother stop short of being active? If you're fed up of watching him slouched playing online games, it's time to help him take action. Book him in for alternative sports such as target shooting, archery, canoeing, self-defence or sailing. You know, the kind of sports to make him want to show off his new action prowess.

• Your partner, ah the husband, boyfriend, girlfriend, wife. The love of your life. Stop yourself short of spending on something superfluous just for Christmas and book a holiday, a cruise trip or a weekend break for both of you, somewhere far, somewhere near or wherever your budget takes you. Don't turn your nose up to a weekend in Gozo if that is all you can afford - it's the thought of spending quality time together that counts.

• Small gifts to gift to random people can be quick and easy to procure on your own steam, if you know what to get:

• potted cacti wrapped in velvet ribbon for the gardening wannabe;

• a year's supply of dog shampoo for the dog lover;

• a bag of kitty toys for the cat lady;

• a credit note from an art shop for the creative asset in the family;

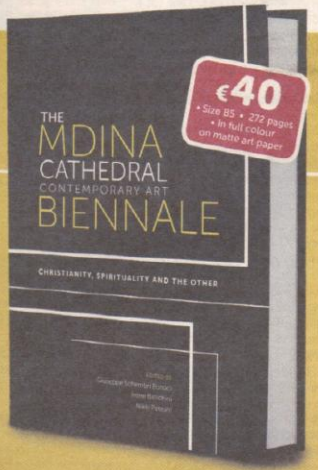
• a box of crafting accessories for the home-bound relative;

• a ticket to a live dolphin show for the quiet one.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT
THEY'RE SURE TO LOVE

The Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale is being held between 13 November 2015 and 7 January 2016 in the historic Medieval-Baroque citadel

It will establish a spiritual creative forum for international artists, musicians, performers and writers, whose contributions will focus around the Mdina Biennale's theme 'Christianity, Spirituality and the Other'. The theme will be explored from various aspects and will investigate the issue of faith and its relevance to contemporary society. It will create a stimulating modern environment, in which different works of art by artists from diverse cultural backgrounds are displayed together. The Mdina Biennale traces its roots back to the previous Christian and Sacred Art Biennale of the 1990s, and the 2015 edition will radically widen its creative spectrum. The idea that all art is spiritual remains the central concept. This thematic approach is profoundly important for a complete appreciation and understanding of the event. It plays a central role in the concept of the Artistic Director, Dr. Giuseppe Schembri Bonaci.



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