

and finally

20 things that make autumn fabulous...

Words: Sarah Drew Jones

1 You can finally pack away that damn bikini and its unfortunate tendency to display to the world your podgy bits/strange birthmark/drag queen style stubbly armpits. Yay!

2 It's the best season for new fashion, thereby giving you a valid excuse to tip the entire contents of your wardrobe in a skip and restock from scratch. Max out the credit card? Hell yes, and sell a kidney on eBay if you have to, as well.

3 All the TV channels launch their new flagship shows, so it's goodbye Big Boring Brother with its chav overload and charm deficit, and a big hello to loads of American imports. Just how much are we loving Brothers & Sisters, Dirt, Studio 60 and Weeds?

4 You can stop worrying about bizarre one-day heatwaves/third-degree sunburn/flash flooding and enjoy the leaves turning brown without thinking that global warming will kill you before your next birthday.

5 At last, we'll stop being treated to the sight of women wearing micro-shorts so tight they'd scare a gynaecologist every time we walk down the high street. And, hopefully, chunky blokes in wife-beater vests will disappear 'til next May too.

6 That 4pm biscuit is now officially acceptable as you can just add another jumper when its calories miraculously appear on your hips five minutes later.

7 WALKS IN THE PRETTY COUNTRYSIDE SUDDENLY SEEM A FUN PROSPECT, DESPITE THE FACT THAT YOU KNOW YOU'LL BE BORED, COLD AND LONGING FOR THE SHOPS BY THE TIME YOU'RE FIFTY FEET AWAY FROM THE CAR

8 There's much less call for gardening, and that pesky lawnmower can be consigned (along with your exercise bike and that George Foreman Grill) to obscurity in the garage.

9 You have the smug pleasure of tutting: 'Christmas decorations already?! Jeez, it gets earlier every year. In my day they went up on Christmas Eve and not a moment before' every time you walk through Tesco...

10 There will now be a 10-month break from pretending to love your bloke's cremated barbecue offerings. How hard is it to heat a mini burger for flip's sake? Is the man a closet arsonist?

11 Autumn is the only time of year when you can spend £600 on beauty treatments and justify it by saying that you're only putting back what the summer took out...

12 An expensive new haircut is *de rigueur*. In fact, it may even be enshrined in law (we can't be bothered to check, but surely...?)

13 You have earned a break from salad, fruit and pick-your-own strawberries that just taste of mud, and can safely go back to Twix, spag bol and the occasional bowl of cheesy chips. With Pinot Grigio. Sometimes all in one meal.

14 No longer will you have to cry: 'It's summer, we should all go outside!' to your disinterested, belligerent and borderline violent family every Saturday morning.

15 NEW BOOTS! IN EVERY COLOUR, LEG LENGTH AND HEEL HEIGHT AVAILABLE! OH, THE UNBRIDLED JOY OF IT ALL!

16 Suddenly, the end of the year is in sight and you seem to have lots of annual leave to use up. Day on the sofa with a Dirty Dancing DVD and a bottle of Cava, anyone?

17 Party season is almost upon us, so it's only right and just that you buy five more dresses and start a course of collagen facials, isn't it?

18 Obviously, the house needs snugly new sofas, sexy new throws and, yes, go on, a brand new kitchen as well. Don't want to be uncomfortable through winter, do we?

19 Travel agents are offering such fab late-season deals this year, they're making a second, or even third holiday seem almost like an investment.

20 Now's the time to clean out the wine warehouses before they hike their prices up for the Christmas rush. Well, got to fill those long dark evenings somehow...

