



FEATURE

The first month of the year offers both challenges and promises, serving as the threshold for new expectations and aspirations.

ALL
ANEW
IN

January



Years ago, I encountered a dancer named January, finding her name uniquely beautiful. I wondered if she was born in that month, but I never asked her. Unlike other month names like May or June for people, January holds a distinct impact.

But why is it called January? Legend has it that during Numa's reign (c. 715-673 BC), he restructured the Roman calendar, elevating January to the first month, replacing March. This choice aligns with its namesake, the Roman god Janus, known for beginnings. With two faces, Janus could see both the past and the future, also serving as the god of doors.

Thus, it's fitting that the inaugural month bears the name of a god who straddles past and future, signifying inspiration and positive connotations.

FEATURE

WHY JANUARY IS A GREAT MONTH

While January holds significant importance, its meaning varies among individuals. In Western culture, January often receives disproportionate negative attention, attributed to post-holiday financial strain and the dreariness of winter's short days. Many opt to dismiss January entirely.

Notably, the concept of 'Blue Monday,' proclaimed as the most depressing day of the year, falls on the third Monday of January. Originating from a 2005 press release by a UK travel company, this notion, calculated with a weather-centric equation applicable only to the northern hemisphere, lacks scientific validity.

Financial planning poses challenges in January, yet for some, it signifies a time of opportunity and anticipation. While December, with its festive spirit and personal significance, remains a favourite for many, January symbolises a fresh start, inaugurating 365 new days.

As I approach January, I experience a blend of excitement and trepidation, predominantly positive. It offers a clean slate, inviting reflection, relaxation and the establishment of new goals for the forthcoming months. This initial month shapes one's mood for the entire year, discouraging dwelling on any January blues.

What captivates me, and likely many others, about January is the prospect of embracing new aspirations. It serves as a rejuvenating period, inspiring the setting of fresh goals and

resolutions. January's unique power lies in its capacity to mark the commencement of a new chapter—a blank canvas where hopes, dreams and aspirations can be vividly painted.

Indeed, January possesses a distinctive ability to inspire, symbolising the initiation of a new journey. It stands as a special month, uniquely allowing us to extend wishes of 'Happy New Year' to one another.

OUT OF DEPRESSION

As a student, January not only marks the beginning of a new term but also a fresh year, signifying progression to a higher

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In Perugia, Italy to study for a month after learning Italian since January 2009.

academic level, whether in primary or secondary school. Among various Januaries, one holds profound significance for me—1987, a transformative period that changed my life.

Having battled severe depression towards the end of 1986, I had withdrawn from boarding school and returned home for recovery. The grip of depression persisted, rendering me almost emotionless, resembling a zombie. Blankness enveloped my mind, and reliance on sleeping pills became a necessity. Those days in my teenage years were undeniably the bleakest and darkest.

Then, the turning point arrived in January 1987, when my father enrolled me in a new college. Miraculously, as I immersed myself in school life, my depression gradually lifted, marking the commencement of a new chapter. The inexplicable disappearance of my depression might be attributed to the establishment of routine and the anticipation of daily activities. Successfully passing my A levels at that college paved the way for pursuing tertiary education overseas.

THE Y2K SAGA

Who could erase the memory of January 2000, particularly the inaugural moment when the calendar flipped from 1999 to 2000? The global anticipation surrounding the Y2K millennium bug, which was speculated to wreak havoc in the digital world, created a palpable buzz. However, the transition into January 2000, turned out to be an anticlimactic non-event.

I recall celebrating the onset of 1 January 2000, in Hong Kong with my family, joining the city and the world in welcoming the year with spectacular fireworks and festivities. It was a thrilling time as the world stepped into a new millennium. However, in truth, the new millennium officially commenced on 1 January 2001, a celebration that paled in comparison to the preceding year's grandeur.

FIRST BALI TRIP AND MANY MORE!

January 2007 stands out as one of my most memorable Januaries. Having recently transitioned from full-time employment to freelancing as a writer for entertainment magazines, the month marked a pivotal moment. Early in January, I seized the opportunity to fulfil a long-standing desire by planning a much-anticipated trip to Bali.

Though it was just a five-day escapade, the experience was nothing short of enchanting. Exploring the island with friends, I discovered the allure of Bali and found myself captivated. The trip left me so captivated that I returned with an extra-large bag,

What is Your January Quest?

EMBARK ON NEW ADVENTURES AND DISCOVERIES.

Glow with the determination to achieve.

Look forward to the promising future

DIVE INTO THE UNKNOWN WITH A CURIOUS SPIRIT.

Notice the subtle changes and opportunities.



unable to resist the charm of Balinese designs.

This initial voyage to Bali served as a catalyst for many more adventures. In August of that same year, I brought my parents to experience the island's charm. Over the following years, I embarked on solo journeys, delving into different towns and regions of Bali. To me, Bali became a paradise with its captivating offerings. Remarkably, my love affair with the island has endured, totalling 14 visits to date, all ignited by that transformative January in 2007.

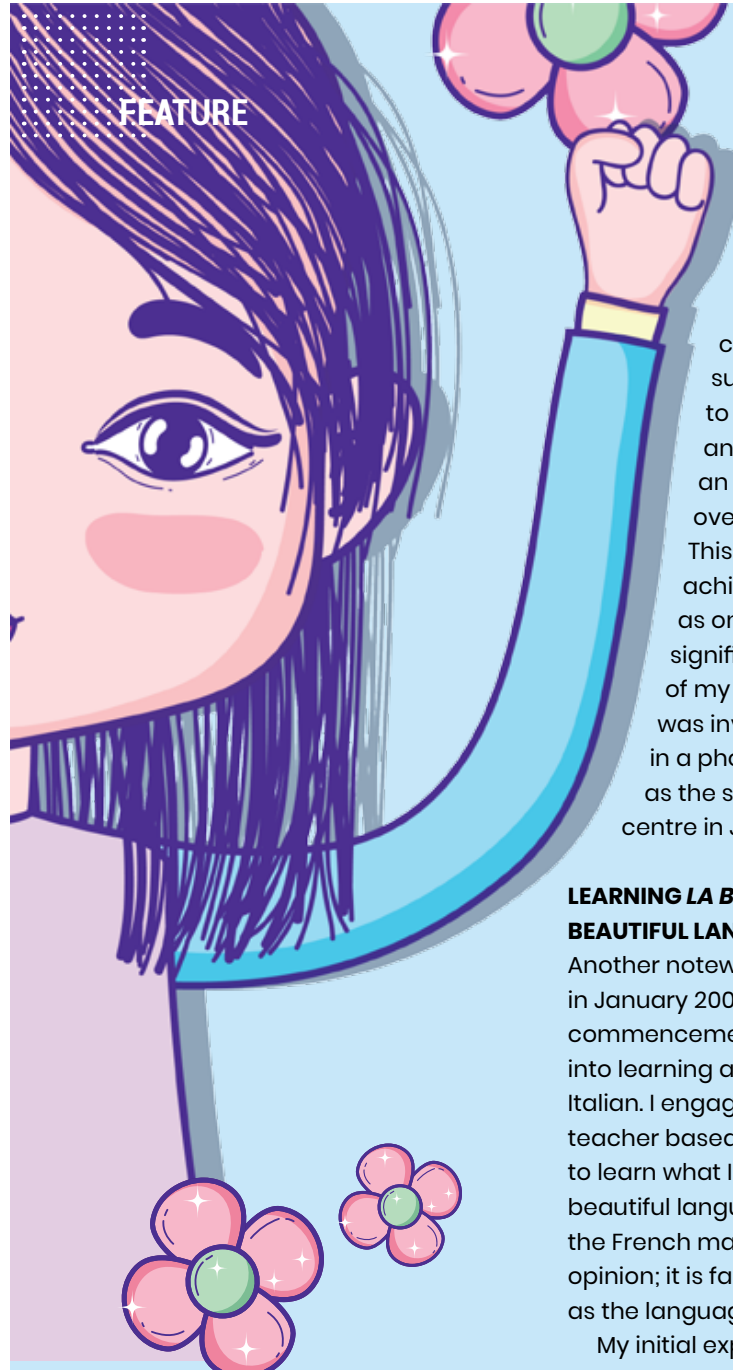
SLIMMING TRIUMPH

Having indulged excessively in food, my weight has significantly increased since transitioning to freelancing. It reached a point where frustration set in as my clothes, particularly pants and jeans, became too tight. Driven by a strong determination to shed those extra pounds, I took action. In early January 2009, I enrolled in a comprehensive slimming programme that incorporated both dietary adjustments and



Since January 2007, I have travelled to Bali numerous times including attending Ubud Writers and Readers Festival.

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body treatments to target stubborn fat.

With unwavering commitment, I successfully adhered to the programme and managed to shed an impressive 15kg over eight months. This weight-loss achievement stands as one of my most significant. In recognition of my transformation, I was invited to participate in a photo shoot, serving as the spokesperson for the centre in January 2010.

LEARNING LA BELLA LINGUA (THE BEAUTIFUL LANGUAGE)

Another noteworthy occurrence in January 2009 was the commencement of my journey into learning a new language—Italian. I engaged with a native teacher based in Kuala Lumpur to learn what I consider the most beautiful language, even though the French may have a differing opinion; it is famously recognised as the language of song.

My initial exposure to Italian was through classical lyrical vocal lessons, and among various European languages (including English), singing in Italian held a special place in my heart.

Since that point, my pursuit of learning the language has been ceaseless. I engaged in online Italian lessons with native teachers, travelled to Italy and enrolled in various language schools. Currently, I find myself at an upper intermediate level and have plans to undergo an

examination in Italy next year.

The study of Italian has not only enriched my linguistic skills but has also opened up a new world for me. Apart from residing with Italian families and forming new friendships, I have explored various parts of Italy, including some of its most remote destinations, immersing myself in the country's exquisite nature and culture. Across six trips, I have been fortunate to accumulate about a year's worth of living experience in Italy—all stemming from that pivotal decision to learn the language back in January 2009.

SO, THIS IS JANUARY...

Reflecting on the past, many Januaries have been marked by events offering inspiration and fresh beginnings.

January possesses the unique ability to glance back at the preceding year while simultaneously propelling us forward to establish new goals and resolutions. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the realisation of these aspirations, January serves as an invitation to embark on a journey of self-discovery, improvement and new challenges. Though setbacks may occur, the month remains a beacon, allowing us to reignite our resolutions and plans.

As we welcome January 2024, a profound sense of renewed hope permeates, standing before a pristine canvas with an entire year lying ahead. Stepping into January once more, with its untapped potential, this month becomes a wellspring of inspiration, shaping the trajectory for the rest of the year. 🌸

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