

## £<sup>TM</sup> m missing coffee

Published: January 14, 2026, 12:46 am

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Sunday morning is often a moment for reflection: Saturday's given some relief from the working week. I lie in a little longer than usual most Sundays. It's rare that I work that much. There's usually a plan for social activity of some sort or other.

Today's one of my sons' birthday. Tesco is not a great place to buy a 19 year old a present for such an occasion. They were almost denuded of cards. He's wholly undersanding, thankfully. The best I can do is a meal of his choice - within the constraints of me being the cook. I make no pretence to being a chef.

But there are compensations in the lockdown. As I wrote a goldfinch, more brazen than usual it seems, is picking at some thyme in my garden. I am taking the time to notice these things.

That said I can't help but say that I am missing things too. Not London. Not shopping. Not some of the face-to-face meetings that may remain online, I think, after this, although there are at least as many of them now. No, what I'm really missing is going out for coffee.

I'm not averse to a pub, but some time ago I think more of my social life shifted to coffee and tea shops from bars and pubs. I have not regretted it. I'm aware that as a result in several of my favourite establishments in the city (because Ey is a rather small city) I don't have to order my black americano; they know what I want, as they know what other regulars want.

I like the feedback from that community of regulars.

I miss meeting friends to put the world to rights, or not.

I just miss watching the world go by as I write in coffee shops, as is my not infrequent habit.

Of course I can survive without it. But this is a moment to think about what is important. And people are.

I will value those coffee shops more when this is over. I am hoping that they make it to the other side. I am hoping their staff do too. They're the lubricant of a lot of what happens in my life, much more than I appreciated.

I'm not expecting to rush out and spend when this is over. If I go on holiday it will be when it's possible, and almost certainly in the UK, because that's been my habit for a long time. But coffee down by the river here in Ely? That will happen as soon as possible.

Isolation teaches us things we probably knew, but really did not appreciate, although I'm never going to recommend it. This period will be seen as disastrous for a great many reasons, and will frame much of our understanding of this first half of this century. But I'm determined to learn all I can from it. That I am pretty much hooked not so much on coffee as on the social opportunity it provides is one of those things. There are worse afflictions.