

Today Manningtree... and tomorrow, the world!

Swimming with dolphins or climbing Mount Everest, DICK LUMSDEN looks at what dreams are made of

EVERY morning, when I sit down at my desk with a cup of strong coffee, the first thing I do is update my "to do" list.

If I didn't have a list, with things I can satisfyingly tick-off as I go through the day, I'd be lost. My motivation would shrivel up and die, my mind would wander and before you know it I'd be curled up in the corner with a good book.

You won't be surprised to hear that I also do lists on a larger scale. For instance, unlike New Year's resolutions, I have a New Year list... with holidays, projects around the house, things to buy, places to go, people to see. One of my friends has a list on four pages of an Excel spreadsheet which covers everything for the next four years... although that may be a bit extreme.

When I've finished writing this article there will be another tick on today's list. And by the end of this week, when the plumber has finished fixing up our new bathroom suite, that will be another big tick on the annual one.

One thing I don't have, though, is a bucket list.

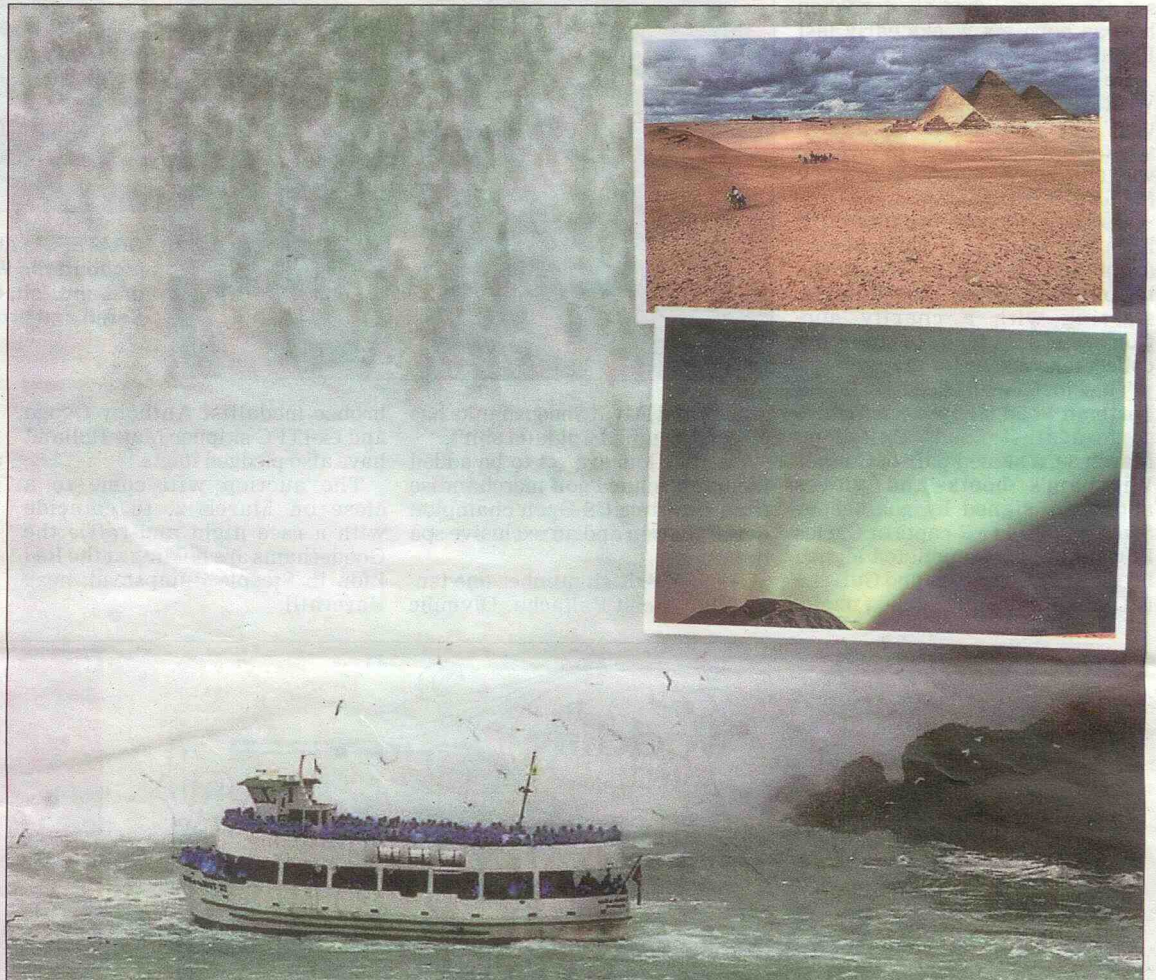
I fully intend to travel as often and as far as I can, for as long as I can, but I refuse to compile a list of things to do which, by its nature, implies that having ticked it off you are one step closer to closing the door on life.

With apologies to those few people who are genuinely living on borrowed time and trying to do as much as they can with the time they have left, bucket lists have become big business. There are no end of websites dedicated to ever-expanding bucket lists.... there is even a website at www.1000places.com which lists, funnily enough, 1,000 places to see before you die. Really....?

Even if you were particularly well off and were pretty dedicated, you'd be hard pushed to do more than 50 a year, so you'd need upwards of 20 years to get round them all.

At www.bucketlist.net they have compiled the all-time top 20 things to do as voted for by hundreds of, as they call them, "buckaroos". Pleasingly, I have managed, or at least tried, 12 of the 20, so if I ever am in a time and place where a bucket list becomes necessary, I'm already over halfway there.

Why is it that swimming with dolphins seems to feature on every bucket list? Believe me, I've seen them around a boat and they



HE'S GOT A LITTLE LIST: And on it you might find the Northern Lights, pyramids and the Niagara Falls... none of which are common in East Anglia, Dick Lumsden acknowledges. Photos: PA/CONTRIBUTED

description. I reckon they figure on so many lists because it is a clever PR campaign by sea life centres and marinas to get people to part with cash on the off chance.

Of course, most of the things on bucket lists involve travel of some kind. Seeing pyramids, huge waterfalls, the Aurora Borealis, elephants or tigers would be extremely unlikely in Manningtree.

So that's another reason for suspecting that this whole business is one great marketing campaign. We know for a fact that it is those of us with a few years on the clock that keep the travel business going (and, come to that, the car industry, the restaurant business, and of course the wine business).

Already this year the big travel operators are reporting record bookings for places like Burma, Thailand and Vietnam. And the majority of these bookings are from older travellers with cash in

We may not all be contemplating an early meeting with the Grim Reaper, but we do believe that, if we're going to do it, it would be better to trek up the foothills of Everest now rather than put it off till we don't have the energy.

We want to party, and we want to party in distant and more exotic locations. But I'm not suggesting some kind of middle aged equivalent to the debauched full moon parties on the island of Koh Phangan. Rather than snorting class A drugs and cavorting naked at midnight on the beach, I'd be in a cosy hotel room with my statins, a glass of wine and a good book on the Kindle.

This increasing demand for long-haul travel by older adventurers who have money to spend, is also, of course, an alternative way to contribute foreign aid. With Britons making something around 58 million trips abroad this year, a significant

toilet, that is a fair source of income for them. And I for one am much happier delivering money directly into the hands of foreign shopkeepers, barmen and taxi drivers than I am seeing my taxes diverted into the hands of corrupt Government officials.

But, if you are reading this and thinking all of this foreign travel is not for you - then comfort yourself by thinking that you could be living right in the middle of some foreigner's bucket list. There must be someone out there that is desperate to paint a scene at Flatford Mill; eat an ice cream on Southwold Pier or have a walk on part in TOWIE.

Live the dream!

■ Dick Lumsden is managing director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to take part occasionally in some gentle