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Letter writing enjoys a revival as fans seek connection and a break from screen time

By **CHEYANNE MUMPHREY**
Associated Press

At a time when productivity means optimizing every second and screens blur the line between work and home, some people are slowing down and disconnecting by looking to communication devices from the past.

Tactile activities ranging from writing letters and typewriter clubs to TikTok communities showcasing calligraphy skills and wax seals are giving retro writing instruments a resurgence. More than quaint throwbacks, the pursuits provide their enthusiasts with opportunities to reduce their technology use, be more intentional with time and build meaningful connections with others.

"I feel as though my pen pals are my friends. I don't think of them much differently than if I were chatting with a friend on the phone, in a coffee shop or at another person's house," said Melissa Bobbitt, 42, a devoted letter-writer who corresponds with about a dozen people from her home in Claremont, California, and has had up to 40 pen pals at one time. "Focusing on one person and really reading what they are saying, and sharing what's on your heart is almost like a therapy session."

Ink, paper and other tools that once were the only way to send a message from afar are continuing to bring people together from around the world. Below, some of them explain the appeal of snail mail and give recommendations for getting started.

Writing can be an escape

In a society shaped by constant availability, hands-on hobbies like writing letters



Pen pal letters are displayed outside the Sullivan County Health Care nursing home in Unity, N.H., June 8, 2020.

Associated Press

and scrapbooking require focus and patience. The act of picking up a pen, sealing an envelope with wax and laying out pages may yield aesthetically pleasing results, but it also creates a space for reflection.

Stephania Kontopanos, a 21-year-old student in Chicago, said it can be hard to put her phone and computer away, especially when it seems all of her friends and peers are on social media and her classes and personal life revolve around being online.

"There are times when I'm with my friends and at dinner, I'll realize we are all on our phones," Kontopanos said, adding that she tries to put her phone down at those moments.

Kontopanos also unplugs consciously by sending postcards to her family and friends, scrapbooking, and junk journaling, which involves repurposing everyday materials like tickets

and receipts to document memories or ideas. She says going to the post office has become an activity she does with her mother back home in Kansas and includes sharing stories with the postal workers, people she would not have routinely encountered.

Nostalgia can foster community

Writing and sending letters is nostalgic for KiKi Klassen, who lives in Ontario, Canada. The 28-year-old says it helps her feel more connected to her late mother, who was a member of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, which represents mail carriers and other postal employees.

In October 2024, Klassen launched the Lucky Duck Mail Club, a subscription-based monthly mail service that sends participants a piece of her art, an inspiring quote and message. She says her membership includes more than 1,000 people across, at most, 36

countries.

"When I sit down, I'm forced to reflect and choose my words carefully," Klassen said. "It also lends itself to vulnerability because it is easier to write down how you are feeling. I've had people write me back and I've cried hearing so many touching stories. I think for a lot of people paper creates a safe space. You write it down, send it off and don't really think about it after." For Bobbitt, who has corresponded by mail for years, there is a "grand excitement" when she opens her mailbox and finds something that is not a bill or advertisement. "If we all filled each other's mailboxes with letters, we would all be kinder and, at the very least, won't dread checking our mailboxes," she said. Bobbitt says she first joined a pen pal club in second or third grade and later was connected to more writers through Postcrossing, an online project that partners

people around the world to send and receive postcards. She says some of the postcards turned into letters as friendships grew between her and some other regular writers.

It's a similar feeling of connection that inspired DJ Robert Owoyele, 34, to create CAYA, a monthly "analog gathering" in Dallas. Owoyele launched the event less than a year ago and has since organized evenings with letter writing, coloring, vinyl listening sessions and other activities.

"We live in a digital age that fosters a false sense of connection, but I think true connection happens in person," he said. "When we are able to touch or see something, we are more connected to it naturally. These analog activities are a representation of that."

How to get started

While writing letters and engaging in other vintage pursuits might seem accessible, it is not always easy to get involved. For many people, carving out time to slow down can feel like another obligation in a schedule filled with to-dos.

Kontopanos says she decided it was important for her to reprioritize her time. "The older I get, the more I realize how much time had been wasted on my phone," she said. Creating space to explore allowed her to discover the hobbies she loved doing enough to make them a priority, she said. There are many hobbies to consider, some of which don't require expensive tools or hours of free time. Frequenting spaces where communities centered around these hobbies gather can be a way to learn about the different activities. □

The Sundance Film Festival prepares to bid farewell to Park City, and Robert Redford

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

The Sundance Film Festival may be a little bittersweet this year. It will be familiar in some ways as it kicks off on Thursday in Park City, Utah. There will be stars, from Natalie Portman to Charli XCX, and breakout discoveries, tearjerkers, comedies, thrillers, oddities that defy categorization and maybe even a few future Oscar nominees. The pop ups and sponsors will be out in full force on Main Street. The lines to get into the 90 movies premiering across 10 days will be long and the volunteers will be endlessly helpful and cheery in sub-freezing temperatures.

But the country's premier showcase for independent film is also in a time of profound transition after decades of relative stability. The festival is bidding farewell to its longtime home and forging forward without its founder, Robert Redford, who died in September. Next year, it must find its footing in another mountain town, Boulder, Colorado.

Celebrating the legacy of Robert Redford and his creation

It's no surprise that legacy will be a through-line at this year's final edition in Park City. There will be screenings of restored Sundance gems like "Little Miss Sunshine," "Mysterious Skin," "House Party" and "Humpday" as well as Redford's first truly independent film, the 1969 sports drama "Downhill Racer." Many will also pay tribute to Redford at the institute's fundraising event, where honorees include Chloé Zhao, Ed Harris and Nia DaCosta.

"Sundance has always been about showcasing and fostering independent movies in America. Without that, so many filmmakers wouldn't have had the careers they have," said "Mysterious Skin" filmmaker Gregg Araki. He first attended the festival in 1992 and has been back many times, including at the labs where Zhao was one of his



The exterior of the Egyptian Theatre is illuminated on Main Street during the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, Jan. 22, 2015.

students.

Quite a few festival veterans are planning to make the trip, including "Navalny" filmmaker Daniel Roher. His first Sundance in 2022 might have been a bit unconventional (made fully remote at the last minute due to the pandemic) but ended on a high note with an Oscar. This year he's back with two films, his narrative debut "Tuner," and the world premiere of "The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist," which he co-directed with Charlie Tyrell.

"We're going through a weird moment in the world ... There's something that strikes me about an institution that has been evergreen, that seems so entrenched going through its own transition and rebirth," Roher told The Associated Press. "I'm choosing to frame this year as a celebration of Sundance and the institute and a future that will ensure the festival goes on forever and ever and stays the vital conduit for so many filmmakers that it has been."

Over the past four decades, countless careers have been shaped and boosted by the festival and the Institute. Three of this year's presumed Oscar nominees — Paul Thomas

Anderson, Ryan Coogler and Zhao are among those the Institute supported early in their careers.

Jay Duplass, who first came to Sundance in 2003 with his brother, Mark, with what he calls a "\$3 film" said it was the place where his career was made.

"I'd probably be a psychologist right now if it wasn't for Sundance," Duplass said.

While he's been to "probably 15 Sundances" since, it hasn't lost its luster. In fact, when a programmer called him to tell him that his new film "See You When I See You" was selected, he cried. The film is based on a memoir in which a young comedy writer (Cooper Raiff) attempts to process the death of his sister (Kaitlyn Dever). It's one of many films that finds humor amid grim subjects.

Bold swings, comedies and Hollywood stars

As always, the lineup is full of starry films as well, including Cathy Yan's art world satire, "The Gallerist," starring Portman, Jenna Ortega, Sterling K. Brown, Zach Galifianakis and Da'Vine Joy Randolph. The romantic drama "Carousel," from Rachel Lambert, features Chris Pine and Jenny Slate as high school exes who rekindle their romance later

in life. Araki is also bringing a new film, "I Want Your Sex," in which Olivia Wilde plays a provocative artist (Araki described as a cross between Madonna and Robert Mapplethorpe) who takes on Cooper Hoffman as her younger muse.

"It's kind of a sex-positive love letter to Gen Z," Araki said. "It's a comedy. It has elements of mystery, thriller, murder a little bit of 'Sunset Boulevard' ... it's fun, it's colorful, it's sexy. It's a ride." Wilde also steps behind the camera for "The Invite," in which she stars alongside Seth Rogen as a couple whose marriage disintegrates over the course of an evening. Olivia Colman is a fisherwoman looking to make the perfect husband in "Wicker," co-starring Alexander Skarsgård. Zoey Deutch plays a Midwestern bride-to-be seeking out her celebrity "free pass" (Jon Hamm) in the screwball comedy "Gail Daughtry and the Celebrity Sex Pass." And Ethan Hawke and Russell Crowe lead the Depression-era crime drama "The Weight."

Pop star and noted cinephile Charli XCX will also be out and about, starring in the self-referential mockumentary "The Moment," and appearing in "The Gallerist" and "I Want Your

Sex" as well.

Documentaries about celebrities and urgent subjects

The 2026 festival features a robust lineup of documentaries too, which have a good track record of snagging eventual Oscar nominations and wins. There are a handful of films about famous faces, including basketball star Brittney Griner, Courtney Love, Salman Rushdie, Billie Jean King, Nelson Mandela and comedian Maria Bamford.

Others delve into newsy subjects past and present, like "When A Witness Recants," in which author Ta-Nehisi Coates revisits the case of the 1983 murder of a boy in his Baltimore middle school and learns the truth. "American Doctor" follows three professionals trying to help in Gaza. "Who Killed Alex Odeh" examines the 1985 assassination of a Palestinian American activist in Southern California. "Everybody To Kenmore Street" is about civil resistance to deportations in Glasgow in 2021. And "Silenced" tracks international human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson in her fight against the weaponization of defamation laws against victims of gender violence.

And some don't fit into any easy category, like "The History of Concrete" in which filmmaker John Wilson takes what he learned at a "how to sell a Hallmark movie" seminar and tries to apply it to a documentary on concrete.

Saying goodbye to Main Street

There might be a bit of wistfulness in the air too, as everyone takes stock of the last Sundance in Park City and tries to imagine what Boulder might hold. "It feels very special to be part of the last one in Park City," Duplass said. "It's just a super special place where, you know there are going to be movies there with giant stars and there's also going to be some kids there who made movies for a few thousand dollars. □"

California's scenic Highway 1 near Big Sur reopens 3 years after damaging landslides

BIG SUR, Calif. (AP) — A 90-mile (145-kilometer) section of California's Highway 1 along the famous Big Sur coast fully reopened Wednesday after three years of closures and repairs following a series of landslides and a roadway collapse that hampered tourism on the scenic route. The reopening around mid-day came three months ahead of schedule, and business owners say that should give travelers plenty of time to plan their spring and summer road trips. The highway is famously a must for California visitors traveling between Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"Today is a monumental milestone for us," said a relieved Colin Twohig, general manager of the Big Sur River Inn. "We're hitting the light at the end of the tunnel after three long years." The first shutdown came in January 2023 when a series of powerful atmospheric rivers triggered a major landslide. The highway was buried by mud and rocks again the following year during another wet winter, and a lane also collapsed down a cliff near the Rocky Creek Bridge.

The traffic stoppage between Carmel and Cambria cut off access to Big



Cones mark a break in the southbound lane of Highway 1 at Rocky Creek Bridge in Big Sur, Calif., April 1, 2024.

Sur, an isolated stretch of the state's central coast where misty, forested mountains rise up from the ocean. What used to be a short drive between the southern and northern sections with tiny Big Sur Village roughly in the middle became an eight-hour trek inland and then back toward the seashore.

The isolated area, home to fewer than 2,000 residents, is known for its panoramic hiking trails along high cliffs and craggy beaches

where seals and sea lions sometimes sprawl out. The late "Tropic of Cancer" author Henry Miller lived there for nearly two decades starting in the 1940s, and there's now a library devoted to his work.

There were multiple closures at various locations throughout the past three years, and the last stretch that remained shut was a 7-mile (11-kilometer) span near Lucia, according to the California Department of Transportation, or Cal-

trans. Gov. Gavin Newsom announced the opening on social media, thanking Caltrans for the speedy work in "reviving a vital economic lifeline for local business owners and residents affected by the closure." Caltrans, which has called Highway 1 the jewel of the state highway system, deployed remotely operated bulldozers and excavators to safely remove tons of debris in steep terrain. Then crews drilled 4,600 steel bars into the slopes in a grid

to patch layers of the hillside together and reduce the risk of future slides, the department said.

California Assemblymember Dawn Addis, a Democrat whose district includes Big Sur, said the restoration will provide a much-needed fiscal boost to the region.

"This turning point will help restore revenue, access to our state parks, support jobs, public safety, and economic stability for many of our residents," Addis said in a statement.

Twohig said he looks forward to seeing tourists in cars and motorhomes back on the road.

He estimated that his inn, with 22 guest rooms, a large restaurant and a general store, saw a 20% drop in business. He said the road closure directly following COVID-19 restrictions was a one-two punch. The inn spent the down time making improvements and marketing heavily to entice California residents to visit during the off-seasons.

"When you have a hospitality business, you really rely on the busy season, and when there is no busy season, it can be a hard pill to swallow," he said. "Having that lifeline back is huge." □

Associated Press

Elephant seals return to Año Nuevo State Park. Visitors watch battling bulls and 75-pound pups

By HAVEN DALEY
Associated Press

PESCADERO, Calif. (AP) — Every winter about 10,000 elephant seals make their way to California's Año Nuevo State Park to fight, mate and give birth. The spectacle runs from mid-December through March, drawing wildlife watchers eager for a glimpse of the largest seals on the planet. During what park docent Laura Stern called "pupping season," bull seals some reaching up to 16 feet (4.9 meters) in length and weighing up to 2.5 tons engage in bloody battles for breeding access to the

females. "So most elephant seals come back to the same beach where they

were born. They don't all, but most of them do," Stern said. "And we have about



A bull elephant seal rests on a beach at Año Nuevo State Park, Friday, Jan. 16, 2026, in Pescadero, Calif.

Associated Press

10,000 elephant seals that come to Año Nuevo."

Elephant seals were hunted nearly to extinction in the 1800s, sought out for their blubber, which was used to make oil. In 1892, fewer than 100 of the animals remained on a small island off the coast of Baja California. Recognizing the crisis, the Mexican government extended legal protection to the species in 1922, followed shortly by protection in the United States. Today the population has grown to an estimated 250,000 seals living in the Pacific. "There is a genetic bottleneck because they're all

coming from that same 30 to 60. But so far they're doing really well, and we haven't had any problems," Stern said.

Año Nuevo State Park, about 90 minutes south of San Francisco, is one of the largest mainland breeding rookeries on the West Coast. During pupping season, visitors come in droves to book docent-led guided walks so they can watch the long-nosed bull seals clash on the shore, hear the barks and bellows filling the seaside air and see the mothers nurse sleek, 75-pound (34-kilogram) pups on the sand dunes. □

China's population falls again as births drop to lowest rate since 1949 communist revolution

By HUIZHONG WU

Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — How do you persuade a population to have more babies after generations of limiting families to just one?

A decade after ending China's longtime one-child policy, the country's authorities are pushing a range of ideas and policies to try to encourage more births — tactics that range from cash subsidies to taxing condoms to eliminating a tax on matchmakers and day care centers.

The efforts haven't paid off yet. At least, that's what population figures released Monday show for what is now the world's second-most populous nation. China's population of 1.4 billion continued to shrink, marking the fourth straight year of decrease, new government statistics show. The total population in 2025 stood at 1.404 billion, which was 3 million less than the previous year.

Measured another way, the birth rate in 2025 — 5.63 per 1,000 people — is the lowest on record since 1949, the year that Mao Zedong's Communists overthrew the Nationalists and began running China. Figures before that, under the previous Nationalist gov-



People carry their toddlers by a toy store in Beijing, Monday, Jan. 19, 2026.

Associated Press

ernment, were not available.

China was long the world's most populous nation until 2023, when it was surpassed by regional neighbor and sometime rival India. Monday's statistics illustrate the stark demographic pressures faced by the country as it tries to pivot from a problem it is working hard to overcome: status as a nation with a growing but transitional economy that, as is often said, is "getting old before it gets rich."

Is a snake involved?

The number of new babies born was just 7.92 million in 2025, a decline of 1.62 million, or 17%, from the previous year. The latest birth numbers show that the slight tick upward in 2024 was not a lasting trend. Births declined for seven years in a row through 2023. Most families cite the costs and pressure of raising a child in a highly competitive society as significant hurdles that now loom larger in the face of an economic downturn that has impacted households

struggling to meet their living costs.

Across the region, "it's these big structural issues which are much harder to tackle, whether it's housing, and work and getting a job and getting started in life and expectations around education..." said Stuart Gietel-Basten, director of the Center for Aging Science at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. "It's gonna be difficult to make a major change in those number of births until those are addressed."

Another potential factor in the numbers, at least for 2025: Last year in China was the year of the snake, considered one of the least favored years for having a child under the Chinese zodiac. The government's official Xinhua News Agency, however, did say early last year — perhaps optimistically — that the snake "is shaking off its negative connotations."

Like many other countries in Asia, China has faced a declining fertility rate, or the average number of babies a woman is expected to have in her lifetime. While the government does not regularly publish a fertility rate, last saying it was 1.3 in 2020, experts have estimated it is now around 1. Both figures are far below the 2.1 rate that would maintain the size of China's population.

For decades, the Chinese government barred people from having more than one baby and often sanctioned those who did — a policy that produced more than two generations of only children. In 2015, the government raised the permitted amount of offspring to two and then, facing demographic pressure, further revised the limit to three in 2021. □

A novel sanctuary in Antarctica is preserving ice samples from rapidly melting glaciers

By NICOLE WINFIELD and PAOLO SANTALUCIA

Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Scientists in Antarctica on Wednesday inaugurated the first global repository of mountain ice cores, preserving the history of the Earth's atmosphere in a frozen vault for future generations to study as global warming melts glaciers around the world. An ice core is something of an atmospheric time capsule, containing information about the Earth's past changes in a frozen climate archive. With global glaciers melting at an unprec-

edented rate, scientists have raced to preserve ice cores for future study before they disappear altogether. The Ice Memory Foundation, a consortium of European research institutes, inaugurated the frozen sanctuary on Wednesday at the Concordia station in the Antarctic Plateau. The foundation livestreamed the ceremonial ribbon cutting and opening of the frozen cave where the ice samples will be kept for future generations.

The first two sets of samples of Alpine mountain ice cores were drilled out of

Mont Blanc in France and Grand Combin in Switzerland and arrived at the station after a 50-day refrigerated icebreaker and plane journey from Trieste, Italy. During the inauguration ceremony, pairs of foundation team members brought box after box of ice cores into the cave, burrowed deep into a 5-meter (yard) high compacted snow drift at a constant temperature of around -52°C/-61°F.

"By safeguarding physical samples of atmospheric gases, aerosols, pollutants and dust trapped in ice layers, the Ice Memory Foun-



This undated image released on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026 by the Ice Memory Foundation, shows the Concordia Station, where the Ice Memory Sanctuary is being built in Antarctica for ice cores from the Alps carrying the memory of Earth's current atmosphere, which are preserved at a temperature close to -52°C/-61°F for future generations of scientists to study.

Associated Press

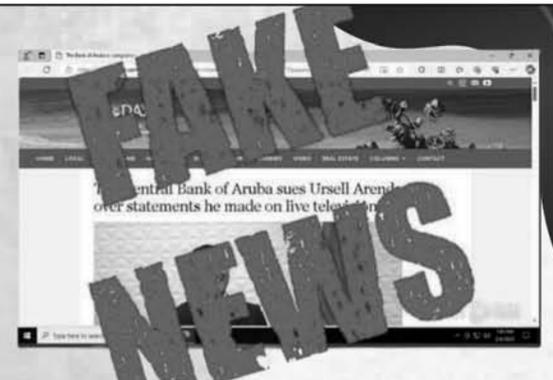
ation ensures that future generations of researchers will be able to study past climate conditions using technologies that may not

yet exist," said Carlo Barbante, vice chair of the Ice Memory Foundation and a professor at Ca' Foscari University in Venice. □

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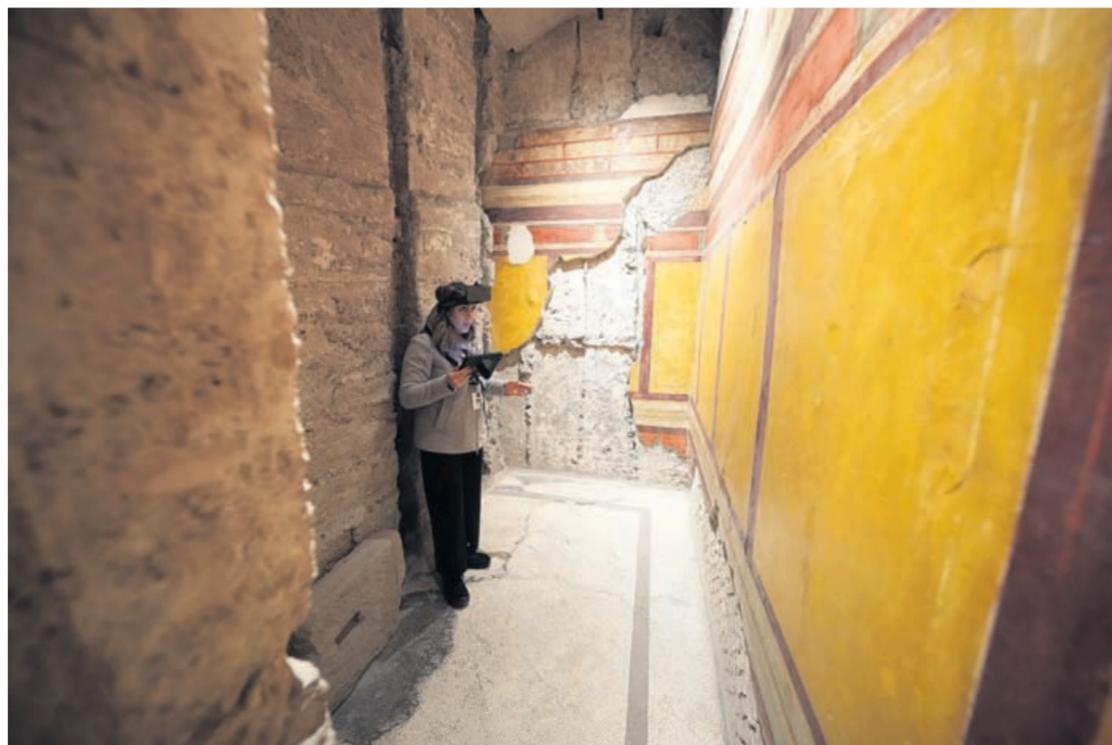
Ancient Rome meets modern technology as tourists visit restored, frescoed home via livestream tours

By NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

ROME (AP) — One of the best-preserved ancient Roman homes on the Palatine Hill is opening to the public for the first time, albeit via a livestreamed tour of its hard-to-reach underground frescoes and mosaics.

The House of the Griffins was first discovered during the excavations in the early 20th century of the Palatine Hill, the verdant hill that rises up from the Roman Forum and dominates views of central Rome today with its striking red brick ruins.

The hill, located just off the Colosseum, was the site of temples and homes of leading citizens during Rome's Republican era, which is traditionally dated from 509 B.C. to 27 B.C. It became the aristocratic quarter during the Roman Empire that followed, when new palaces were built on top of the older homes. The House of the Griffins is one of those earlier Republican-era homes, and was hidden to the world under-



Colosseum Archeological Park guide Valentina uses a head-mounted device to livestream a guided tour for the press of the newly-restored underground House of Griffins, dated between the II and I century B.C., on the Palatine Hill next to the Colosseum, in Rome, Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2026.
Associated Press

ground after the Emperor Domitian built his palace on top of it in the first century A.D.

Now for the first time, the general public can virtually visit the House of the Griffins and its newly restored frescoes, including the decora-

tion that gives the home its name: An arched lunette fresco featuring two griffins — the half-eagle, half-lion mythological creatures.

Visitors won't actually walk through the home's intimate rooms, which are only accessible via a peril-

ously steep staircase underground. Rather, visitors above ground will watch as a tour guide wearing a head-mounted smartphone descends into the domus and walks through its rooms, livestreaming the visit and narration.

The live, virtual tour serves multiple purposes: It allows visitors to "see" a domus that, because of its underground location, would otherwise be off-limits. And by limiting the number of people in its rooms, the livestreaming protects the delicate frescoes from too much humidity and carbon dioxide.

Project chief Federica Rinaldi said archaeologists don't know much about the family who lived there, but said they were clearly well-off. The level of decoration recalls some of the elegant homes of the era in Pompeii: The frescoes feature richly colored faux marble designs, and floor mosaics of three-dimensional cubes.

"Its location at the highest point of the hill, its distribution over several levels that take advantage of the slopes of the Palatine Hill itself, and its preservation make it today an almost textbook reference," she said. "It was certainly a domus of the highest standard." □



High priests celebrate Timket, the Ethiopian Epiphany, on the shore of lake Dembel, in Batu, Ethiopia, Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026.
Associated Press

By SAMUEL GETACHEW and AMANUEL GEBREMEDHIN BIRHANE

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Millions of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians gathered

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians celebrate Epiphany to mark baptism of Jesus

on Monday at celebrations for Epiphany, locally known as Timkat, which commemorates the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. In Batu, a town on the western shore of Lake Dambal (Hora-Dambal) in the Oromia Region, thousands of pilgrims entered the lake waters after priests blessed them, symbolically reenacting baptism and embracing the festival's themes of purification, renewal, and faith.

In the capital, Addis Ababa, many waited for the

tabots, which are symbols of the Ark of the Covenant meant to contain the 10 commandments and are used to consecrate churches. Tabots were ritually carried to nearby public spaces for overnight prayers before being returned to their home churches the next day, surrounded by millions of the faithful in spectacular displays of reverence. Similar celebrations were held across the country, including inside the 17th century Fasilides Fortress in Gondar, located in the

war-torn Amhara region. Timkat is seen by the faithful as an important religious holiday, nearly as significant as Easter and Christmas. It was inscribed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2019. "We are celebrating the baptism of Jesus Christ, and our hearts are filled with joy," said Bereket Adugna, 43, who traveled from Addis Ababa with his wife and two children to Batu. □

Nights of Culture, Music, and Entertainment at Paseo Herencia



(ORANJESTAD)—As the sun sets, Paseo Herencia comes alive with entertainment that celebrates Aruba's culture, music, and vibrant energy. The open-air plaza transforms into a lively hub where locals and visitors gather to experience the island's rhythm, sights, and flavors. Evenings at Paseo Herencia invite guests to slow down, connect, and enjoy a mix of music, dance, and immersive experiences in a relaxed, welcoming setting.

This month, we proudly celebrate Dia di Betico, a day honoring the life and legacy of Betico Croes, a key figure in Aruba's journey toward autonomy. A beloved traditional Aruban band will perform live on January 25th from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Known for their authentic rhythms and lively performances, Grupo di Betico brings a strong sense of cultural pride to the plaza, offering both visitors and residents a memorable evening filled with local heritage and island sounds.

Weekly programming ensures that every night offers something new. Cultural Wednesdays celebrate Aruba's musical heritage, starting with steelpan music at 7:00 pm and followed by a cultural dance show at 8:00 pm that

highlights traditional movements and storytelling. Saturdays in January are dedicated to Carnival Nights beginning at 8:00 pm, filling Paseo Herencia with dazzling costumes, lively music, and spirited performances that immerse guests in one of Aruba's most beloved celebrations. The plaza's entertainment continues with themed nightly water show at 7:30 pm, 8:30 pm, and 9:30 pm, creating a natural transition from live performances into the evening's activities.

For younger visitors, the carousel and kids' train provide joyful, memorable experiences that bring a touch of magic to the plaza. Thrill seekers can also enjoy the Airsoft attraction located behind The Lazy Turtle, ensuring that there is entertainment for all ages.

For those continuing the night, Paseo Herencia offers a variety of vibrant nightlife



experiences. Gusto Nightclub is known for high-energy DJ sets, VIP bottle service, and a daily happy hour from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The club brings together locals and visitors for a lively, unforgettable party atmosphere. Frenchie's Karaoke Bar provides a relaxed outdoor setting where guests can take the stage, sing, and perform while enjoying the support of friendly staff and fellow patrons. Flamingoes Bar offers a social all-ages experience with inventive cocktails, delicious snacks, and a spacious terrace ideal for groups, making it a top choice for music, conversation, and a lively bar vibe.

With stores open daily from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm, visitors can combine shopping, dining, and entertainment into one seamless visit. Parking at Paseo Herencia is complimentary for up to two hours when shopping, dining, or enjoying a movie, simply by presenting a purchase receipt to the parking cashier. Whether visiting for an evening show or staying late into the night, Paseo Herencia offers a complete island experience where music, culture, and entertainment come together to create memorable moments for all ages. □



Sandy and Coco of Luna Foundation Crowned as Miss and Mrs. Carnival 2026!



(Oranjestad)—On Sunday afternoon, a short ceremony by Luna Foundation took place during which its Miss and Mrs. Carnival were crowned. During the ceremony, dogs Sandy and Coco received the crowns for Miss and Mrs. Carnival, respectively.

Luna Foundation's queen selection featured several participants in both categories. These included the puppies Lady, Sandy, Nancy, Mathilda, Noelia, and Lily for Miss Carnival. In the Mrs. Carnival category, Coco, Alexis, Monalisa, and Cadushi participated.

Voting opened five days before the selection, during which Facebook users were asked to cast their votes by giving a "like" to their favorite dog.

All participants certainly gave a tremendous performance while walking the Carnival runway.

Congratulations to Sandy, Coco, and all the other beautiful participants! Congratulations to Luna Foundation! □

Photos courtesy of Luna Foundation.



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Casago Aruba: Redefining Island Stays with Full-Service Property Management



Casago Aruba was born from a shared passion for elevating the island's tourism experience. Built on a strong foundation of service, hospitality, and a keen eye for quality, the Casago team—backed by over 16 years of experience in the vacation rental and hospitality industry—is on a mission to redefine what luxury and convenience look like for travelers visiting Aruba.

But Casago is more than just a vacation rental platform. It is a **full-service property management company**, offering seamless experiences



for both guests and homeowners alike. While travelers benefit from handpicked accommodations and personalized service, homeowners gain a reliable partner dedicated to the care and performance of their property.

A Stay Tailored to You

Casago Aruba offers more than just stylish villas. Their curated portfolio includes a **wide variety of condos, homes, and villas** in different sizes to suit all types of travelers—from solo adventurers and couples to large families and groups. Every stay is backed by local expertise, with concierge support, 24/7 guest assistance, and an attention to detail that consistently exceeds expectations.

Whether you're here to relax on world-famous beaches, explore Aruba's cultural gems, or discover hidden corners of the island, Casago Aruba ensures your getaway is as smooth as it is memorable.

A Partner for Homeowners

Behind the scenes, Casago offers a robust suite of property management services designed to help homeowners



maximize rental income while minimizing stress. Services include:

- **Promotion** through Casago's professional booking platform and expert local marketing strategies
- **Complete management** of check-ins, guest communication, cleanings, landscaping, pool maintenance, and repairs
- **Transparent maintenance** reporting, real-time reservation tracking, and on-site security monitoring
- **Full handling** of tax filings for both local and state re-

quirements

- **Monthly property inspections** and full utility bill management
- **Strategic planning** to help homeowners increase profitability and keep their properties in top condition

This full-service model ensures that every home is maintained to the highest standard while giving property owners full peace of mind.

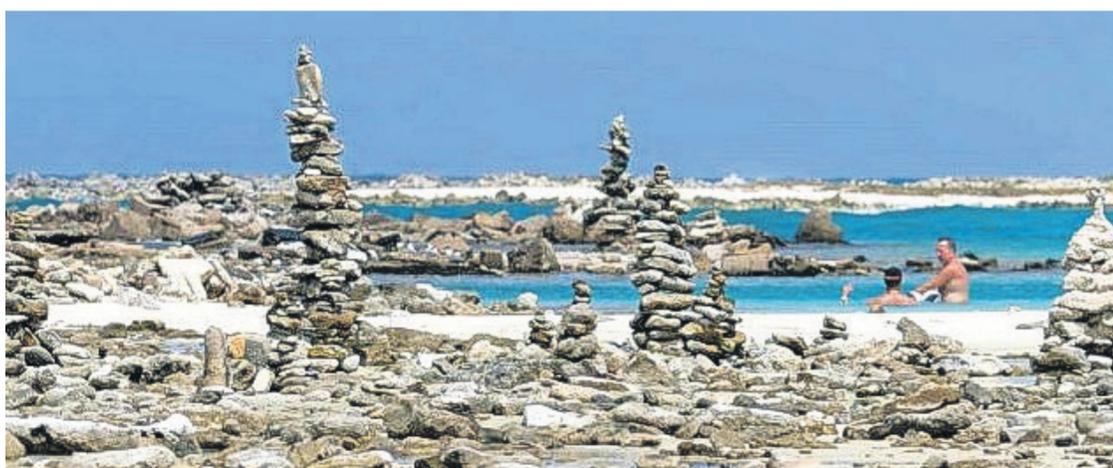
Rooted in Community and Sustainability

What truly sets Casago Aruba apart is their commitment to the local community and to sustainable practices. The team works closely with local businesses and artisans, promotes eco-conscious travel, and supports initiatives that contribute positively to the island's environment and economy.

As one of the fastest-growing vacation rental and property management companies on the island, Casago Aruba continues to expand its footprint—welcoming more travelers, partnering with more homeowners, and raising the standard of hospitality in Aruba. □

Rock stacking and its harmful effects

(Oranjestad)—The organization Aruba Birdlife Conservation has in the past raised concerns about the phenomenon of “rock stacking” in the area of **Baby Beach and warned about the dangers it poses, especially for children.**



As known, “rock stacking” is not illegal in Aruba, but its impact on nature is harmful as the stones form part of the natural habitat of small animal species living in Aruba's wilderness. Experts warn that “rock stacking” could even lead certain species to extinction.

In Aruba, much of the “rock stacking” also occurs near Arikok National Park. Although this activity is not illegal in Aruba, it may be time for park authorities to impose stricter regulations

on this activity.

Tourists often believe that the meaning behind this activity is making a wish, but they do not realize its negative impact.

Aruba Birdlife Conservation's post not only raises alarms about the activity but also now that this phenomenon has reached Baby Beach, some of the stacked stone towers are up to 1.7 meters high, which can be very dangerous, especially for children. □

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Game 3	Lucky 7	\$150
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Game 6	Postage Stamps	\$400
Game 7	Letter T	\$500
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Snakes of Aruba

BOA
(*Boa constrictor*)



CASCABEL
(*Crotalus unicolor*)



SANTANERO
(*Leptodeira bakeri*)



Arikok National Park is home to various unique plant and animal species such as Aruba's rare endemic rattlesnake *Crotalus unicolor*). This rattlesnake is locally known as the 'Cascabel'. But Aruba has two more snake species living on the island: the Santanero and the Boa.

Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol.

Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.



Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. This snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans. However, the venom can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please

do not harm this species.

Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly. Boas are a non-native species. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. □

Aruba's kite flying tradition

(Oranjestad)—Every year for King's Day, Arubans gather with friends and family to fly kites. Big or small, paper or plastic, blue skies fill up with these colorful flying contraptions, brightening our yearly celebration of the Dutch Monarch.

The tradition of flying kites starts at home in the weeks leading up to King's Day. These kites were traditionally made with things found in the nearby mondi* and in the kitchen at home. Using dried up cactus sticks for the frame, old news papers,

and glue made from flour, water and salt to dry faster (some people even use cornstarch slurry as glue), kids usually make their own kites with their friends, parents or other close family members. Tails are made from old bed sheets, ripped



and tied together to create a long string of fabric trailing behind the back end of the kite. To finish off the process, people used fish lines or thin rope to tie three corners of the kite together. Another long string of rope is tied in the knotted center and bundled up, used to steer the kite as it flies in the air. Decorating the kite was especially important, and children would use paint to create their own designs—the more colorful, the better!

People usually fly their kites in big open fields, like empty soccer and baseball fields found all around the island around noon, when the sun is at its brightest. In the past few years, kite flying has become a sport in which groups of people would battle against each other to see whose kite is the biggest, the prettiest, and whose could fly flawlessly and longer in the air.

*Mondi: Aruban woods. □

Lorraine and Charles: “Aruba to us is family coming together”

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Lorraine Gutowicz and Charles Weinberger from Philadelphia, PA, USA.

They wrote to us saying: “Aruba to us is family coming together, our children and grandchildren, enjoying the warmth and beauty of this magical island with those we hold most dear.”

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □



Aruba: the legend behind its name

(Oranjestad)—Most folkloric tales and legends in Aruba revolve around our indigenous ancestors, who came from mainland Venezuela, and discovered the island and made it into their new home. This particular legend tells the story of the birth of the Aruba name.

The legend follows the life of Arua, an indigenous Cacique originally from Aroa in the Falcon state in Venezuela in the year 50 AD. Arua had a son around the year 70 AD with his wife Shira, who they named Corobori. When Corobori was old enough, he joined his father on the usual boat trip to the islands of Curaçao and Bonaire to gather salt.

On their way back to Mainland Venezuela, they were caught up in a heavy rain storm—a side effect from a passing, but far away, hurricane. Of course, because of the lack of motors and sail, their boat was left in the mercy of the heavy winds. After a while, the storm started to pass, and the clouds began to clear up. Finally able to see around them, the Cacique spotted land approximately an hour away. So, they started to row in that direction until they reached the coast.

Once they arrived on what they thought was Venezuela, they decided to stay the night and fix their kayak. The next morning, the Cacique ordered his son and a few warriors to go find any sign of population in the area: "Corobori," Arua



said. "Don't come back without news. It's in your hands how long we stay here till we find our family. So, if you need to take a week to gather information, we will wait for you."

"Don't worry," Corobori replied. "As soon as we have any information, we will let you know." Armed with arrows and spears, backpacks filled with food and water containers, they set off. They climbed several small hills, but no sign of a village. They crossed different dry riverbeds, but no sign of anything. When the sun finally descended, they found themselves near a fairly tall hill and decided to climb it for a better view of a village. This hill was called Pan Dushi or Orcuyo, which today we call Hooiberg.

The next morning, they could clearly see that they have landed on an island, but an unfamiliar one at that. When Corobori went back to where his father

was waiting, he told him the news: "Father Arua, you have just discovered an island, but it is not Curaçao or Bonaire. Far in the south, we saw the big mountains of our homeland Venezuela, which we could have never seen on the other island. This leads us to believe we are on a new island. But that's not all. When the sun came up, we saw in the distance a glowing plain, which we think may be salt."

The Cacique was pleased to hear of his son's findings. He decided to stay a couple days on the newly-discovered island in search for salt. The next morning they ascended Hooiberg again and stayed to see if they could find nearby smoke, indicating an inhabitant village. But they found nothing. So they went back to their initial arrival settlement, now known as Santo Largo in Savaneta. The next morning they hiked along the Spaans Lagoen near

the Mangel Halto Beach and reached the area of Bushiri. There, they boarded their kayaks and heading to what we know now as Malmok, where they found rocks of salt. After a couple days of exploring the island and gathering some salt rocks, they left for Venezuela, where they were reunited with their families.

Throughout the year, they travelled back and forth to Aruba, collecting salt. After a while they settled on the island, generations of families living along the coast. Corobori was the first indigenous inhabitant in our history to explore the entirety of the island.

Arua, after decades as the leader of his tribe, spent his last days on the island. Having reached 80 years old, he called for his family on his death bed. In his hammock, he said: "My children, many years have passed, and I've asked my warrior to bring me back to

the island so I can laid to rest. The God of living has given me the gift of life to see my son, grandchildren and great grandchildren. But now he is calling me home. Corobori, my torch is now passed to you. Guide our people, and be the leader you were always meant to become. If one day you leave my island, do not forget that it is also yours. This is my last wish: When I die, bury me in our maize plantation."

And so when the Cacique passed away, his wishes were granted and he was laid to rest in the area we now know as the Paradera Cemetery. Where he used to live, they built the Paradera Church.

And that is the tale of what inspired the Aruba name. In the generations that lived or travelled back and forth to the island, there were many familiar names*, like Guadiriki, a warrior who was there when the island got discovered and his son, whom he called Huliba; Corobori and his children, Corodori, Camacuri and Turibana, Masiduri; and Malmok, the 13-year-old boy who alerted the Cacique when the Caribes attacked.

Familiar names: all these names are familiar to Arubans, as these are the names of places and plants on the island. □

Source: Un storia di e Indjan Arua (A story of the Indian Arua) by Adolf (Dufi) Kock.

Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!

(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.

The bridge was formed during thousands of years, cut and crafted by the wild waves that crash into the coral stone walls of the coast. Before its collapse, this bridge measured 30 meters in length and 7 meters in height, making it the biggest natural bridge in the Caribbean at the time. For many years, this site was also a frequently visited beach, as the bridge had a

small opening through which the water would flow into the tiny beach.

Unfortunately in 2005, the bridge collapsed, and the little beach dried up. Despite this, this site remained a tourist attraction, with many visitors walking along the coral cliffs of the bridge to see the spectacular view of the northern coastline and the Caribbean Sea. Visitors can also still visit the souvenir shop on the left of the bridge entrance.

While the natural bridge no longer is functional, there is now a smaller natural bridge very close. This bridge is often called the "Baby Bridge" or "Daughter Bridge". □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

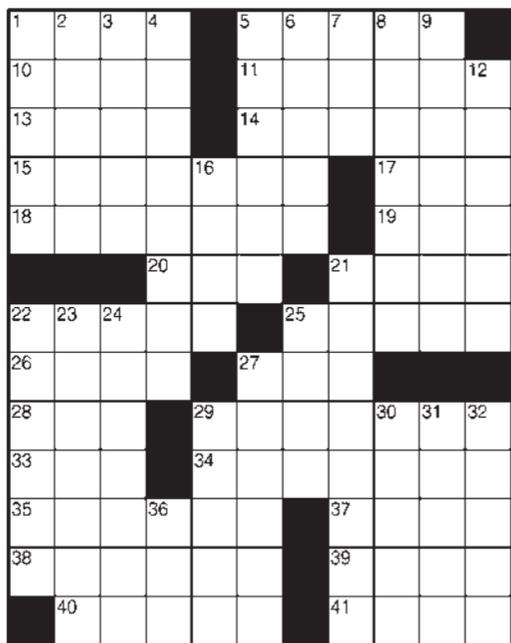


ACROSS

- 38 Shirt
- 1 Drove too fast
- 5 Party givers
- 10 Make roads
- 11 Fly high
- 13 Falco of TV
- 14 Remote, informally
- 15 Candy bar cover
- 17 Memo- rable time
- 18 Kind of overload
- 19 Treat rudely, in slang
- 20 Print units
- 21 Portion (out)
- 22 Satchel part
- 25 Printer need
- 26 Metal sources
- 27 Cut, as hay
- 28 Buddy
- 29 Broadcast ender
- 33 Yale rooter
- 34 Kit Carson, for one
- 35 Drake or Dre
- 37 Mother of Castor and Pollux

DOWN

- 1 Gushes forth
- 2 San Diego player
- 3 French spa city
- 4 Homes for biolumi- nescent fish
- 5 Tormen- tors of new recruits
- 6 Pistil part
- 7 Small drink
- 8 Attached, in a way
- 9 Like surgical tools
- 12 Pencil part
- 16 Pageantry
- 21 De- empha- size
- 22 Suzanne of "Three's Company"
- 23 Refrain bit
- 24 Chef's secrets
- 25 Forum attire
- 27 Helen of "The Queen"
- 29 Carell of movies
- 30 Met music
- 31 Disgusted
- 32 College houses
- 36 Vitality



1-30

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-30

CRYPTOQUOTE

Q E G ' T D K C M A D F , Q E G L

W M R W J D N N . M C H C U D F M ,

A M S D H Q K C X W D L P D K E L D H D .

— "L D X G L J E K X W D U D F M"

Cryptoquote: IT'S BETTER TO SEE SOMETHING ONCE THAN TO HEAR ABOUT IT A THOUSAND TIMES. — ASIAN PROVERB

Cruise ship Schedule: Jan. 13 - 18 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	19	CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	20	MS RENAISSANCE	09.00	18.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00	22.00	C	1
WED	21	QUEEN VICTORIA	08.00	****	B	1
		ISLAND PRINCESS	08.00	17.00	C	1
		SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	22	QUEEN VICTORIA - Dept.	****	17.00	B	-
		MAJESTIC PRINCESS	07.00	16.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL CONQUEST	08.00	17.00	I	1
FRI	23	BRILLIANT LADY	10.00	19.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN STAR	11.00	20.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

5			3	6		1	2	7
			9	5		8	6	
1	6				4		3	
	9	7			3			
	3		4	9	6	7		
8	5		1	7	2			
4				3	5	6		
9					7	5		
		5			9		8	1

Difficulty: ★★

1/20

Answer to previous puzzle

8	1	3	6	2	7	4	5	9
5	6	7	9	3	4	1	8	2
2	4	9	8	5	1	6	3	7
9	3	1	5	4	8	2	7	6
7	2	8	1	6	9	5	4	3
4	5	6	2	7	3	8	9	1
1	7	5	4	9	6	3	2	8
6	9	2	3	8	5	7	1	4
3	8	4	7	1	2	9	6	5

Difficulty: ★

1/19

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Tylenol pain-relief pills are shown in La Habra, Calif., Sept. 23, 2025. Associated Press

New research bolsters evidence that Tylenol doesn't raise the risk of autism despite Trump's claims

By LAURA UNGAR
AP Medical Writer

A new review of studies has found that taking Tylenol during pregnancy doesn't increase the risk of autism, ADHD or intellectual disabilities adding to the growing body of research refuting claims made by the Trump administration. President Donald Trump last year promoted unproven ties between the painkiller and autism, telling pregnant women: "Don't take Tylenol."

The latest research review, published Friday in The Lancet Obstetrics, Gynecology & Women's Health, looked at 43 studies and concluded that the most

rigorous ones, such as those that compare siblings, provide strong evidence that taking the drug commonly known as paracetamol outside of the U.S. does not cause autism, ADHD or intellectual disabilities. It's "safe to use in pregnancy," said lead author Dr. Asma Khalil. "It remains ... the first line of treatment that we would recommend if the pregnant woman has pain or fever." □

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With pool
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Divi Phoenix

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Penthouse 2 BR WK # 1 room # 672
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Price :\$40,000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

Condo Project

Palm beach
Property land 4433m2
42 Appartments
39 x 88m2 and 3 x 72m2
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3 BR 3 1/2 bath
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220070

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Call:011-297-630-1307
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Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:

Sta. Anna: Tel.586 8181

San Nicolas:

Seroe Preto:Tel.584 4833

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank	Tel. 588 0002
FAVI- Visually Impaired	Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous	Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous	Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia Relacional	Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes	Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention	Tel. 582 4433
Quota Club	Tel. 525 2672

General Info

Phone Directory Tel. 118

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Świątek overcomes rust to advance in Australian Open. Djokovic racks up more records

By JOHN PYE

AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)

— Iga Świątek knows she has plenty to work on in her bid for a first Australian Open title and a career Grand Slam.

The No. 2-ranked Świątek never got comfortable in a 7-6 (5), 6-3 win over No. 130-ranked Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue in the first-round on Monday night.

Novak Djokovic already has a record 10 titles in Australia among his 24 major championships, and just keeps racking up the records.

He equaled two all-time tennis marks by starting his 21st Australian Open and his 81st Grand Slam tournament, and he added another milestone in the last night match Monday with his 100th win at Melbourne Park.

The 38-year-old Djokovic had a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 first-round win over Pedro Martinez to



Novak Djokovic of Serbia plays a forehand return to Pedro Martinez of Spain during their first round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Jan. 19, 2026.

become the first man to win 100 or more matches at three Grand Slam tournaments.

"I like the sound of it," he said. "Centurion is pretty nice."

Świątek won Wimbledon last year to go with her four French Open titles and her victory at the 2022 U.S.

Open, leaving the Australian Open as the only major missing from her collection. She has twice reached the semifinals.

Yuan was swinging freely and rifling winners as she took a 5-3 lead, and Świątek had to switch things up.

"I was a bit rusty at the be-

ginning," she said. "Many ups and downs, but overall I have some stuff to work on. I'll just focus on that."

From 5-3 down in the first, she held a service game at love to force Yuan to serve for the set. Świątek broke back to level and then, in the tiebreaker, she remained composed and

Associated Press

converted on her second set point.

"I started a bit tight. I needed to get my legs moving. Go after my shots. Be brave with the decisions," she said of the change up. "It's not hard to win matches when everything is going well. Today it wasn't, but I was able to win."

Świątek had a disrupted preparation for the year's first major, losing two singles matches at the United Cup but helping Poland win the title for the first time.

One of those losses was to No. 3 Coco Gauff, who also had some struggles before beating Kamilla Rakhimova 6-2, 6-3 in the opening match on Rod Laver Arena on Day 2.

Gauff has won two Grand Slam titles but, like Świątek, has never gone past the semifinals at Melbourne Park.

She had six double-faults in the first set against Rakhimova, but found her range in the second. It's not a new issue she had a tour-high 431 double-faults last year but is something Gauff is working on. □



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Improved pass rush helps Falcons defensive coordinator Ulbrich stay on new coach Stefanski's staff

By CHARLES ODUM

AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Atlanta Falcons defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich has been retained on new coach

Kevin Stefanski's staff, the team announced Monday. The decision to keep Ulbrich came two days after Stefanski was named as the replacement for fired

coach Raheem Morris. Ulbrich carried the endorsement of Falcons owner Arthur Blank, who had said when Morris and general manager Terry Fontenot were fired that he would recommend but not mandate the new coach keep the defensive coordinator. Morris was fired following an 8-9 finish in his second season despite improvements on defense, including the pass rush led by rookie first-round picks James Pearce Jr. and Jalon Walker and second-year player Brandon Dorlus. In Ulbrich's first season as defensive coordinator, the Falcons set a team record with 57 sacks, one year after finishing next-to-last in the league with 31.

Pearce finished with 10 1/2 sacks, the most by a

Falcons player since Vic Beasley had 15 1/2 in 2016. The 2025 draft class also included safety Xavier Watts, who had five interceptions. Another safety, Jessie Bates III, was one of Atlanta's four players named All-Pros in 2025. Bijan Robinson was named a first-team running back and second-team all-purpose player. Tight end Kyle Pitts Sr., right guard Chris Lindstrom and Bates earned second-team honors.

The decision to retain Ulbrich was the first staff decision announced following Stefanski's hiring on Saturday night, less than two weeks after he was fired by the Cleveland Browns. Stefanski is expected to bring in a new offensive coordinator and special teams coach. □



Atlanta Falcons defensive coordinator Jeff Ulbrich looks on before an NFL football game between the Carolina Panthers and the Atlanta Falcons on Sunday, Sep. 21, 2025, in Charlotte, N.C.

Associated Press

Bills fire coach Sean McDermott after 9 seasons of falling short of reaching the Super Bowl

By **JOHN WAWROW**
AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)

— The Buffalo Bills fired coach Sean McDermott on Monday after the team again failed to reach the Super Bowl in his nine seasons.

The move came two days after the Bills were eliminated in a heart-wrenching 33-30 overtime loss at Denver in the divisional round of the playoffs.

“Sean helped change the mindset of this organization and was instrumental in the Bills becoming a perennial playoff team,” owner Terry Pegula said. “But I feel we are in need of a new structure within our leadership to give this organization the best opportunity to take our team to the next level.” As part of the new structure, Pegula announced he was promoting general manager Brandon Beane to president of football operations. Beane, who also is completing his ninth season in Buffalo, will oversee the coaching search.

The Bills went 12-5 in the regular season and saw their five-year run atop the AFC East end, finishing second behind the New England Patriots. Buffalo be-



Buffalo Bills head coach Sean McDermott leaves the field after an NFL divisional round playoff football game against the Denver Broncos, Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024, in Denver.

Associated Press

came the NFL's first team to win a playoff round in six consecutive years but not reach the Super Bowl.

McDermott's firing is the latest in what's become a seismic shift in the NFL's coaching ranks this offseason. He became the 10th head coach to lose his job, joining a respected group that includes Baltimore's John Harbaugh and Pittsburgh's Mike Tomlin. Harbaugh has

since been hired by the New York Giants.

The 51-year-old McDermott finished with a 98-50 regular-season record and was 8-8 in the playoffs, ranking second on the team list in wins behind Hall of Fame coach Marv Levy (112-70, 11-8). Levy did so over 11 seasons during a tenure that included the Jim Kelly-led team reaching and losing four straight Super

Bowls in the early 1990s.

McDermott's failure to reach the Super Bowl with Josh Allen at quarterback became his undoing. Though Allen has broken many of Kelly's passing and scoring records, the Bills have advanced to the AFC championship game just twice and lost both times to Kansas City during a team-record seven-year playoff run.

The loss Saturday to the Broncos was a crushing blow, with Allen nearly inconsolable at the post-game podium, blaming himself for an outing in which he threw two interceptions and lost two fumbles.

McDermott rallied to Allen's defense, saying the loss wasn't on the quarterback. And then the usually calm coach showed his emotions when questioning the officials' ruling on Allen's second interception, which ended Buffalo's lone possession in overtime.

Receiver Brandin Cooks came down with Allen's deep pass but had it wrestled out of his hands by Ja'Quan McMillian. Officials ruled McMillian had the ball before Cooks was down by contact, and Denver was awarded the turnover at its 20.

McDermott, who was a member of the NFL's competition committee overseeing rules, believed Cooks came down with the ball, and he also was dismayed over why officials took little time to review the play.

“I'm standing up for Buffalo, damn it. I'm standing up for us,” McDermott said. □

Green Day to open 60th Super Bowl with anniversary ceremony celebrating generations of MVPs

By **JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr.**
AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP)

— The NFL is marking the 60th anniversary of the Super Bowl with a hometown opening act.

Green Day will kick off the big game with an opening ceremony Feb. 8 at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, the league announced Sunday. The performance will celebrate six decades of the championship's history, with the band helping usher generations of Super Bowl MVPs onto the field.

The trio, who formed in the East Bay subregion of the San Francisco Bay Area

and are made up of Billie Joe Armstrong, Mike Dirnt and Tré Cool, are expected to perform a selection of their best-known anthems as part of the tribute.

“We are super hyped to open Super Bowl 60 right in our backyard!” lead singer Armstrong said. “We are honored to welcome the MVPs who've shaped the game and open the night for fans all over the world. Let's have fun! Let's get loud!”

The ceremony airs live at 3 p.m. Pacific on NBC, Telemundo, Peacock and Universo.

“Celebrating 60 years of

Super Bowl history with Green Day as a hometown band, while honoring the NFL legends who've helped define this sport, is an incredibly powerful way to kick off Super Bowl LX,” said Tim Tubito, the league's senior director of event and game presentation. “As we work alongside NBC Sports for this opening ceremony, we look forward to creating a collective celebration for fans in the stadium and around the world.”

The opening ceremony will take place ahead of the pregame entertainment, in which Charlie Puth is to perform the national an-

them, Brandi Carlile will sing “America the Beautiful” and Coco Jones will

deliver “Lift Every Voice and Sing.” □



Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day performs during the first weekend of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival at the Empire Polo Club on Saturday, April 12, 2025, in Indio, Calif.

Associated Press

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Tkachuk is back for the Panthers. Will it be enough to spark a run to the playoffs?

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
 AP Sports Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP)

— Matthew Tkachuk is back with the Florida Panthers, ready to help the back-to-back Stanley Cup champions try to return to the playoffs and start tuning up to play for USA Hockey at next month's Milan Cortina Olympics.

Tkachuk — who had surgery to repair a torn adductor and sports hernia over the summer, about two months after helping the Panthers win their second straight Stanley Cup — went through morning skate on Monday and was added to the lineup for Florida's game against San Jose that night.

"I'm feeling great. Just so excited to be back," Tkachuk said. "It was a little over five months since the surgery, so just chomping at the bit to come back, really. And, yeah, happy that the day is finally here. I wasn't coming back until I was feeling 100%. I came back not 100% one time, and that's only a playoff



Florida Panthers' Matthew Tkachuk shows fans the team's 2025 Stanley Cup ring before placing it inside the display at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, Canada, on Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2025.

Associated Press

thing, so I'm happy with the whole recovery process." Tkachuk had missed nearly a full year — 72 games over 11 1/2 months of regular-season hockey; he couldn't play in the final 25 games last season after getting hurt in the 4 Nations Face-Off and has missed the first

47 games of this season. He comes back with 35 games remaining in Florida's season and the Panthers entering Monday four points out of the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference. "He's ready to play," said Panthers coach Paul Mau-

rice, adding that he's not going to over-use Tkachuk right out of the gate. "We're happy to have him back, for sure." Florida has stayed in the race despite having Tkachuk, Aleksander Barkov and Tomas Nosek yet to play this season because of

injuries and a slew of other players filling the injured list. Dmitry Kulikov, Jonah Gadjovich and Cole Schwindt have all missed most of the season; of late, stand-outs Seth Jones and Brad Marchand — who are both set to be Olympians, Jones for the U.S. and Marchand for Canada — have missed time as well.

"It's seven, eight guys that at some point have gone down — at the same time, too, which is never easy," Tkachuk said. "They've done a great job staying in the fight. With that being said, we have to go on a run here. We've got to get back in a playoff spot. We're not happy with being out of the playoffs, but they have done an amazing job of staying in the fight, so very proud of them for that." The Panthers went 38-30-4 in those last 72 regular-season games that Tkachuk missed, meaning they won barely more than 50% of the time. But they went 16-7 in last year's playoffs, with Tkachuk playing in all 23 of those contests. □



Winnipeg Jets' Jonathan Toews (19) tries to tip the puck past Toronto Maple Leafs goaltender Dennis Hildeby, right, during second-period NHL hockey game action in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026.

Associated Press

Jonathan Toews plays first game in Chicago since joining Winnipeg Jets

By **JAY COHEN**
 AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Jonathan Toews put his Chicago return on his calendar after he signed with his hometown Winnipeg Jets. And then it slipped away as the day approached.

"I was kind of focusing on the next game, and it kind of sneaks up on you. So here we are," he said.

Here we are, indeed.

Toews was back in Chicago on Monday for his first game in his first NHL home since he signed with Winnipeg on July 1. The 37-year-old center spent his first 15 seasons with the Blackhawks, winning three Stanley

Cup titles.

"It's a weird situation. You don't get games like this all the time, obviously," Toews said. "But just trying to walk that line between, at the end of the day, you want to go out there and play well, and you want to win the game, so you got to keep some level of focus and not get too distracted with all the things going on around you."

Toews was selected by Chicago with the No. 3 pick in the 2006 draft, one of the first big moments in the team's rise to the top of the NHL. He was just 20 years old when he became the 34th captain in team history in July 2008. □