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Why some women choose Galentines over Valentines. And how they might celebrate

By ALICIA RANCILIO

Associated Press

Christie O'Sullivan of Trinity, Florida, has spent 21 Valentine's Days with her husband, but her favorite celebration was one spent with a girlfriend before she got married.

They took the day off work, got massages, and went out for cocktails and a fancy dinner.

"For me, it was 10 out of 10. That whole day was intentional," said O'Sullivan. She remembers it as empowering "on a day that's usually filled with pressure to be in a relationship, or sadness because I wasn't currently in one."

Galentine's Day became a pop culture phenomenon with a 2010 episode



Anastasia Richman, from left, Chela Pappaccioli, Nova Brown and Maria Suppa pose at a Galentine's Day party hosted by Pappaccioli in Franklin Lakes, N.J. on Feb. 16, 2025.

Associated Press

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of the TV comedy "Parks and Recreation" that celebrated female friendships around Valentine's Day. Amy Poehler's character, Leslie Knope, gathered her gal pals on Feb. 13.

"What's Galentine's Day? Oh, it's only the best day of the year," said Knope.

Honoring female friendships can happen any day of the year, of course. Whether on Feb. 13 or another day, here are some ways to create a fun-filled experience:

Making it a party

Chela Pappaccioli of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, has been hosting a Galentine's Day bash at her home for the last three years. She has a bartender and a DJ hired, and this year invited 45 of her nearest and dearest. So far, she has 34 confirmations, and is assembling gift bags for her guests to take home. There are no men allowed "unless the bartender happens to be male."

The event may be extravagant, but Pappaccioli says it's worth it. "It's an escape to just be with your girls, be silly, do something fun and just focus on the friendships you've created and enjoying each other's company," she says.

Learning how to do some-

thing new

Liz Momblanco of Berkley, Michigan, who describes herself as a "serial hobbyist," invites her friends to take classes like cookie and cake decorating, calligraphy and stained glass. "I enjoy learning something new and having a shared experience," said Momblanco, who has attended day retreats for women that offer activities like floral arranging, yoga or a cold plunge.

Marney Wolf, who runs the retreat company Luna Wolf, says providing an opportunity for art and creativity builds community.

"It bonds you, whether it's the smallest thing or really deep. You watch these grown women turn into almost like a childlike kindergarten response like, 'Oh my gosh! Good job! You're so talented!' That little lift is the easiest thing to do," she said.

Filling a Valentine's void

Wolf takes care to schedule Galentine's-themed retreats near Valentine's Day because some women don't have someone to spend Feb. 14 with.

"I know it can be a really lonely time for people and I think some take it for granted," she says.

Pappaccioli said a couple of divorced friends come to her party, and "even if you're married it can be depressing because your husband may not be doing what you want or your boyfriend may not support you in the way you want," she says.

"It's nice to know that you don't need that. You can still celebrate the holiday, but turn it around a little bit and celebrate the relationships you want to."

Creating different kinds of bonds

Galentine's Day get-togethers can forge new friendships. And spending quality time with a friend provides an opportunity to put the phone away, avoid distractions and build memories. □

Movie Review: 'Crime 101' is a middle of the road L.A. heist movie, with 'Heat' around the corner

By JAKE COYLE

AP Film Writer

Bart Layton's "Crime 101" is a "Heat" pastiche that, even if it falls well shy of its Michael Mann blueprint, has some basic appeal going for it. Los Angeles crime movies are fun. Chris Hemsworth looks good in a suit. And we're all suckers for savvy criminals with good escape routes.

Just as Robert De Niro's Neil McCauley strategized along L.A.'s asphalt arteries in "Heat," Mike Davis (Hemsworth) works exclusively up and down the 101 freeway. Near its exit ramps, he hits high-value targets with insider information. He works stealthily and alone, slipping out of surveillance camera sight in time to stash his window-tinted car in a garage.

And like McCauley in "Heat," there's a detective on his trail. Detective Lou Lubesnick (Mark Ruffalo) has deduced a pattern in Mike's heists. Not many in the department, though, have much interest in his theories. His boss is pushing clearance rates, and his partner (Corey Hawkins)



is beginning to realize Lou may be detrimental to his career ambitions.

If any of this sounds like familiar territory, there's more. Mike also has a budding romance with a woman (a vibrant Monica Barbaro) who doesn't know his profession. Lurking on the outside is a dangerously reckless thief (a typically scuzzy Barry Keoghan) who doesn't

have Davis' panache. Oh, and Mike tells his sole contact (Nick Nolte) he'll do just one more job and then he's gone for good.

So, yes, "Crime 101" can feel a little like an introductory course to the heist movie. But those making out their syllabi would be better sticking with the OG standbys ("The Asphalt Jun-

gle," "Rififi") and the more muscular modern classics ("Heat," "Inside Man," "Logan Lucky") than this stylish but hollow iteration.

"Crime 101," adapted by Layton from Don Winslow's novella, isn't trying to recreate the heist-movie wheel. It's a solid if trope-heavy throwback that leans into genre clichés with an expansive, character-first ap-

proach. But even with the aid of a good ensemble cast, "Crime 101" ends up lacking in both depth of character and set-piece spectacle, leaving it stuck in the middle of the road.

In both documentaries ("The Impostor," "The Deepest Breath") and fiction films ("American Animals"), Layton has evidenced an abiding fondness for the heist movie. His passion for the genre is self-evident from the start in "Crime 101," just as is the benefit of cinematographer Erik Wilson, who gives the movie a cool sheen. In the opening credits, as Mike dresses for a job, he brushes off dead skin and the particles float softly in the morning light like falling snow.

But "Crime 101" also has a Big Theme to announce at the start. Over the opening montage a disembodied voice over sounds with the encouragement that all is attainable: "Today is a beautiful day of opportunity." As "Crime 101" proceeds, all of its central characters are in some way wrestling with their need, or desire, for more. □

Michael Douglas announces 'raw' memoir for October release

By HILLEL ITALIE
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Oscar-winner Michael Douglas will have a memoir out this fall, a "raw, sweeping" account he says will illuminate his storied personal and professional lives. "After being asked for many years, I've finally decided it's time to tell my story on my own terms," Douglas said in a statement released Wednesday through Grand Central Publishing, which has set an Oct. 6 release date. "Not the highlight reel, not the version shaped by headlines or box office numbers, but the real one. I've lived a life that unfolded in public while being deeply private at the same time, and there's a difference. This is about where I came from, what I fought

against, and what I chose for myself. Fame can blur the truth; this is my attempt to bring it back into focus."

Douglas' book, written in collaboration with Michael Fleming, is currently untitled. Financial terms were not disclosed; Douglas was represented by Shane Salerno of the Story Factory.

The 81-year-old actor has been on screen, and in the news, for decades. The son of Hollywood giant Kirk Douglas, he broke through in the 1970s in the hit TV series "The Streets of San Francisco" and went on to star in such cultural touchstones as "Fatal Attraction," "Wall Street" and "Basic Instinct." He also produced the Oscar-winning "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," a project

that Douglas' father had longed to take on himself. Michael Douglas has survived cancer and substance abuse and otherwise fought to set himself apart from the elder Douglas. His marriage in November 2000 to fellow actor Catherine Zeta-Jones, more than 20 years his junior, was initially met with doubts that their union would last.

"For the first time, Douglas is ready to tell the unfiltered story of his life in a raw, career-sweeping memoir that traces his journey from his father, Kirk Douglas' shadow to his own stardom," Grand Central's announcement reads in part.

Along with baring his demons and disappointments, Douglas "shares

his triumphs: his victorious fight against stage-four cancer and his enduring 25-year marriage to Catherine Zeta-Jones, which has proved skeptics wrong and become one of Hollywood's most enduring love stories," Grand Central announced.

Beyond his Academy Awards for acting in "Wall Street" and producing "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," Douglas has won five Golden Globes, a Primetime Emmy and an AFI Lifetime Achievement Award. □



Michael Douglas appears at the 65th Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles on Sept. 22, 2013.

Associated Press

What if just 1 in 10 people changed how they eat, drive, heat or shop?

By AYA DIAB

Associated Press

Climate change is often viewed as an issue that's too big for individual action to matter. But calculations show that when personal choices add up, the impact can be significant.

The Associated Press looked at four everyday behaviors in the U.S. ranging from food and transportation to home energy and clothing. The question was then posed: What if just one in 10 Americans who currently eat beef, drive gasoline cars, heat their homes with natural gas or buy new clothes changed each of those habits?

To find out, the AP gathered data from federal agencies and other sources on each habit, then calculated how much emissions would be reduced if one out of every 10 users made a switch. The answer is tens, and in some cases hundreds, of billions of pounds of carbon pollution avoided each year.

Food: Swapping beef for chicken

Beef is one of the most carbon-intensive foods in the global food system because cattle emit methane and require vast amounts of land and feed, creating large amounts of climate pollution. Producing beef generates greenhouse gas emissions several times higher than chicken.

The recommended serving



Vehicles drive along a highway July 30, 2025, in Cincinnati.

size of meat in the U.S. is 3 ounces (85 grams), according to the American Heart Association. Swapping one serving of beef that size for chicken once a week would cut about 10 pounds (4.54 kilograms) of carbon dioxide. Over 52 weeks in a year, that would equal a reduction of about 525 pounds (238 kilograms) of carbon dioxide per person per year.

About 74% of Americans eat beef at least once a week, according to a 2023 survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. If one out of every 10 of them or about 25 million people swapped just one beef meal a week for

chicken, emissions would fall by about 13 billion pounds (roughly 6 million metric tons) of carbon dioxide each year. That change is roughly comparable to the annual emissions from nearly 1.3 million gasoline cars.

"Beef is a commonly consumed item that has one of the largest carbon footprints per pound," said Dave Gustafson, project director at Agriculture & Food Systems Institute. "It is probably one of the largest individual choices that people make with regard to what they eat that has a direct impact on personal carbon footprint."

Transportation: Gas cars to electric vehicles

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, transportation is one of the largest sources of direct greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., and personal vehicles account for a major share of that total. Transportation accounts for 28% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by economic sector.

The EPA says the average U.S. motorist drives 11,500 miles (18,507 kilometers) per year. The average gas powered car emits 400 grams (14 ounces) of carbon dioxide per mile, compared with about 110 grams (3.9 ounces) of carbon dioxide per mile for an electric vehicle.

Associated Press

Driving an electric vehicle instead of a gas car cuts roughly 7,400 pounds (3,357 kilograms) of carbon dioxide per person annually, even after accounting for emissions from electricity generation. If a number of Americans equal to 1 in 10 licensed drivers or 23.77 million people made that switch, the emissions savings would add up to roughly 175 billion pounds (roughly 79 million metric tons) of carbon dioxide every year, nearly 1.25% of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

"If a large percentage of people changed a little bit of their travel, then all of a sudden the benefits are huge," said Dillon Fitch-Polse, a professional researcher and co-director of Bicycling Plus Research Collaborative at the University of California, Davis.

Energy: Heating homes differently

At home, heating is often an invisible source of fossil fuel use. About 60 million U.S. households rely on utility natural gas furnaces, which burn fuel directly inside the home, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Replacing a gas furnace with an electric heat pump, which moves heat instead of generating it through combustion, cuts about 1,830 pounds (830 kilograms) of carbon dioxide per household per year. □



U.S. singer Britney Spears arrives for the premiere of Sony Pictures' "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California on July 22, 2019.

New York, United States

U.S. singer Britney Spears has become the latest musician to sell the rights to her catalog that includes

hits like "...Baby One More Time" and "Oops!...I Did It Again," US media reported Tuesday.

The deal is believed to be

Britney Spears sells rights to her music catalog: US media

worth around \$200 million, according to sources cited by celebrity site TMZ, though it said the exact amount is not detailed in legal documents.

That sum would be comparable to the sale of Canadian singer Justin Bieber's catalog in 2023.

Spears, 44, joins a growing list of artists who have sold their music rights in recent years including Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan, as well as Shakira and KISS.

US media reported that the

rights were bought by music publisher Primary Wave, whose portfolio includes the works of Whitney Houston, Bob Marley, Prince and others.

Owners of a song's publishing rights receive payment for every broadcast, album sale or use in advertising and films.

The growing music rights market allows artists to monetize their catalogs, which are attractive long-term assets for investors in the streaming era.

Major labels like Sony, Universal and Warner have also expanded in this line of business, alongside specialist investors Recognition Music Group and Concord Music Publishing.

Spears shot to fame in the late 1990s but has largely stepped back from the music scene in recent years. In 2021, a US court terminated a 13-year conservatorship that had allowed Spears's father to control her finances -- an arrangement the singer had described as abusive. □

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Study finds climate change set the stage for devastating wildfires in Argentina and Chile

By ISABEL DEBRE

Associated Press

Buenos Aires, Argentina (AP) — Human-caused climate change had an important impact on the recent ferocious wildfires that engulfed parts of Chile and Argentina's Patagonia region, making the extremely high-risk conditions that led to widespread burning up to three times more likely than in a world without global warming, a team of researchers warned on Wednesday.

The hot, dry and gusty weather that fed last month's deadly wildfires in central and southern Chile was made around 200% more likely by human-made greenhouse gas emissions while the high-fire-risk conditions that fueled the blazes still racing through southern Argentina were made 150% more likely, according to World Weather Attribution, a scientific initiative that investigates extreme weather events soon after they happen.

That probability will only increase, the experts added, as humans continue to blanket the planet with heat-trapping gases.

"Overall, we're confident in saying that the main driver of this increased fire risk is human-caused warming," Clair Barnes, a research associate with World Weather Attribution, told reporters in a briefing. "These trends are projected to continue in the future as long as we continue to burn fossil fuels."

The blazes that tore through Chile's Biobio and Ñuble regions in mid-January killed 23 people, destroyed over 1,000 houses and other structures and forced tens



Firefighters battle wildfires in Los Alerces National Park, Argentina, Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026.

Associated Press

of thousands of people to flee their homes. All the blazes were ignited by human activity, whether arson or negligence.

In southern Argentina, the fires first ignited by lightning forced the evacuation of thousands of tourists and residents and burned through over 45,000 hectares (174 square miles) of native forest, including vast swaths of the Los Alerces National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site home to 2,600-year-old trees.

Carolina Vera, a professor of climate sciences at the University of Buenos Aires who is not related to World Weather Attribution, said the findings were in keeping with what previous studies have shown about the effects of global warming on wildfires, specifically in the native forests of Argentina's Chubut province where she lives.

Extreme heat and strong winds caused wildfires to spread 20 km (12 miles)

across Patagonia's native forests in just two days last month.

"This particular fire case, in my opinion, is the one in which the influence of anthropogenic climate change dominates over other factors," she said.

Finding human fingerprints on disasters

The study, confirming what had been widely suspected, brings the first scientific assessment of global warming's role in intensifying some of the most serious wildfire emergencies to grip Chile and Argentina in years.

It's the latest in an emerging subfield of climate science known as weather attribution, which is evolving rapidly in response to a growing thirst for public information about how climate change influences natural disasters.

The World Weather Attribution report has not yet been peer-reviewed or published

in a scientific journal, but it relies on widely accepted methods, including the analysis of data and computer model simulations to compare today's climate with past weather patterns. Dominique Bachelet, a climate change scientist at Oregon State University who wasn't involved in World Weather Attribution's analysis, said the findings didn't surprise her.

Climate modelers have run computer simulations predicting increased fire danger for more than two decades now, she said, citing the role of global warming in deepening droughts, altering prevailing wind patterns and disrupting the length and timing of seasons.

"Climate change has been called a threat multiplier," she said. "I only wish land managers and policy makers had paid attention when we first started publishing our results and prepared for the challenges they face today."

Hot and dry forests become a tinderbox

Record droughts and scorching temperatures created conditions conducive to wildfires in Chile and Argentina, the study found, while single-species plantations of highly flammable trees like pines helped the fires spread more easily in both areas. The invasive species have replaced native, more fire-resistant ecosystems in the region, turning shrub, brush and grass into kindling.

In Argentina's Patagonia, some weather stations established 70 years ago recorded heat waves unprecedented in length and severity.

The town of El Bolsón recorded its highest January temperature on record 38.4 degrees Celsius (101 degrees Fahrenheit). The town of Esquel, near Los Alerces National Park, logged 11 consecutive days of maximum temperatures in January, its second-longest warm spell in 65 years. Temperatures in Chile before the fires erupted were high but not record-breaking.

The researchers estimated that seasonal rainfall from November to January, before the peak burning period, was around 25% weaker in Chile and 20% less intense in Argentine Patagonia than it would have been without a rise in global temperatures of at least 1.3 degrees Celsius (2.3 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.

"This, together with higher-than-average temperatures, led to vegetation being submitted to stress, very low humidity in the soil," said Juan Antonio Rivera, □

Paris wine show reflects surging demand for zero- and low-alcohol drinks

By JOHN LEICESTER

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — As a French teetotaler, Justine Bobin knows how challenging it can be to not drink in a country where wine, beer and other boozy beverages still lubricate many social interactions, even if France is less hooked on alcohol than it used to be.

"People are convinced that you can't have fun if you don't drink alcohol in France," she says.

Which is one of the reasons that Bobin trekked up to Paris this week, to check out the growing array of zero- and low-alcohol drinks predominantly red, white, rosé and sparkling wines from around Europe, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Those products rubbed shoulders with established producers and distillers of all things alcoholic at a major international trade show for the wine and spirits industries.

With slogans championing "no alcohol, no regrets, no consequences" and en-



Ludovic Fuhrmann, Director of Sales at Terre de Vignerons, poses for a photo at the Wine Paris 2026 fair, at the Porte de Versailles exhibition center in Paris, France, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026.

Associated Press

couraging consumers to "drink different," producers of so-called no/low beverages are aiming to profit from changing tastes and habits, in particular those of young adults more mindful of alcohol's harms.

In the United States, fewer Americans are reporting that they drink alcohol. In

other major international markets, a growing no/low industry is chipping away at booze's hegemony. France's government is offering to pay wine-makers who agree to rip up their vineyards, to reduce the output of vintages no longer in demand. Dutch drinks giant Heineken this

week said it will cut up to 6,000 jobs from its global workforce by 2028, after its beer sales fell last year. But the firm's portfolio of no/low drinks saw double-digit growth in 18 of its markets. Bobin, who is Muslim, said zero-alcohol drinks can help teetotalers and drinkers of alcohol spend time

together. She tasted a variety of non-alcoholic adult beverages at the Wine Paris show, looking for some to sell at her delicatessen shop in France's wine-making Burgundy region.

"It allows us to share a moment with people even without drinking alcohol. So they can drink if they want, but we can still share a drink, toast with them," she said. "It offers an alternative for everyone and brings people together. It's more of a product for inclusion, I think, for people who don't drink alcohol, and that's great."

Alcohol consumption in France has plummeted in the last half-century, with many adults dropping the habit of wine with most meals and young people, in particular, generally drinking less and differently than their parents.

Katja Bernegger, who produces alcohol-free wines in Austria, said no/low drinking isn't a passing fad.

"People are more mindful of their body," she said. □

Say cheese! 'Wallace & Gromit' expo puts kids into motion

London, United Kingdom

A new London exhibition is aiming to inspire children to follow in the footsteps of the creators of "Wallace and Gromit" and their beloved animated world. The British capital's biggest children's museum is giving a behind-the-scenes look

at Aardman, the studio that created the popular stop-motion favourites, Shaun the Sheep and others.

Opening Thursday at the Young V&A museum in east London, "Inside Aardman: Wallace & Gromit and Friends" uses interac-

tive and colourful displays to explore how the British studio's iconic clay characters are brought to life. Timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Aardman's first production and showcasing over 150 objects including models, sets, and storyboards from the studio's archives the exhibition took nearly two years to prepare, said chief curator Alex Newson.

"It's really celebrating... how those characters have survived the test of time, and if anything, are more loved today than they were when they kind of first came out," Newson told AFP.

"We really also wanted to show the process behind how they are made," said the curator, including how the creators came up with characters like the hapless, cheese-loving inventor Wallace and his floppy-

eared dog Gromit.

"But more than that, we wanted to use those... to inspire children to become kind of the next animators and the animators of the future."

Despite the rise of children's exposure to screen time, Newson believes "people want to make things by hand still".

"I know that in today's increasingly digital world, it's easy to create something without having to do anything. But there is a real thirst to make things, and there's also a real thirst to see things that have been made by people."

Aardman, based in Bristol in southwest England, uses the word "thumbiness" to describe how viewers can almost see the fingerprints of the people who make the puppets and scenes. "You can understand that

this was a handmade thing, and there was love, sweat and tears that have gone into the creation of it," said Newson.

'Beast of Mossy Bottom'

To mark its half-century, Aardman will release a new movie later this year: "Shaun the Sheep: The Beast of Mossy Bottom".

Schoolchildren previewing the exhibition, which runs to November 15, enjoyed the interactive displays, which included a praxinoscope an animation device and character design stations.

They also saw lighting experiments on a film set from "Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl", the process behind stop-motion video creation, and how animators make sound effects.

"It's very fun," said Zahre, aged eight, whose favourite character is Gromit. □



A person looks at the model of the Snowmanotron, from Wallace & Gromit's Cracking Contraptions, 2002, during a photocall for the Inside Aardman: Wallace & Gromit and Friends exhibition at the Young V&A museum in London on February 9, 2026, to mark the 50th anniversary of British Oscar-winning animation studio Aardman.

The Lionfish and its threat to our marine wild life

(Oranjestad)—Despite its colorful and striking appearance, the lionfish has become a Caribbean-wide problem for Atlantic sea life. The Aruban marine wild life is also affected by this beautiful dilemma, as it is foreign to our waters and has become a danger to our local fish and reefs.

Originating from the Indo-Pacific Ocean, the lionfish is a relatively small fish. It

has no teeth, but it does protect itself against predators using its sharp, colorful spikes. It is said that the sting of a lionfish can be up to 100 times more painful than that of a bee's sting.

Its natural predators in the Indo-Pacific are sharks and barracudas, but in the Caribbean Sea, local fish do not recognize the lionfish as part of their diet.

In other words, the lionfish has no predators in the Caribbean Sea. And this becomes a major problem for our local marine life; if there are no predators to stimulate population control of lionfish, these fish can continue to reproduce and expand to other parts of the Atlantic, become more invasive and dangerous for other types of fish.

For Aruba, the lionfish is a problem especially for our local coral reefs. According to Patrick van Brakel, lionfish expert and hunter from the Hunting Lionfish Aruba foundation, every reef has a "cleaning station"—tiny fish that eat algae and other types of waste on a reef, thus maintaining the reef's health and providing food to the fish population in the area. However, as the lionfish feeds off of these tiny fish, it becomes harder for the coral reef to maintain its health.

Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlantic happened



in Florida, where people would buy lionfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish were too much upkeep, they were let out into the ocean to roam free. From continental USA, the lionfish travelled to and invaded the entire Caribbean area, from Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao up to New York. In Aruba, lionfish were discovered in 2009.

Controlling the lionfish population is a challenge, as each female fish can lay up to 40,000 eggs a day.

Luckily, we have people like van Brakel who dedicate their lives hunting and capturing these invasive species, using them for consumption and jewelry making.

They are caught with a hand spear, an object resembling a garbage picker with 4 sharp prongs. These spears are used like a sling shot to catch lionfish from a distance. These fish are then put into a collecting tube and taken out of the water. This way, he does his part in protecting the local wild life. □

Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's City Center Street Car – or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" – is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered street-car operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the down town area with a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25 minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00 pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center – it is free for all! □



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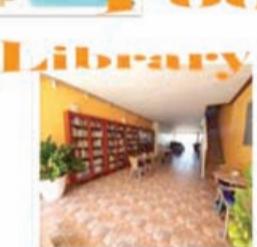
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2 BBQ sets



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QA Loft Apartment

Share your Aruba memories with us!



(Oranjestad)—We at Aruba Today love to hear from our readers. This is why we love our segment "Aruba to me", where we ask our readers to send in their message and pictures sharing what Aruba means to them.

What we also love is creating and sharing memories. This is why we would like to invite you, our lovely reader, to share your fond memories on the island with us. It could be a photo from the first time you visited island to the pictures you took at that Carnival Parade you attended last week. All is welcome!

Tell us your stories and let us give you a shout-out in our next issue.□

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Celebrate an Unforgettable Valentine's at Elements Restaurant, Ranked Among the World's Most Romantic Date Night Spots

Romantic Valentine's Day Dinner on February 14 and "Day After Valentine's" Brunch on February 15, Reservations Recommended

EAGLE BEACH — On the most romantic day of the year, couples are invited to celebrate love in one of the Caribbean's most iconic settings: Elements Restaurant, the award-winning, adults-only dining destination at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, overlooking Eagle Beach. In 2025, Tripadvisor ranked Elements as the #1 Fine Dining Restaurant in the Caribbean and the #7 Best Spot for Date Night in the World and named it, placing it among the most celebrated restaurants worldwide.

To mark the occasion, Elements will host a romantic Valentine's Day Dinner on Saturday, February 14, 2026, followed by an extended celebration with a special "Day After Valentine's" Brunch on Sunday, February 15. Both experiences feature the same curated Couples' Valentine's menu, offering guests the opportunity to celebrate either under the evening sky or in the warm glow of a relaxed seaside brunch.

A Prime Eagle Beach Location with Panoramic Views

Elements is perched above Eagle Beach — Tripadvisor's #3 Best Beach in the World and #1 Best Beach in the Caribbean — and offers a dining experience defined as much by its setting as by its cuisine. From its elevated position, the restaurant commands panoramic views across the white sands and

turquoise sea, creating a cinematic atmosphere that feels effortlessly romantic from the very first course to the last.

Guests may choose to dine on the shaded Elements Deck, where ocean breezes and sweeping views set the tone for an open-air celebration, or inside in the elegant, air-conditioned indoor dining space, where expansive panoramic windows keep Eagle Beach fully in view while offering cool comfort and refined intimacy. Whether couples choose the deck or the indoor setting, the ambience remains the same: elevated, serene, and designed for connection.

A Special Couples' Valentine's Menu Served for Both Dinner and Brunch

The Couples' Valentine's menu, served on both February 14 and February 15, begins with a celebratory welcome toast and unfolds through a series of thoughtfully crafted courses designed for sharing. The experience includes refined soups and elegant starters such as locally produced burrata paired with roasted grapes, as well as sesame-seared tuna with tropical ponzo. Guests are then invited to choose from a selection of mains, including filet mignon, seared chicken, or fresh mahi mahi, complemented by warm seasonal accompaniments and rich finishing touches. The menu concludes with a refreshing rosé sorbet and a deca-



dent dessert-sharing platter, offering a sweet finale to an evening—or afternoon—of romance. For couples looking to elevate the celebration even further, optional premium Champagne upgrades are available.

Reserve Early, Seating Is Limited

With its award-winning culinary reputation, adults-only atmosphere, and extraordinary location overlooking one of the world's most celebrated beaches, Valentine's weekend seating at Elements is already filling

up quickly. Guests are encouraged to reserve early to secure their preferred dining time.

Valentine's Day Dinner:
Saturday, February 14, 2026
Day After Valentine's Brunch:

Sunday, February 15, 2026
Elements Restaurant, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort — Eagle Beach, Aruba

Reservations:
elementsrestaurant.com/reservations

More information:
www.elementsaruba.com/events

Aruba's first Ombudsman and what she can mean for you

(Oranjestad)—Ombudsman Mrs. Jurima Bryson, appointed on October 1st 2024, is proud to represent Aruba and is prepared to help both locals and tourists with their concerns.

What is the role of the Ombudsman?

In a nutshell, the Ombudsman is the middle man between you and government or semi-government agencies. This means that as a local or as a visitor of Aruba, you can file a complaint to the bureau of the Ombudsman against government and semi-government agencies. Already left the island? No problem. The Ombudsman of Aruba can still receive and handle your com-



plaint even from abroad. You only have to provide a way for them to reach you.

To contact the Ombudsman, you can visit the office located at Caya G.F. Betico Croes 149, Oranjestad, Aruba. You can also call at +297 281 6800 or email @ombudsman.aw for more questions or complaints.

Opening hours

The Ombudsman office is open to the public with no appointment from Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 11:30 am. Follow the ombudsman on Instagram: @ombudsmanaruba and Facebook: Ombudsman Aruba

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Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations

(Oranjestad)—The Ayo and Casibari Rock Formations are known locally as one of the crucial sites to have in your “off-road” trip itinerary. These naturally formed rock formations are just one of the few places on the island that hold a rich history of our culture and of our ancestors.

Ayo

The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of several giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding “mondi”*. This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock forma-



tion contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breathtaking view of the Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze offer a sense of comfort and peace.

Casibari

Probably the busier rock formation site, the Casibari is situated more in the center of the island, much closer—and more accessible—to the general public. Just like Ayo, Casibari is a fenced area containing several boulders that lay on top or lean on each other. The best aspect of the Ca-



sibari Rock Formation is the accompanying view when you climb up the top of the round, flat boulder. For this position, you can see the majority of the island and the ocean in the south.

Both sites are open free to the public, 24 hours a day. However, unless you are taking a trip with a professional tour guide, there are

no guides at the sites to help you climb the rock. So, do be careful when trudging on the boulders, and make sure to befriend any roaming goats you see along the way!

*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi!□

National Park Arikok: Aruba's biggest nature conservation

The National Park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are numerous animals to discover, for example the bright blue Cododo or mighty Warawara.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the island's past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: A majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heading back to the ocean after laying her eggs during breeding season. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Nature Conservation

The protected area of National Park Arikok was officially established in 2000. Arikok National Park is a 34 square kilometers (7907 acres) of natural area, located at the north-eastern part of Aruba which

contains examples of most of the island's flora and fauna against a backdrop of great geological complexity. We are proud to state that approximately 18% of the total land area of Aruba is assigned as a National Park, to protect and preserve the flora, fauna, geology and historical remains present within Arikok National Park.

The Landscape

There is a great geological variety within the park. The main aspects are the rough hills of the volcanic Aruba lava formation, the mysterious rocks of the batholithic quartz-diorite/tonalite, and the limestone rocks from fossilized coral. The two tallest hills on the island are situated within the park. Jamanota hill 188 meters (617 ft) and Arikok hill 176 meters (577 ft), from which the name of the park is derived.

The line of the permanently wind-and-wave beaten North Coast is broken by several bays (boca's). Most of them are small yet impressive inlets at the mouth of dry riverbeds. Some of these bays (boca's) are spectacular sights, adorned with white, sandy beaches and sand dunes, as is the case at Boca Prins and Dos Playa.

Arikok is also home to Conchi, Aruba's most important natural attraction; also known as The Natural Pool. The journey to the Pool is an adventure by itself and only possible by foot, horse, or 4x4 vehicle. As of 2020, ATV's and UTVs are not



allowed in the park due to its significant impact on nature.

Cultural and Historical components

There are a number of sites within the park that attest to the history of Aruba. The Caquetío Indians left rock paintings in Cunucu Arikok and Fontein Cave.

Old plantation (Cunucus) sites tell the story of an active yet challenging agricultural past.

These Cunucus were also residential areas for the few families that worked the land. These families found ways to survive in the difficult conditions, and were able to erect their homes with materials found in the area. Two of these adobe houses have been restored. Park rangers are learning many of the old building techniques in order to preserve this unique Aruban mud-house. At Cunucu Arikok and near Plantation Prins you can find these adobe houses.

Park Management

The Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF), formerly known as Aruba National Park Foundation, manages the national park. This foundation was established in July 2003. In February 2017, mangrove



and wetland RAMSAR site #198 Spanish Lagoon was annexed to Arikok National Park due to its importance as a feeding and breeding area for water birds and as a nursery area for a variety of marine organisms. With this addition, the areas under management increased by 70 hectares while the amount of species of flora and fauna to be conserved to over 250. On December 21st, 2018 (AB 2018 no. 77) Parke Marino Aruba – currently consisting of four marine protected areas (MPAs) – was officially established and subsequently brought under management of ACF. In 2019, preliminary management plan for marine were introduced for Parke Marino to conserve reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests and in 2020 ACF was given additional management areas such as the Saliñas

(Druif, Malmok, Cerca, Palm Beach, Bubali etc.) and also additional areas such as Rooi Manonchi, Ser'l Teishi etc. Managed areas can be seen here: <https://acf.aw/>.

Visit the National Park Arikok to see the wonder of Aruba's nature. The visitor center in San Fuego and entrance in Vader Piet (San Nicolas) is open daily from 8:00 AM to 16:00 PM. Contact the ACF via e-mail, info@acf.aw or call +297 585 1234 for more information.

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CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 38 Antlered

1 Words animals to learn, for short

40 Humble 42 Stable mothers

6 Oxford parts 43 Exhausted

11 Battery end 44 With craft

12 Got up ravine

13 Seafood garnish

14 Entice

15 Bigwig, briefly

16 Lynx or lion

18 Deep hole

19 Wing

20 Shade

21 Sheltered side

22 Like many loaves

24 Surrender

25 Small amount

27 Rowing team

29 Spuds

32 Brood watcher

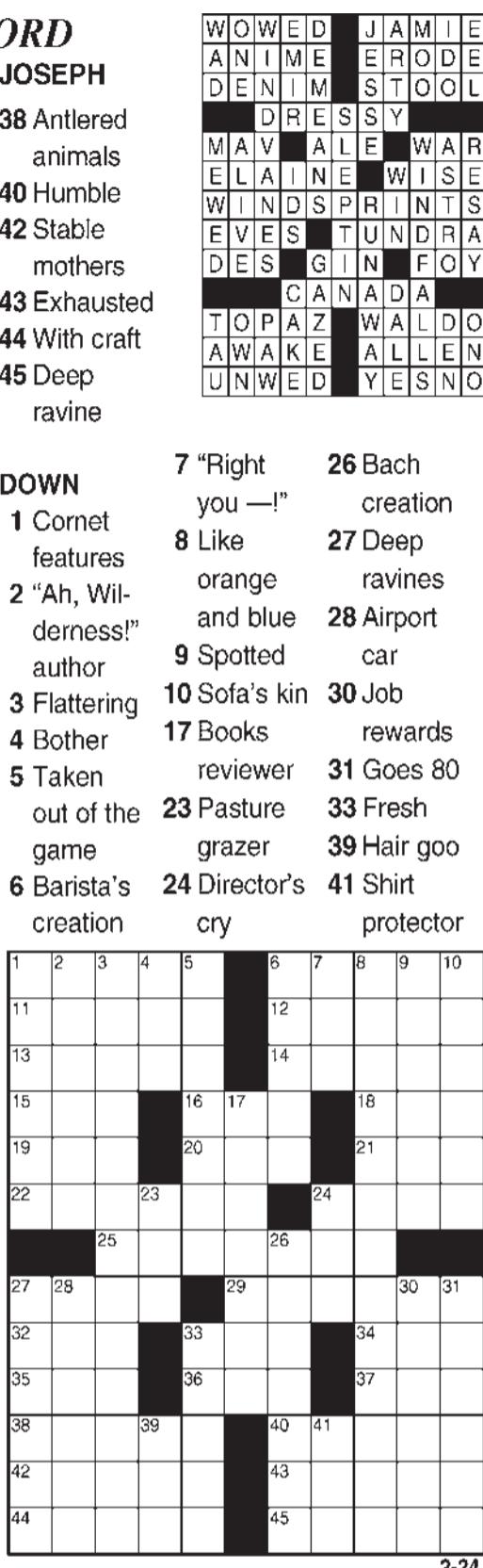
33 Heir, at times

34 Catch some z's

35 Colony member

36 Works in a gallery

37 Draw

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONG FELLOW

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.

2-24

CRYPTOQUOTE

HIUKSM LEZZ KCR HCJM EW
LM LUER WCB DCJM CRIMB
TMB DCK CB EW LM LUER
WCB DCJM CRIMB REJM.
— XUBUHO CXUJU

Cryptoquote: IT IS AMAZING WHAT
YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH IF YOU DO NOT CARE
WHO GETS THE CREDIT. — HARRY S. TRUMAN

Cruise ship Schedule: Feb. 9 - 15 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH
MON	09	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C 1
TUE	10	MAJESTIC PRINCESS SERENADE OF THE SEAS OASIS OF THE SEAS	07.00 08.00 08.00	18.00 23.00 23.00	B C I 1
WED	11	BRITANNIA CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE SEA CLOUD SPIRIT FREEWINDS	07.00 08.00 08.00 06.00	18.00 23.00 14.00 ****	B C I E 1
THU	12	MS RENAISSANCE CARIBBEAN PRINCESS CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00 09.00 09.00	18.00 22.00 22.00	B C I 1
SAT	14	AIDAPERLA	09.00	21.00	C 1
SUN	15	NORWEGIAN PEARL FREEWINDS - Dept.	08.00 ****	17.00 22.30	C E -

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

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

Answer to previous puzzle

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

©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
Difficulty: ***

2/12

Difficulty: ★★★★

2/13

French artist finds happiness drawing spectators at his 17th Olympics in Cortina



French artist Marc Ahr displays his artwork after drawing the scene at the women's singles luge event, during the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, Monday, Feb. 9, 2026.

Associated Press

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT
Associated Press

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy

(AP) — There was only one person in the crowd at a luge event for the 2026 Olympic Winter Games Monday night who did not watch any of the runs.

French artist Marc Ahr focused on the spectators to capture their reactions as their national teams triumphed or fell short, and on the beauty of the mountains.

Calling himself the "unofficial painter of the Games," this is Ahr's 17th Olympics. He started in Milan to paint the opening ceremony, hockey and a city panorama, then traveled to Cortina to see luge, women's Alpine skiing and curling. He worked quickly Monday in Cortina, using a black pen to draw the entire scene during the women's singles luge event.

"I don't really care if they go fast or not fast," he said as luge athletes hurtled down the icy track. "What's important is, emotion of people."

He drew groups of people watching the screen displaying results and cheering, kids playing in the snow, fans dancing with

the Olympic mascot, Tina, and Italian parents comforting their child. Ahr even danced with Tina and drew that, too.

Many people approached Ahr to see what he was up to, especially when they noticed he looked their way as he sketched. He offered to add their names next to their likeness.

For Isabel Hernandez of Mexico, Ahr drew Mexico's flag so she would be recognizable. For a German fan, he drew their face paint.

"I also draw, so it's nice to

see people doing it for events like this," Hernandez said. "It's something that I will share with my friends. And people probably won't believe me, but it's fun to know that I have this memory of it."

Bette Wiley, Cheryl Ann Husby and Cynthia Briction stood together with their arms over each other's shoulders while Ahr put them into the scene. Briction said she loved it. Explaining why, she said, "Have you ever been

standing in the middle of the Dolomites and had a man sketch you? It doesn't get any more unique than that."

When Ahr finished for the night, he finally looked at the track in time to see a luger. He added a directional arrow to the track he had drawn in black pen. Ahr had been paying so little attention that he thought athletes went the other way around. Later, he would draw the winner and use watercolors to complete the artwork. He sells his pieces online and at the Olympics.

Ahr does like the athletes, too. In fact, he paints many of their portraits after the Games are over. But during the Games he is happiest interacting with the spectators and soaking up their good energy.

"I use my talent to make people happy," he said. "Why not? This is why I am happy to do it." □



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One Tech Tip: All you need to know about the iPhone's Lockdown Mode

By KELVIN CHAN
AP Business Writer

A little known security feature on iPhones is in the spotlight after it stymied efforts by U.S. federal authorities to search devices seized from a reporter. Apple's Lockdown Mode recently prevented FBI agents from getting into Washington Post reporter Hannah Natanson's iPhone.

Agents seized the phone, as well as two MacBooks and other electronic devices, when they searched Natanson's home last month as part of an investigation into a Pentagon contractor accused of illegally handling classified information. But the FBI reported that its Computer Analysis Response Team "could not extract" data from the iPhone because it was in Lockdown Mode, according to a court filing. So what is Lockdown Mode? Here's a rundown of how it works and how to use it:

Highest security

Apple says Lockdown Mode is an "optional, extreme" protection tool designed to guard against "extremely rare and highly sophisticated cyberattacks." It's not for everyone, but instead for "very few individuals" who could be targeted by digital threats because of who they are or what they do.



A Solver magnetic button is attached to an Apple iPhone during CES Unveiled ahead of the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada on January 4, 2026.

"Most people will never be targeted by attacks of this nature," Apple's support page says.

It's available in Apple's newer operating systems, including iOS 16 and macOS Ventura. It works by putting strict security limits on some apps and features, or even making some unavailable, to reduce the areas that advanced spyware can attack. It also restricts the kinds of browser technologies that websites can use and limits photo sharing.

Can Apple turn it off?

Apple has previously rejected U.S. government requests to build so-called backdoor access for its de-

vices.

In 2016, Apple refused a request by authorities to help bypass lockscreen security for an encrypted iPhone belonging to a shooter who carried out a terrorist attack in San Bernardino, Calif. The company also declined to add an ability to input passcodes electronically, which would make it possible to carry out "brute force" attempts to guess the combination using computers. "It would be wrong to intentionally weaken our products with a government-ordered backdoor," Apple said in explaining its decision.

How to turn on Lockdown

Mode

Make sure your iPhone, iPad or MacBook has been updated. You'll have to turn the feature on separately for each of your Apple devices.

On your iPhone, go to Settings, then to the Privacy and Security section, scroll down to the bottom and tap on Lockdown Mode. Enter your passcode not a facial or fingerprint scan to activate it. The device will restart and then you'll again have to use your passcode to unlock it. On MacBooks, follow a similar procedure from the System Settings menu.

Apple recommends that you switch it on for all of the

company's devices that you own.

Better than biometrics

You might assume that requiring facial or fingerprint recognition to unlock your phone is good enough to protect it from snooping. But experts say passcodes are better than biometrics at protecting your devices from law enforcement, because they could compel you to unlock your device by holding your phone up to your face or forcing you to put your finger on the scanner.

FBI agents told Natanson that they "could not compel her to provide her passcodes," but the warrant they used to execute the search did give them the authority "to use Natanson's biometrics, such as facial recognition or fingerprints, to open her devices." According to a court filing, Natanson said she didn't use biometrics to lock her devices but agents were ultimately able to unlock her MacBook with her finger.

This is how it affects your phone

Apple says some apps and features will work differently when Lockdown Mode is on.

Some websites might load slowly or not work properly, and some images and web fonts could be missing because they block "certain complex web technologies." □

AI to track icebergs adrift at sea in boon for science



An iceberg floats in the sea in Nuuk, Greenland, on March 4, 2025.

Paris,

British scientists said Thursday that a world-first AI tool to catalogue and track icebergs as they break apart into smaller chunks could fill a "major blind spot" in predicting climate change.

Icebergs release enormous volumes of freshwater when they melt on the open water, affecting global climate patterns and altering ocean currents and ecosystems.

But scientists have long struggled to keep track of these floating behemoths once they break into thousands of smaller chunks, their fate and impact on the climate largely lost to the seas.

France

To fill in the gap, the British Antarctic Survey has developed an AI system that automatically identifies and names individual icebergs at birth and tracks their sometimes decades-long journey to a watery grave.

Using satellite images, the tool captures the distinct shape of icebergs as they break off or calve from glaciers and ice sheets on land.

As they disintegrate over time, the machine performs a giant puzzle problem, linking the smaller "child" fragments back to the "parent" and creating detailed family trees never before possible at this scale. □

Chloe Kim falls short of Olympic three-peat, taking silver as Choi Gaon wins women's halfpipe

LIVIGNO, Italy (AP) — Chloe Kim fell short in her bid to become the first Olympic snowboarder to win three consecutive gold medals, finishing second to Choi Gaon of South Korea in the women's halfpipe on Thursday.

Choi dethroned the two-time defending champion after she bounced back from an ugly crash that had silenced the crowd. The 17-year-old drew another collective gasp when she jumped into the lead with a score of 90.25 on her final run.

Kim had one more shot to get back on top, but the 25-year-old American wiped out on her final run and settled for silver. Japan's Mitsuki Ono claimed bronze.

Choi's chances in the final

looked to be in jeopardy when she slammed into the incline of the halfpipe and slid to the middle of the course, where she remained for several minutes. After being attended to by medical staff, she rode off the course unassisted.

It wasn't clear that she would even come back for her second run, but she did and got it down. Then came her turn down the halfpipe that was good for gold.

Choi became the youngest X Games winner in 2023 at age 14. Now the first-time Olympian is first non-American woman to win gold in snowboarding's premier event since Torah Bright of Australia in 2010. Kaitlyn Farrington won for the U.S. in 2014 at the Sochi Olympics, and Kim triumphed in Pyeongchang and Beijing.



United States' Chloe Kim falls during the women's snowboarding halfpipe finals at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Livigno, Italy, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026.

Associated Press

Kim is not alone in letting the milestone of golds in three consecutive Winter Olympics slip away at these Games. Czech Ester Ledecka fell short in Alpine snowboarding's parallel gi-

ant slalom, as did Austria's Anna Gasser in big air. Both were also two-time defending champions.

American snowboarding great Shaun White won

three gold medals on the halfpipe, but not consecutively. He won in 2006, 2010 and 2018. He finished fourth in 2014.

White was in the crowd Thursday and cringed after Kim fell on her final run. Kim's boyfriend, Cleveland

Browns defensive end Myles Garrett, was also in her cheering section, along with Snoop Dogg. Like many in the crowd, they had gathered to watch one of the biggest names in snowboarding go for Olympic history.

Instead, they watched Choi wipe away tears as she held up her medal, one step up on the podium from Kim, the rider who has been her idol. □

Dutch speedskater Xandra Velzeboer wins Olympic short track 500 gold after world record in the semis

By HOWARD FENDRICH
AP National Writer

MILAN (AP) — Xandra Velzeboer of the Netherlands won the women's 500 meters gold medal in short track speedskating at the Milan Cortina Olympics on Thursday night after breaking her own world record in the semifinals.

Velzeboer finished first in the final in 41.609 seconds, ending Italian silver medalist Arianna Fontana's attempt to become the first woman to win three consecutive individual Winter Games short track golds at any distance. Fontana was more than a half-second behind an eternity in a 500 with a time of 42.294. That dominant display came after Velzeboer clocked an Olympic-record 41.853 in the quarterfinals at the start of the evening, and established the new world mark of 41.399 in the semifinals. □



Xandra Velzeboer of the Netherlands wins gold during the short track speed skating women's 500m at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy, Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026.

Associated Press

Valentine's Dinner Menu

Saturday Feb. 14, 2026

Appetizer

Caesar salad
or
Crispy Fried Calamari with Caribbean Salsa

Entrée

6 oz Grilled Tenderloin, walnut mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetables with red wine sauce
or
Grilled Mahi-Mahi with Tomato Salsa and Jasmine rice

Dessert

Crème Brûlée
or
Chocolate lava cake with vanilla ice cream

PRICE \$55 p.p.

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NBA All-Star 2026: Times, details, how to watch the weekend's events



Houston Rockets forward Kevin Durant (7) drives against Oklahoma City Thunder guard Aaron Wiggins (21) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, in Oklahoma City.

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By DAVID BRANDT

AP Sports Writer

All-Star weekend is back in California for the second straight year, this time moving to Inglewood for the NBA's annual midseason showcase.

Among the on-court events are the celebrity game and Rising Stars competition on Friday night, 3-point, Shooting Stars and slam-dunk contests on Saturday and a new All-Star game format on Sunday that features the USA vs. the World.

The U.S. vs. the World concept was talked about for years before finally becoming a reality this season. The NBA and the National Basketball Players Association unveiled the long-awaited plan earlier this season, after trying yet again to figure out the latest way to spark renewed interest in the game.

Here's some of what to know about All-Star weekend:

Where to watch this weekend's events?

Here's the rundown (all times Eastern):

Friday All-Star celebrity game, 7 p.m. (ESPN); Rising Stars competition, 9 p.m. (Peacock), NBA HBCU Classic, 11 p.m. (Peacock)

Saturday NBA All-Star media day, 1:30 p.m. (NBA TV); Commissioner Adam Silver press conference, 4 p.m. (NBA TV); 3-point contest, Shooting Stars and slam-dunk contests, starting at 5 p.m. (NBC, Peacock)

Sunday NBA All-Star Game, 5 p.m. (NBC, Peacock)

Who are the All-Stars?

The All-Stars are split among three teams, which were selected by NBA.

USA Stripes: Boston's Jaylen Brown, New York's Jalen Brunson, Golden State's Stephen Curry is injured and will be replaced by Toronto's Brandon Ingram, Houston's Kevin Durant, Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James, Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard, Cleveland's Donovan Mitchell and San Antonio's De'Aaron Fox. (Fox is the injury replacement for Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo).

Coach: San Antonio's Mitch Johnson

USA Stars: Toronto's Scottie Barnes, Phoenix's Devin Booker, Detroit's Cade Cunningham and Jalen Duren, Minnesota's Anthony Edwards, Oklahoma City's Chet Holmgren, Atlanta's Jalen Johnson and Philadelphia's Tyrese Maxey.

Coach: Detroit's J.B. Bickerstaff.

World: Antetokounmpo, Portland's Deni Avdija, Los Angeles Lakers' Luka Doncic, Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander is injured and will be replaced by Houston's Alperen Sengun, Denver's Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray, Indiana's Pascal Siakam, New York's Karl-Anthony Towns, San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama and Miami's Norman Powell.

Coach: Toronto's Darko Rajakovic.

What's the All-Star Game format?

The two U.S. teams both have eight players while the World team has nine players. Games will be one standard NBA quarter, or 12 minutes long.

The USA Stars will play the World in Game 1. The winner of that game will play the USA Stripes in Game 2. The loser of Game 1 will play the USA Stripes in Game 3.

The teams with the best two records will play in the championship game. If all three teams are 1-1, point differential would be the tiebreaker.

Who are the betting favorites?

According to BetMGM Sportsbook, Team USA Stripes is the favorite to win the All-Star tournament at +160, followed by the World (+170) and the USA Stars (+200).

The favorites for All-Star MVP are Wembanyama (+700), Doncic (+1000) and Cunningham (+1100). □