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The Aruban Cunukero: From past to present

Arizona's 2026 wildflower season: A rare winter gift and a race against the heat

PHOENIX, AZ – After one of the wettest autumns in over a century, Arizona's desert floors began their 2026 transformation earlier than anyone anticipated. What started as an unusually green landscape in December has evolved into a complex, "muddled" wildflower season. While some regions are teasing "above-average" displays, an early March heatwave is currently threatening the longevity of the blooms, creating a sense of urgency for "petal peepers" across the state.

A visitor walks through a field of Desert Gold (Geraea canescens) wildflowers as they carpet Death Valley, California in a rare "super bloom," March 4, 2016.

A season of high expectations

The stage for a potential "superbloom" was set by record-breaking rainfall in late 2025. This autumn moisture is the critical first hurdle for germinating spring annuals like Mexican gold poppies and lupines. By mid-January 2026, the first sightings of color were reported weeks ahead of the traditional late-February start.

Experts from Arizona State Parks and local trackers initially predicted a "robust" season. However, as of March 2026, the consensus among park rangers is one of cautious observation. While not quite reaching the "once-in-a-decade" intensity of the 2023 superbloom, 2026 is trending as significantly better than the "virtually nonexistent" season of the previous year.

Where the color is popping

For those looking to catch the 2026 display, success depends heavily on elevation and recent localized weather:

Bartlett Lake & Tonto National Forest: This has been a consistent hotspot this year. Wildflowers came early to Bartlett Lake, with North Lake Road showcasing hearty collections of white poppies and lupines as early as February.

Lost Dutchman & the Superstitions: While perennials like brittlebush and chuparosa are showy, rangers at Lost Dutchman State Park warn that annual poppies may be scarcer here than in previous years.❑

The Falls are ours: State strikes a $2M deal to save Abiqua

By Oregon News Service

SALEM In a race against private development and the ticking clock of the legislative session, Oregon lawmakers have finalized a historic $2.1 million agreement to purchase Abiqua Falls, ensuring that one of the state's most iconic natural cathedrals remains open to the public forever. The deal, cemented this week through the passage of Senate Bill 5701, marks the end of over a century of private ownership by the Abbey Foundation of Oregon. For generations, the 92-foot waterfall famed for its perfect hexagonal basalt columns existed in a precarious state of "permitted trespassing." That era officially ended as the state moved to acquire nearly 200 acres of rugged canyon land.

Abiqua Falls in Oregon

A Rare Bipartisan Victory

The acquisition was fueled by an unusual alliance between Senator Fred Girod (R-Lyons) and House Majority Leader Ben Bowman (D-Tigard). "This is a world-class site," Girod stated during the budget hearings. "If we didn't act now, we risked seeing 'No Trespassing' signs go up on a piece of Oregon's soul."

The $2.1 million price tag covers two distinct parcels:

The Crown Jewel: $600,000 for the 40-acre tract containing the falls, held by the Abbey Foundation.

The Buffer: $1.4 million for 160 surrounding acres owned by timber giant Weyerhaeuser, intended to protect the watershed and providing a "recreational buffer" for the new park.

From "Secret Spot" to State Responsibility

While the purchase is a victory for hikers, it presents a logistical mountain for the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD). Abiqua is notorious for its "vehicle-eating" access road and a trail so steep it requires a series of knotted ropes to navigate.

Local emergency responders have long voiced concerns over the site's surge in popularity on social media. "We've seen a massive increase in rescues and stuck vehicles," said one Marion County official. Under state management, the OPRD is expected to evaluate infrastructure upgrades, including formalizing the trailhead and potentially improving the logging road that currently requires high-clearance 4WD.

Preserving the "Wild" in Wild Oregon

Despite the transition to state control, officials are wary of over-developing the site. The goal is to maintain the "wild character" of the Santiam Canyon. Unlike the paved paths of nearby Silver Falls State Park, Abiqua is expected to remain a "primitive-access" site, preserving the sense of discovery that has defined the trek for decades.

"We aren't just buying land; we're buying a legacy," said Bowman. "In fifty years, Oregonians won't care about the budget line item they'll care that they can still stand at the base of those basalt pillars and feel the mist."❑

2-month-olds see the world in a more complex way than scientists thought, study suggests

By LAURA UNGAR
AP Medical Writer

A new study suggests that babies are able to distinguish between the different objects they see around them at 2 months old, which is earlier than scientists previously thought.

The findings, published Monday in Nature Neuroscience, may help doctors and researchers better understand cognitive development in infancy.

"It really tells us that infants are interacting with the world in a lot more complex of a way than we might imagine," said lead author Cliona O'Doherty. "Looking at a 2-month-old, we maybe wouldn't think that they're understanding the world to that level."

The study looked at data from 130 2-month-olds who underwent brain scans while awake. The babies viewed images from a dozen categories commonly seen in the first year of life, such as trees and animals. When babies looked at an image like a cat, their brains might "fire" a certain way that researchers could record, O'Doherty said. If they looked at an inanimate object, their brains would fire differently.

The technique — known as functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI — allowed scientists to examine visual function more precisely than in the past. Many previous studies relied on how long an infant looked at an object, which can be difficult to assess at younger ages. Some of those past studies suggested that infants as young as 3 to 4 months could distinguish between categories such as animals and furniture.

"What we're showing is that they really already have this ability to group together categories at two months," O'Doherty said. "So it's something much more complex than we would've thought before."

In the new study, many of the babies returned at 9 months, and researchers successfully collected data from 66 of them. In the 9-month-olds, the brain was able to distinguish living things from inanimate objects much more strongly than in the 2-month-olds, O'Doherty said.

Someday, researchers said, scientists may be able to connect such brain imaging to cognitive outcomes later in life.

Liuba Papeo, a neuroscientist at the National Center for Scientific Research in France, said the number of babies in the study is one thing that makes the work "impressive and unique." Brain imaging with very young infants presents challenges.

"One — perhaps the most obvious — is that the infant needs to (lie) comfortably in the fMRI scanner while awake without moving," she said in an email.❑

In this undated photo, Baby Blaise attends her 9-month Foundcog scan with her mother Mary at Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience in Dublin, Ireland.

Associated Press

In which Pooh turns 100: Hunny-loving bear marks a milestone

A member of the Walt Disney Studios Archive staff displays a vintage Winnie-the-Pooh Meets Tigger book during a tour of the Walt Disney Studios Archive, ahead of the 100th anniversary of Winnie the Pooh, at The Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California on February 25, 2026.

Burbank, United States

Winnie the Pooh, the self-described bear of "very little brain" who has charmed generations with his homespun and heartfelt wisdom, is turning 100.

The beloved children's character ambled into the world in 1926 in a book written by English author A.A. Milne, and illustrated by E.H. Shepard.

Now Disney, which acquired the rights to Pooh and his pals from Hundred Acre Wood in the 1960s, is holding a year-long celebration of the slow-witted bear, whose image is found all over the planet, from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe.

"Winnie the Pooh is all of us," said Kevin Kern, senior manager of research at the Walt Disney Archives in Burbank, California, where all kinds of Pooh paraphernalia are neatly catalogued.

"He shows all the emotions that we show. He sees the things that we see. He struggles like we do; whether he's trying to get up a tree to get honey or understand his friends.

"He's so steeped in wisdom that he himself does not always think he's giving, and that's so timeless."❑

The Silver Harvest: Iowa's corn king status fuels a new era of economic prosperity

DES MOINES, IA — Across the rolling plains of the American Midwest, a quiet green revolution has matured into a golden economic empire. Iowa, long celebrated as the epicenter of American agriculture, is currently experiencing a historic surge in productivity and market influence. As the 2026 agricultural season hits its stride, the state has solidified its undisputed title as the "Corn King," transforming 13.1 million acres of deep, black soil into a $14 billion engine of growth that is felt far beyond the farm gate.

William Byron, driver of the #24 Raptor Chevrolet, celebrates with a burnout after winning the NASCAR Cup Series Iowa Corn 350 Powered by Ethanol at Iowa Speedway on August 03, 2025 in Newton, Iowa.

A century and a half of growth

Iowa's dominance is no accident of geography alone. While the state is blessed with the "confluence of moisture, ideal soil temperature, and a long growing season," as noted by retired plant breeder Thomas Hoegemeyer, its current success is the result of over 150 years of relentless innovation. From the introduction of hybrid seeds in the early 20th century to today's precision satellite farming, Iowa has consistently outpaced global competitors.

Today, the average Iowa corn farmer produces yields that would have seemed like science fiction to their grandparents. This efficiency has created a "Silver Harvest"—a term local economists use to describe the high-value returns resulting from the integration of raw grain production with advanced industrial processing.

The ethanol and livestock powerhouse

The true secret to Iowa's economic boom lies in what happens to the corn after it leaves the field. Unlike regions that simply export raw grain, Iowa has built a sophisticated, closed-loop economy. The state boasts the nation's largest network of ethanol plants—42 facilities in total—which convert roughly half of the state's corn crop into renewable fuel.

This industry doesn't just power vehicles; it provides a vital byproduct known as "distillers grains," a high-protein feed that supports Iowa's massive livestock sector. With more livestock feeding operations than almost any other state, Iowa has created a localized "value-added" chain. The corn feeds the cattle and hogs, the livestock provides fertilizer for the fields, and the ethanol plants provide a steady, high-volume market for the grain. This synergy ensures that every bushel of corn generates maximum revenue within the state borders.

Economic ripple effects

The financial impact of this "Corn Heaven" is staggering. The $14 billion in farm-gate value ripples through the state's economy, supporting a vast infrastructure of machinery manufacturers, research laboratories, and transportation networks. In cities like Ames and Des Moines, biotech firms are thriving, fueled by research from Iowa State University aimed at making crops even more resilient to climate fluctuations.

This prosperity is visible in rural communities that were once struggling. New schools, upgraded medical facilities, and modernized main streets are being funded by a robust tax base anchored in agricultural success. For many small-town residents, the towering grain elevators are not just industrial landmarks; they are monuments to community stability.

A culture of pride

The economic boom has also reinforced a deep sense of regional identity. In Iowa, corn is more than a commodity; it is a cultural touchstone. At local high school football games and community fairs, it is common to see "Corn King" banners and hear the "Iowa Corn Song," where residents jubilantly raise their hands to mimic the height of a towering stalk.

"There is a pride here that you don't find elsewhere," says local farmer David Miller. "When the world needs to be fed or when the country needs a cleaner fuel source, they look to these fields. We aren't just growing plants; we're growing the future of the American economy."❑

Grades for grabs: The Staten Island bodega turning report cards into rewards

STATEN ISLAND, NY — In a neighborhood corner store where most come for a quick coffee or a sandwich, a new kind of "currency" is taking over.

Wail Alselwi, the 36-year-old manager and co-owner of Zack's Finest Deli & Grocery, has become a local legend for a simple but powerful bet: if you show him a report card with good grades, the snacks are on the house.

The viral "Island Ock" challenge

Known to locals and his millions of TikTok followers as "Island Ock" or "Wally," Alselwi's "Grades for Grabs" initiative has transformed his bodega into a hub for academic celebration. The program follows a tiered reward system based on a student's performance:

Averages of 90% or higher: Students receive their choice of free items from the store, a $100 bill, and a custom T-shirt.

Averages of 80% to 90%: Students can grab anything they want for free.

Most Improved: Even students with lower grades who show significant progress, perfect attendance, or "Student of the Month" honors are rewarded with free treats.

From a single bet to a global movement

The initiative began in 2023 when Alselwi challenged a regular young customer, Zamier Davies, to make the honor roll. Davies, who initially earned an 88% average, claimed an Oreo milkshake as his first prize. By the end of the year, he had achieved his goal and made the honor roll, sparking a viral video that has since inspired children from as far away as Pennsylvania to travel to Staten Island just to show off their grades.

One notable visitor, a fourth grader named Maleek , traveled from out of state with grades ranging from 93 to 100. After receiving his $100 reward, he used it not for candy, but to pick up essentials for his family, including eggs, bread, and rice.

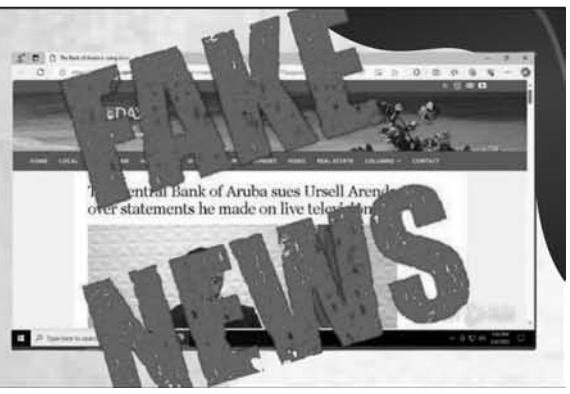
A father's inspiration

For Alselwi, an immigrant from Yemen, the motivation is deeply personal. With his own three children still living in Yemen, he says he sees them in every child that walks through his door.

Community and national support

What started as Alselwi paying out of his own pocket has grown into a community-supported mission. His brother, Nashwan, launched a GoFundMe campaign that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to keep the rewards flowing. Alselwi has also been officially recognized by Staten Island Borough President Vito Fossella for his selfless dedication to the borough's youth.

As report card season continues, the line at Zack's Finest Deli remains long, not just for the food, but for the chance to hear a community leader say, "I'm proud of you".❑



This picture taken on March 5, 2026 shows former nuclear plant worker Toru Akama playing with a cat during an interview with AFP at his animal shelter in Namie, Fukushima prefecture.

Former Fukushima worker devotes life to abandoned pets

Namie, Japan

Not far from the Fukushima nuclear disaster site, former plant worker Toru Akama tends to dozens of pets abandoned after the catastrophe 15 years ago, work he sees as part of his quest for redemption.

Meows and barks break the silence of the countryside, once an evacuation zone, as the 63-year-old brings food to the animals left behind when their owners fled the triple disaster of March 11, 2011: earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident.

"It's because of this plant, where we worked for years, that these animals ended up like this," Akama told AFP at his home in northern Japan, surrounded by cats.

"They should have been able to go on living their lives as pets, but because of this accident they were abandoned.

"I felt it was my duty to protect them," he said.

Akama will never forget what he saw in the wake of the disaster, caused by Japan's strongest earthquake on record.

The tsunami it unleashed killed or left missing 18,500 people, and a wall of water crashed into the Fukushima nuclear plant on the northeast coast causing a devastating meltdown.

A day later, residents were ordered to evacuate and an unbroken line of cars formed on the national highway that runs past Akama's house.

"Then the dogs started wandering in search of something to eat least those that weren't chained up," he recalled.

"There was no one left, just my wife and me handing out food."

-'Outrage'-

Akama then began taking the animals into his home: first 40 dogs, then 50.

A decade and a half later, he has found adoptive families for more than 1,000 animals and continues to take in new pets who have been abandoned for other reasons.

He says he has "felt outrage" at the pet owners, who have sometimes left their animals in front of his house.

Some "are remorseful, but others simply do it because the animals have become a nuisance", he said.

In difficult moments, "of course... people's priority is human beings, but animals are living beings too, members of the family. It's as if people were abandoning their own children".

After the nuclear disaster, some residents had to flee by bus, and animals were not allowed aboard.

"There were elderly people in tears, asking if someone could take their pet," he recalled.

A month after the disaster Akama also had to leave, but he returned every day for his work at the plant and to look after his charges.

"Because they had known hunger, I absolutely wanted to give them a good life. Sometimes we went without ourselves in order to buy them quality food," he said.

-They 'watch over me'-

Over the past 15 years, Akama says he has spent almost all of the compensation he received after the plant accident on the animals, and he continues to cover most of their care and food costs.❑

The pygmy long-fingered possum was thought to have been extinct for 6,000 years.

Fossil finds come to life as "extinct" pygmy possum rediscovered in New Guinea!

In a "remarkable" scientific breakthrough, researchers have rediscovered the pygmy long-fingered possum (Dactylonax kambuayai) in the remote rainforests of West Papua, New Guinea. Previously known to Western science only through fossils dating back 6,000 to 7,500 years, the tiny marsupial's reappearance has been hailed as one of the most significant wildlife finds of the century.

A "Lazarus" Species Returns

The pygmy long-fingered possum is now classified as a Lazarus taxon a species that miraculously reappears after being thought extinct for millennia.

Distinctive Features: Weighing roughly 200g, this striped marsupial possesses an extraordinary fourth finger twice the length of its other digits.

Specialized Hunter: It uses this elongated finger to extract wood-boring insect larvae from deep within tree bark.

Scientific Significance: Biologist Tim Flannery, who led the research team, described the find as "unprecedented," noting that finding even one such lost species is rare, but finding two alongside the newly rediscovered ring-tailed glider (Tous ayamaruensis) is "extraordinary".

Collaborative Conservation

The discovery, detailed in the Records of the Australian Museum in March 2026, was made possible through a unique partnership between international scientists, citizen scientists, and local Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Knowledge: Researchers from the Australian Museum and Bishop Museum worked closely with elders from the Tambrauw and Maybrat clans, whose ancestral knowledge was "indispensable" in locating the elusive creatures.

Citizen Science: Initial sightings by mammal-watchers and photographs taken by local villagers provided the first modern clues that these "fossil" animals still thrived in the Vogelkop Peninsula.❑

The Green Food Dome: A vision for a resilient future

In an era defined by environmental uncertainty and a rapidly growing global population, the "Green Food Dome" has emerged as a beacon of hope for sustainable living. Far more than just a greenhouse, these structures represent a radical reimagining of how we produce food, manage waste, and build communities. From the high-altitude peaks of the Rockies to the urban rooftops of the Netherlands, the Green Food Dome is proving that innovation and ecology can go hand-in-hand to create a more resilient world.

Landfill uses gas from waste to generate electricity and grow vegetables in Wiltshire England – SWNS

A masterpiece of form and function

The core of the Green Food Dome's success lies in its geodesic design, a structural marvel popularized by Buckminster Fuller. This shape is not merely aesthetic; it is engineered for extreme efficiency. The spherical structure allows for optimal air circulation and even light distribution, ensuring that every plant, regardless of its position, receives the energy it needs to thrive. Moreover, its inherent strength allows it to withstand severe weather, from 180 km/h winds to heavy snow loads, making it a reliable sanctuary for food production in the most challenging climates.

Turning waste into abundance

One of the most inspirational iterations of this technology is the landfill-powered food dome recently unveiled in Wiltshire, England. In a "world-first" initiative, methane gas captured from buried waste is used to generate the electricity needed for heating and ultraviolet lighting. This system transforms a traditional environmental liability a landfill into a productive community asset capable of harvesting 10 tons of produce annually. Similarly, in the Netherlands, small biogas domes in city parks convert food scraps and organic waste into clean energy right before the eyes of the public. These projects exemplify the circular economy, where the "end" of one product's life becomes the beginning of another's growth.

Cultivating community and self-reliance

Beyond its technical merits, the Green Food Dome is a powerful tool for social change. In many regions, these domes are used to alleviate food insecurity by providing year-round access to fresh, nutritious produce. For individuals, the dome offers a path to self-reliance. At high altitudes where the growing season might only last a few months, a climate-controlled dome allows families to grow their own food through the harshest winters.

The "Source of Life" dome showcased at Expo 2025 in Osaka took this further, demonstrating a closed-loop ecosystem where aquatic life and plants work in harmony. Fish waste provides nutrients for hydroponic layers, while the plants filter and clean the water for the fish below. This model suggests a future where even the densest urban centers can sustain themselves through localized, high-tech biology.

A call to action

The Green Food Dome is more than a structure; it is a philosophy of stewardship. It challenges us to look at "waste" as a resource and "barren" spaces as potential gardens. Whether it is a small 3D-printed concrete dome in a schoolyard or a massive inflatable greenhouse on a landfill, these structures invite us to participate in the act of creation. By integrating these resilient systems into our cities and homes, we do more than just grow vegetables we grow hope.❑

Greece hopes eco moorings will protect vital seagrass colonies

Porto Rafti, Greece

At the popular yachting harbour of Porto Rafti near Athens, a project is underway to protect a vulnerable seagrass species vital to the health of the Mediterranean.

Damaged for decades by anchors scraping the seabed, new eco-mooring are designed to be less harmful to the posidonia plants.

Diver Makis Sotiropoulos used a special drill to bore three metres into the seabed before installing the ecological anchorage with its two symmetrical fins.

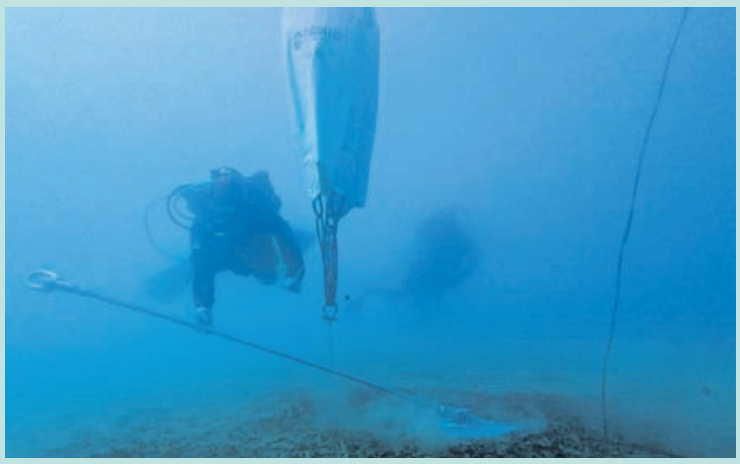
"We pull upwards to lock it in place before attaching a chain and a marker buoy," he told AFP.

The buoy then enables a vessel to moor "in complete safety", he said.

The project is run by the Greek ministry of merchant marine, which aims to extend it across the country's 13,000 kilometres (8,000 miles) of coast, 70 percent of which is covered by Posidonia seagrass meadows.

"When we establish a nationwide network of mooring buoys, then those with boats will be able to tie up safely, quickly and efficiently and at the same time the seabed will not be damaged," ministry secretary general Evangelos Kyriazopoulos told AFP.

The ribbon-like plants have been classified as a "priority habitat" by the European Union for various marine species.



This photograph shows commercial divers installing an eco-friendly mooring system at Porto Rafti bay near Athens to protect seabed's sensitive Posidonia meadows on February 11, 2026.

"Posidonia is among our best allies in the fight against climate change and deserves our full attention," said Maria Salomidi, a researcher at the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR).

The seagrass meadows "capture and store carbon beneath their rhizomes (root stems), produce oxygen, filter and purify the water, and support biodiversity," she said.

- Severe damage -

A large number of Posidonia root stems are torn out when anchors are raised.

"Very often I have observed anchors lying on posidonia meadows," said Rouli Prinianaki, a diver and member of the NGO Aegean Rebreath, which is part of the campaign.

The Greek state organisation for environment and climate change (OFYPEKA) has termed anchoring "one of the most significant threats" to the plants.

Around 40 ecological moorings have been installed in Greece in recent years, mostly in marine parks of the Ionian Sea and near the island of Alonissos. Fifteen eco moorings have been installed in Alonissos "but they are not enough for the thousands of boats in summer," said Spyridon Iosifidis, a fish specialist at the OFYPEKA directorate for the Sporades island group.

- Need for legislation -

Experts say Greece must speed up and broaden the installation of ecological moorings for pleasure boats that flock to its bays in summer.❑

The Caribbean's First Dedicated Cider Bar Opens at Radisson Blu Aruba

Palm Beach, Aruba — Radisson Blu Aruba introduces Blu Tap Cider by South Hill Cider, the Caribbean's first dedicated cider bar in the heart of Palm Beach.

Blu Tap Cider features a rotating selection of handcrafted apple-based ciders developed in collaboration with South Hill Cider, a small, founder-led cidery based in New York's Finger Lakes region. Produced in limited quantities and shaped by each harvest, the ciders reflect the character of the apples available each season rather than a fixed, mass-produced lineup.

"Blu Tap Cider by South Hill Cider reflects how we approach food and beverage at BLU," said Shareska Gutiérrez, Director of Commercial Strategy at Radisson Blu Aruba. "Across our concepts, we seek out thoughtful partnerships with producers who work with intention and respect the craft behind what they create. The goal is not scale or volume, but offering our guests experiences that feel distinctive and genuinely well made."

As the Caribbean's first dedicated cider bar, Blu Tap Cider introduces a new craft cider experience to Aruba's Palm Beach dining scene. Guests can explore the ciders through the Cider Flight, a guided tasting designed for discovery.The bar also offers cider-based cocktails, premium spirits, and a curated wine selection.

The experience is complemented by Don Esteban Gourmet, the boutique tapas concept located next door. The menu features artisanal small plates, refined tapas, and premium ingredients such as Jamón Ibérico de Bellota, often referred to as Pata Negra.

Together, Blu Tap Cider and Don Esteban Gourmet introduce a culinary experience at Radisson Blu Aruba rooted in craftsmanship, strong partnerships, and respect for how food and drink are made.❑

Blu Tap Cider is open daily
from 3:00 PM to 10:00 PM.
For reservations or inquiries:
+297 526 5022
reservation@blutapciderаruba.

"Aruba gives me Peace"

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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 Julie Thurnau from Virginia, USA.

She wrote to us saying: "Aruba gives me peace, happiness & strength which rebalances my soul."
Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers!❑

Blackstone Beach

(Oranjestad)—Named after its most recognizable feature, the Blackstone Beach almost represents the opposite of the typical Aruban beaches. For one, it has black sand and is covered in black smooth stones. Secondly, it lies on the northern side of the island, away from the white sandy beaches of in the southern region. So, if you feel up for something different or if it's opposite day, visit the Blackstone Beach.

Blackstone Beach shows the more natural side of Aruba; the stones that cover the beach and the shape of it has been crafted for thousands of years through volcanic eruptions, coral reef movements and wave activity of the rural northern part of the island.

Located further east to the Natural Bridge and Andicuri Beach, the Blackstone Beach is relatively easy to access. Once you get passed the Ayo Rock Formation, take the Andicuri road leading up to Andicuri Beach. There, you can park your car and take a 1km hike towards Blackstone Beach.

This beach forms part of the Arikok National Park and is therefore a site that is preserved. This is why it is also relatively untouched by commercial influences. Despite being called a beach, do note that it is not advised to swim in the water, as the current is very strong and can easily stray you further in the wild ocean. However, you can still enjoy a spectacular view of the stones and the northern ocean that stretches out in front of the beach and take a picture with your friends or family!❑

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 designsthe 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.❑**

Tern season has arrived, and ACF is calling for their protection

(ORANJESTAD)—Aruba has begun to see terns arriving along its coast to start their breeding season once again. An event that happens every year, the migration of terns to our island normally begins in March, but this year it was observed that they were already present as early as January.

In Aruba, there are ten different species of terns that normally breed from March to September every year. However, ACF has noted that this year their arrival came earlier, and by the end of January a presence of terns was already being seen in their breeding areas. During this season, ten different species breed at different times. This is the reason why the season lasts for more than half a year.

The terns breed mainly in the Baby Beach area and along the north coast of Aruba. Baby Beach is a particularly special site for terns, since this is where they carry out their reproduction rituals. Referred to as a "discotheque" by Natasha Silva, the point of Baby Beach near the open water is where a large group of terns spends the season searching for their partner for life to reproduce.

Terns are very fragile and easily disturbed, especially during their reproduction rituals.

Their nests are divided into two specific sites on our island. The first is the reefs near the refinery in San Nicolas. These reefs become home to the terns, where they lay their nests either on the sand or in the small bushes around the reefs. These reefs are "off-limits" to the public; one of the only areas in Aruba that is completely protected by law.

The terns also lay eggs along the north coast of our island, between cliffs and rocks throughout the area. This is where they are vulnerable to greater danger, according to ACF. Among these cliffs, everything is well camouflaged and cannot easily be seen, even by people who are walking or driving vehicles over the rocks.

The chicks have a natural behavior to "freeze" in place when they sense danger. This puts them at risk of being stepped on. For this reason, ACF is making a call to the community and authorities to help protect our historic birds.

As general advice, ACF says to keep distance and be cautious when passing through areas where terns are breeding. "If a tern starts screaming at you, that is a sign that you are too close to their nest and eggs," Silva explained. These are the types of signals the Aruba community needs to be aware of.

So once again, a call goes out to the entire community of Aruba: Let's protect our terns during an important season for them. Educate yourself and others about the birds, stay alert to harmful activities near nests, and share information with ACF if you notice anything unusual in nature. Together we can care for and strengthen our nature, and that begins with education.

Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF) can be reached by phone at 585-1234 or by email at info@acf.aw❑

ARUBA TODAY

ISLAND INSIGHT

Article by Etnia Nativa

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Episode CCCXLIV (344)

We Are the Shamans and the Memory of the Island

Before the hotels, before the roads, before the maps that gave the island its modern name, Aruba was already speaking.

It spoke through the wind crossing the Divi-Divi trees, through the rhythm of the tides against ancient shores, and through the quiet wisdom carried by the island's first people—those who learned to read the stars, heal with plants, and listen to the language of the land.

At Etnia Nativa, we reflect on an enduring ancestral truth: nothing in nature is wasted, and everything is connected. Within this vision, native culture and philosophy are expressed through daily practice. Materials are reused, traditions are preserved, and respect for the natural world guides everyday life.

By recovering ancestral customs, humanity places itself within the circle of nature rather than above it, for our ancestors saw nature not as a resource to conquer, but as a living presence to understand.

For centuries, many cultures have spoken of shamans as intermediaries between humans and the spirits of nature. They listened to the wind, the ocean, the animals, and the plants, understanding that each carried its own form of wisdom. Nature was never silent—it was a teacher.

Within this worldview, Etnia Nativa stands as a living library of knowledge, offering perspectives on balance, continuity, and transformation. It reminds us that we are part of nature and that the role of the shaman has always been to help communities remember what time and change may cause them to forget.

For thousands of years, our ancestors lived in close relationship with the Earth. They understood migratory patterns, seasonal cycles, medicinal plants, and the delicate balance that sustains life among species. Humans were not merely observers of nature but active participants within its vast web of life.

Over time, agriculture, industry, and the expansion of modern cities created distance between people and the natural world. The illusion of separation gradually emerged. Yet biology, ecology, and history remind us that this separation never truly existed. Humans remain a thread within the same living tapestry as forests, oceans, animals, and soil.

By honoring the land, reusing materials, and preserving Indigenous knowledge, the cultural work of Etnia Nativa reflects this ancestral understanding and demonstrates that harmony with nature is not simply an idea—it is a way of life.

Cultural memory is sustained through storytelling, art, and education. Natural elements are treated with respect, and materials are reused whenever possible. Within this classroom of life, people rediscover how to live in harmony with ecological boundaries and cultural traditions that recognize the value of the natural world.

Every shell, cactus, and stone holds meaning. Nothing is discarded without thought. The cycles of nature—growth, decay, and renewal—are visible everywhere. These daily practices echo the deepest teachings of shamanic traditions: life unfolds as a continuous cycle in which every element has a purpose.

Today, perhaps the role of the shaman is not to stand between humanity and nature, but to remind us of something far more profound:

We were never separate from the Earth. We are part of it.

Modern societies may require a different form of awareness—a collective awakening. Each person carries a responsibility once associated with the shaman: to listen to, respect, and protect the living world to which we belong.

The bridge between humanity and nature is not something we must search for outside ourselves. It already exists within us.

By becoming conscious stewards of our environment, we expand the meaning of ancient wisdom. The responsibility for balance belongs to everyone. We share the same senses, the same intuition, and the same biological connection to the Earth that our ancestors possessed. The difference lies not in our abilities, but in our awareness.

Our health depends on forests, oceans, fertile soils, and biodiversity. Our cultures, food systems, and climate stability arise from ecological balance.

Recognizing this truth transforms the way we live. It reminds us that protecting nature is not an act of charity toward the planet, but an act of survival—and a gesture of respect for ourselves.❑

Before You Leave Aruba… Discover Its Soul

Step inside Etnia Nativa and journey beyond the beaches into the living heart of the island. Here, the ancient wisdom of Aruba's first people still breathes through stories, sacred plants, star navigation, and traditions shaped by centuries of harmony with nature—long before the resorts and modern world arrived.

In just one unforgettable hour, you will encounter the knowledge, resilience, and spiritual connection that forged Aruba's true identity.

A powerful cultural journey into the traditions, wisdom, and enduring spirit of the island's first inhabitants.

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The Aruban Cunukero: From past to present

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's culture consists of rich historical traditions that make up the Aruban identity and lifestyle. However, the life of the cunukero (farmer) is perhaps the most important aspect of our culture, in a sense representing to locals the true essence of the Aruban.

Historically, cunucus (farms) played a huge role in the early social and economic development of Aruba, and its relevance dates back to the early days of the colonization era. Upon being discovered by Spanish conquistadors in the late 15th century, Aruba was used primarily as a ranch, housing horses and cattle brought from Europe. During the Dutch colonization era where the West Indian Company (WIC) dominated the economic sphere on the island, using the land to set up cattle farms and ranches remained popular.

Anthropologist Sidney Mintz divided Caribbean farmers back in four categories:

- The "squatters", who were mostly comprised of illegal and poor colonists, runaway slaves and deserters who took advantage of the Spanish's weak supervision on Caribbean islands like Cuba and the DR;
- Then you have "Early Yeomen", who were legal farmers who came to the west under contract. Once their contract expired, they were given a plot of land for independent use;
- Proto-Peasants were plantation slaves who were allowed to have a small piece of land to grow food for their own consumption. This was to curb the cost of living on the plantations;
- Lastly you have the "Runaway Peasantries", usually comprised of runaway slaves who acquired farming tools and cattle through stealing or through secret exchanges with other slaves from different plantations.

However, the Aruban cunukeros back then are hard to place, and their history may explain why.

From 1636 (beginning of Dutch colonization era) to before the oil industry in 1924, Aruba's population consisted of mostly farmers. These farmers were mostly indigenous and were characterized as peasants. They weren't allowed to participate in trading, but instead were granted a piece of land to live off of. However, in exchange for this grant, these indigenous farmers were obligated to work for the WIC, doing daily tasks such as taking care of or hunting cattle large majority of which were destined for Curacao, clean water tanks and chop wood, among other things.

As much as these farmers were given to opportunity to live "free" with a plot of land, their exclusion from the trading and business world, as well as being deprived the chance to become real property and cattle owners, made them a unique group among Caribbean farmers at the time.

The WIC placed a lot of restrictions on these indigenous farmers a method to safeguard their cattle deposit on the island. The indigenous farmers were mostly granted less than 7 acres of land. Those who owned bigger land were either once affiliated with the WIC or were colonists who settled on the island to try their luck at farming. In 1767, there were about 120 houses/cunucus on the island.

These Aruban farmers were also limited to the amount of cattle they could keep. Most kept goats as cattle, as only those who were affiliated with the WIC could keep (more) sheep. Of the 76 goat herders on the island, about 45 of them had less than 30 goats, and only 7 of them had more than 60 goats.

It wasn't until the WIC was defunct in late 18th century that these farmers were able to obtain more freedom as cunukeros. After 1824, the government gave these farmers official permission to keep livestock, and the obligations once placed on them were officially discarded.

Because of the dry climate in Aruba, growing food for commercial purposes was not popular. The focus was mainly on cattle herding and taking care of livestock. However, livestock need food to survive, and when Aruba experienced its duper dry climate, many farmers would see a big loss in their livestock, and hence profit.

Although the WIC at one point did try to come up with an initiative to get more people to have land on the island, the climate never really allowed real profit from farming. Because of the climate, Aruban farmers in general could not keep large quantities of livestock. At a certain point toward the end of the 18th century, the climate got so bad that many farmers decided to leave the island for a while.

For this reason, the farming economy on the island remained small. As the years went by and people noticed that these farms could not really produce any sustainable profit, farmers kept their small piece of land just to live off of. This is why the Aruban cunukeros only played a very tiny role into the plantation economy.

In modern Aruba, cunucus and cunukeros still exist on the island, fortunately with more freedom and more opportunity to tap into the agricultural market. These farmers usually sell their produce on a smaller scale, like during farmers' market events and other types of (holiday) events.

Source: "Arubaans Akkoord: Opstellen over Aruba van voor de komst van de olieindustrie (Aruban Accord: Essays on Aruba Before the Arrival of the Oil Industry)" by Alofs, Luc; Rutgers, Wim; Coomans, Henny E. red.w❑

CROSSWORD

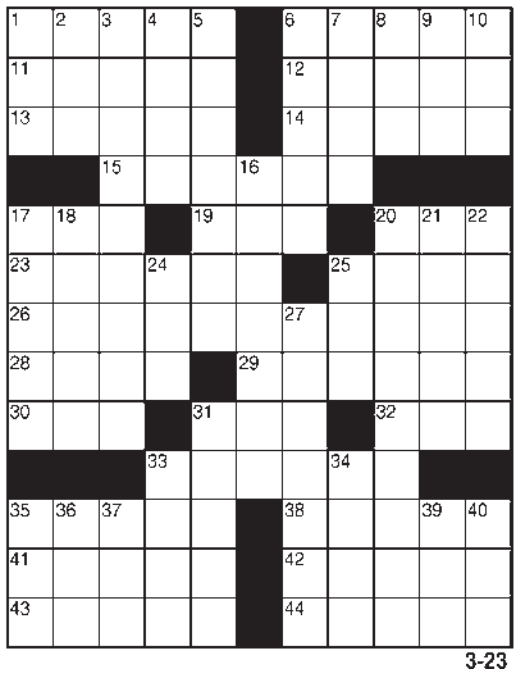
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Sells for
6 Trait carriers
11 Cashew family tree
12 Glorify
13 Bakery come-on
14 "Lassie" boy
15 Friend of Fozzie
17 Wisdom bringer
19 Set fire to
20 Easy victim
23 Moves like a crab
25 High point
26 Ironed
28 Aussie birds
29 Go by
30 Match part
31 Vaccine shot
32 Poetic "always"
33 Playwright Pinter
35 Heathen
38 One a-courting
41 Blow away
42 Dodge
43 Himalayan land
44 Bit of info

DOWN

1 Robert E. Lee's org.
2 "— Town"
3 Forced from a hiding place
4 Not wild
5 Bright hue
6 "Understand?"
7 Way to go
8 "Platoon" setting
9 Avenue tree
10 Pig's place
16 Get wrong, in a way
17 Cart pullers
18 "I want that!"
20 Eyeballed
21 Tickle
22 Friend of Wendy
24 — Alamos
25 Nabokov novel
27 Nudged
31 Leigh of "Psycho"
33 Mist
34 "Damn Yankees" role
35 Contrived
36 French friend
37 Chatter
39 Part of a prof's address
40 "Stand" band



3-23

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

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.

3-23 CRYPTOQUOTE

SZH'G YJKG CZT OZLQZHQ GZ ATKHU RZV CXZYQTO. DXJHG RZVT ZYH UJTSQH JHS SQEZTJGQ RZVT ZYH OZVX.

— XVGWQT AVTAJHB

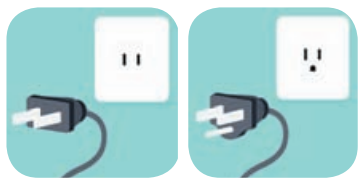
Cryptoquote: THE ONLY SUBJECT I KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IS MYSELF, AND I DON'T KNOW THAT TOO CLEARLY. — WILLIAM SHATNER

Cruise ship Schedule: March 09 - 15 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	09	BRITANNIA	07.00	18.00	B	1
		MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
		CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	08.00	22.00	I	1
TUE	10	SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	13.30	22.30	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
WED	11	CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE	07.00	17.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL MAGIC	09.00	22.00	C	1
THU	12	BRILLANCE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	B	1
		OCEANIA ALLURA	11.00	23.00	C	1
SUN	15	STAR PRIDE	06.00	18.00	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 basicbut 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 occurs, 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

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

Difficulty: ★★★ 3/11

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★ 3/10

Musk, already world's richest person, eyes $1 trillion fortune

New York, United States
Elon Musk's estimated $839 billion net worth has made him the wealthiest individual ever recorded, Forbes said Tuesday, as billionaires worldwide saw their combined fortunes surge in the past year to an all-time high of $20.1 trillion.

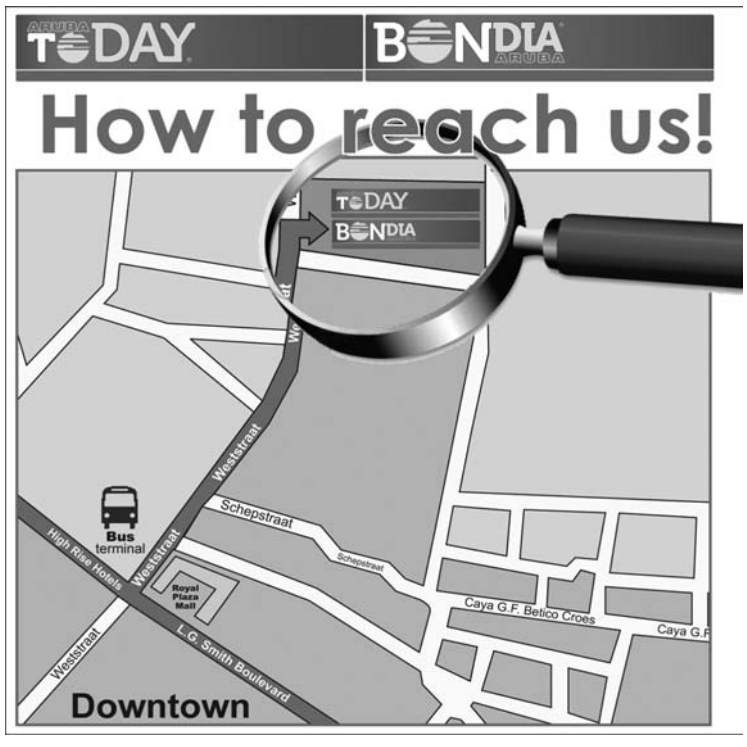
Musk topped the Forbes World's Billionaires list for the second consecutive year after his fortune swelled by roughly $500 billion over the past twelve months, driven by rising valuations at Tesla and SpaceX, which is targeting a public offering in 2026.
He is the first person ever to surpass the $800 billion mark and is on course to become the world's first trillionaire.
Musk's monumental jump in wealth reflects a roller-coaster 2025 for Tesla that saw the electric vehicle maker's stock price tumble through the spring amid consumer boycotts over the billionaire's backing of Donald Trump and other far-right politicians.

But Tesla shares rebounded in the second half of 2025 after Musk exited his Trump administration role and have remained lofty. The Forbes list is based on valuations as of March 1, 2026.
Tesla champions believe the company is poised for stratospheric growth because of Musk's access to cutting-edge technology in autonomous driving and artificial intelligence.
While Musk remains a polarizing figure with the general public, Tesla shareholders have consistently backed the billionaire.
In a November vote, shareholders endorsed a pay package worth up to $1 trillion if Tesla meets production and valuation targets, lifting Musk's share of the company to about 25 percent.

Musk had suggested he could exit Tesla absent the package, saying ahead of the vote that he wanted a large enough stake to have a "strong influence" over the company as he builds a "robot army."
Musk has said that less than 0.1 percent of his wealth is in cash.

CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, South African-Canadian-U.S. businessman Elon Musk speaks during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 22, 2026.

David Kirsch at the University of Maryland said estimates of Musk's wealth are inevitably "highly speculative" because a large share depends on equity assets whose valuations depend on whether anticipated growth pans out.
"If you were to measure the actual assets, it wouldn't be $800 bn. ❑



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Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas
Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:
Dakota: Tel.588 7364
San Nicolas:
Centro Medico: Tel.584 5794

OTHER

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
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+297 588 0539

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

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

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American Airlines	**582 2700**
Avianca	**588 0059**
Jet Blue	**588 2244**
Surinam	**582 7896**

AID FOUNDATIONS

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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

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AI offers hope for young filmmakers dreaming of an Oscar

Los Angeles, United States
Studying at the film school where Oscar-nominated "Sinners" director Ryan Coogler honed his craft, SiJia Zheng dreams of winning an Academy Award.
Now with the recent developments in artificial intelligence, he can see a shortcut to achieving his ambition.
"That's a chance for beginners like me who can use AI to just make a film and to announce to the world that I have the ability to be a director," he told AFP.
Zheng, 29, who hails from China, is one of a burgeoning class of students at USC's School of Cinematic Arts, studying animation in a place that has long been a training ground for future Pixar and DreamWorks talent.

He has used his time at the Los Angeles university to learn about the emerging field of AI animation.
That has included producing his seven-minute short film "Torment" about a masked killer terrorizing a high school.
The film, which was recognized at the LA Shorts festival, was generated entirely by AI in just one week.
Zheng recorded himself in front of a green screen and then asked the software to modify his face to make him into all the different characters in the movie.

Chinese USC student SiJia Zheng speaks about how he used artificial intelligence to modify his face and make him into all the different characters of his film at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, on March 6, 2026.

The technology also allowed him to set his story in an Asian school and have scenes in a swimming pool two things that would have cost a fortune if he had filmed them traditionally.
"As a student, it's impossible to have that much money" to produce a film, he said.

- 'Tool' -
Not everyone in Hollywood feels so positively about AI.
The technology was one of the key sticking points in the writers' and actors' strikes that paralyzed Hollywood in 2023.
Guillermo del Toro, the director of "Frankenstein," which will compete for the best picture Oscar on Sunday, is notoriously anti-AI, insisting he would "rather die" than use it.
Zheng said he had been impressed by the Mexican director's "amazing" film, particularly the opening scene where the monster attacks a 19th-century three-masted ship, which del Toro's prop department constructed specially for the movie.

But "when I watched the film...I was just thinking: 'Oh, using AI to do that would be much cheaper and... make something pretty similar.'"
He insists, however, that it doesn't replace the filmmaking spark.
"AI is just a tool, and people can use it to become even better."
The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the body that will hand out the Oscars in Hollywood on March 15, seems to agree last year the body updated its rules to say it was neutral on the technology.
"Generative Artificial Intelligence and other digital tools...neither help nor harm the chances of achieving a nomination," it said last April.

- 'Ethical' use -
At the University of Southern California (USC), teachers like Debra Isaac are trying to navigate the ethics around the emerging technology of AI.
The animation professor said she was shocked by an AI video that rocketed around the internet in recent weeks.

The short sequence, created by Seedance the AI generation model developed by TikTok's parent company, Bytedance shows an ersatz fight between Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise. Neither star was compensated.
But, used properly, AI does not need to be exploitative, and is not a lazy way to make films, Isaac said.
"It's not just about, 'Hey, I have a prompt, and I'm just gonna type a few words and I'll get my image, and I'll get my animation, and I'm done,'" she said.

"Some of these tools are not ethically dubious at all. They're trained by people that are using their own work," she added.
That's precisely what Xindi Zhang, a recent graduate of the program and winner of a Student Academy Award for her short film "The Song of Drifters," did.
For the mini-documentary about the difficulty of feeling at home anywhere, the 29-year-old artist fed the AI dozens of her drawings.❑

Italy buys rare Caravaggio portrait for 30 million euros

Rome, Italy
Italy has paid 30 million euros for a Caravaggio painting of the future pope Urban VIII, the culture ministry said Tuesday, a work that will enter the Barberini museum collection in Rome.

A visitor looks at the private collection and never previously shown to the public painting "Portrait de Maffeo Barberini" by Italian master Caravaggio at the Gallerie Nazionali di Arte Antica in the Barberini palace in Rome on November 22, 2024.

The portrait of Monsignor Maffeo Barberini was painted by Italian master Caravaggio when the nobleman born in 1568 was in his 30s, years before he became pope.
"This is a work of exceptional importance," Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli said in a statement, adding that it was "one of the most significant investments" ever made by the state for an artwork.
Maffeo Barberini was elected to the papacy in 1623 and his pontificate lasted until his death in 1644.
The painting was authenticated in 1963 by the art critic Roberto Longhi, a great specialist in the work of the 16th-century artist, whose full name was Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio.

"This acquisition, together with the recent purchase of the Ecce Homo by Antonello da Messina, is part of a broader project to strengthen the national cultural heritage," he said.
The previous owners of the work, who were not specified, had allowed the portrait to be exhibited to the public for an exhibit on Caravaggio at Palazzo Barberini the noble family's historic home in central Rome which ended in February 2025.
The museum's director, Thomas Clement Salomon, told AFP at the exhibition's opening in November 2024 that the fact it was being displayed was "exceptional."
"It has never been lent to an exhibition, it has never been seen in a museum, so it is an absolute preview," he said.❑

Gilgeous-Alexander equals scoring record as Thunder roll Nuggets

Los Angeles, United States

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander equalled Wilt Chamberlain's 63-year-old 20-point scoring record on Monday as the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the Denver Nuggets 129-126 in a pulsating clash of the Western Conference titans.

Gilgeous-Alexander finished with 35 points, 15 assists and nine rebounds to pull level with Chamberlain's longstanding mark of scoring 20 points or more in 126 consecutive games set between 1961 and 1963.

But Gilgeous-Alexander's equalling of Chamberlain's streak was almost a footnote to a spellbinding individual performance that saw the reigning NBA Most Valuable Player seal victory with a game-winning three-pointer with three seconds on the clock.

Gilgeous-Alexander had given the Thunder what looked like a winning 126-122 lead with 14 seconds on the clock after another superb three-pointer.

The Nuggets though came roaring back with a nerveless three-pointer from Nikola Jokic, and a foul from Jaylin Williams in the same play allowed Jamal Murray to level it for Denver from the free-throw line.

With overtime looming there was one last throw of the dice for Oklahoma City, and Gilgeous-Alexander duly delivered, launching a 25-foot step back three to snatch victory at the death.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander #2 of the Oklahoma City Thunder celebrates a made basket during the second half against the Golden State Warriors at Paycom Center on March 7, 2026 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

"I just tried to make a play I was comfortable making," Gilgeous-Alexander said after sending the Oklahoma City home crowd into raptures.

"I tried to create space to get a shot off it went down."

Gilgeous-Alexander's winning three was the final act of the latest in a series of blockbuster duels between the two Western Conference heavyweights, who came to blows when the two teams met last month.

Gilgeous-Alexander said the Nuggets had forced the Thunder to raise their game.

"They're a really good opponent. They've won championships, they have really good talent, really good coaching and really good schemes," Gilgeous-Alexander said.

"Playing against them brings out the best in of you. That's the level of basketball that you want to play at the end of the season."

Gilgeous-Alexander received plenty of scoring support with Williams finishing with 29 points 21 of them from outside the arc and Ajay Mitchell adding 24 off the bench.

Jared McCain and Isaiah Joe had 13 points apiece.

Denver were led by a Jokic triple double. The Serbian star finished with 32 points, 14 rebounds and 13 assists, while Tim Hardaway Jr. erupted with 28 points off the bench including eight three-pointers.

Oklahoma City's victory extended their winning streak to six games and leaves them three wins clear of San Antonio at the top of the Western Conference with a 51-15 record.

Denver slipped to 39-26 and are now sixth, occupying the last automatic playoff berth in the West.❑

Japan survive Czech scare to stay unbeaten at World Baseball Classic

Tokyo, Japan

Already-qualified Japan were made to sweat by the Czech Republic's part-time team of teachers and firefighters before the defending World Baseball Classic champions ended pool play with a 9-0 win on Tuesday.

Playing without rested superstar Shohei Ohtani, Japan had to wait until the eighth inning before they got on the scoreboard against the winless Czechs at the Tokyo Dome.

Japan's bats eventually came to life to finish Pool C with four wins out of four.

They now head to the knock-out round in the United States looking to win the title for a record-extending fourth time.

"If we lose in the next game it's over, so we know we have to give everything on both the pitching and the batting side," said Japan manager Hirokazu Ibata.

"We want to make sure we leave it all out there."

Japan were given a tough time by the mostly amateur Czechs, whose pitchers struck out six Japanese batters including Major League Baseball players.

The Czechs were playing at the tournament for a second time and manager Pavel Chadim, a neurologist by trade, said they had proved they were "not baseball tourists".

"How many tourists can have so many contacts, fight and be so close to the best team in the world?" he said.

"I think that our game, it wasn't just a dream for Czech baseball, I feel that this is hope for European countries."❑

Japan's Ukyo Shuto (C) celebrates with teammates after hitting a three run home run during the World Baseball Classic (WBC) Pool C game between Japan and Czech Republic at the Tokyo Dome in Tokyo on March 10, 2026.

Andreeva crashes out in angry end to Indian Wells title defense

Mirra Andreeva reacts to the crowd as she leaves the court after her loss to Katerina Siniakova of Czechia during Day 6 of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on March 09, 2026 in Indian Wells, California.

Indian Wells, United States

Mirra Andreeva's Indian Wells title defense met a bad-tempered end on Monday in round three as Katerina Siniakova stunned the talented Russian teenager 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

The 18-year-old Andreeva opened her bid to retain her crown with an imperious 6-0, 6-0 demolition of Solana Sierra.

But she was in trouble early and often against 44th-ranked Siniakova in a rollercoaster contest that ended with a shot from the Czech that hit the net cord and dribbled over in one last frustrating moment.

Andreeva slung her racquet as she approached the net before departing the court with a defiant gesture at the crowd.

"I'm not really proud of how I managed it," said Andreeva, but added her profanities picked up by courtside microphones weren't directed at the fans.

"It was just anger coming out, just a lot of emotions," she said. "Not really towards anyone."

Siniakova, a former doubles number one, admitted it was an awkward way to seal the win in a match that featured seven service breaks for each player and 43 break chances between them.

"Of course I'm happy (the ball) went on the other side," she said. "I was, like, should I cheer? It's a really tricky finish. But definitely I will not say I'm not happy."

Siniakova said the swirling winds on Stadium Court were troubling both players.

Andreeva's emotions had already boiled over when she sailed a swinging volley long to surrender the second set, during which each player had remarks for the chair umpire about her opponent.

She regrouped to break Siniakova for a 3-2 lead in the third, but Siniakova won the next four games, saving two break points in the final game before gaining the win on her first match point.

Siniakova will face Elina Svitolina for a place in the quarter-finals after the ninth-seeded Ukrainian beat American Ashlyn Krueger 6-4, 6-2.

There was no drama for world number two Iga Swiatek, who defeated Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-3, 6-2.

- Learning experience -

Poland's Swiatek beat Sakkari in the final to claim both of her Indian Wells titles, in 2022, and 2024, but Sakkari had won their most recent encounter in the quarter-finals of the Qatar Open last month.

Swiatek said she had learned from "obvious mistakes" she made in Doha.

"I knew what to focus on today and I did that from the beginning till the end," she said. "So I'm really happy with my focus and the way I was prepared.

Swiatek next faces Doha champion Karolina Muchova, who blew past Antonia Ruzic 6-0, 6-3.

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina kept her bid for a second Indian Wells title on track with a 6-4, 6-4 victory over Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.❑