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How the humble beaver is becoming America's weapon against climate change



Two North American beavers check out a man-made beaver dam in the new beaver enclosure during a sneak peak of the new American Trail at the Smithsonian National Zoo August 29, 2012 in Washington, D.C.

BOZEMAN, MT — In the high-stakes battle against global warming, the world's most advanced laboratories are often outshone by a creature that has been quietly working in the mud for millennia. According to a groundbreaking study published today in *Communications Earth & Environment*, the American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) has been officially upgraded from a "nuisance" to a "climate hero."

The research, conducted over five years across the river basins of the American West, reveals that beaver dams are far more than just bundles of sticks; they are sophisticated, carbon-trapping machines that offer a low-cost, high-impact solution to some of the most pressing environmental challenges of the 21st century.

The carbon sink beneath the surface

The core of the study's find-

ings lies in what happens behind the dam. When beavers obstruct a stream, they create expansive wetlands and ponds. These still waters allow sediment and organic matter—leaves, wood, and aquatic plants—to settle at the bottom. In a fast-moving stream, this organic material would wash away and eventually decompose, releasing carbon dioxide or methane into the atmosphere.

However, in the oxygen-poor environment of a beaver pond's floor, that carbon is buried and preserved. Researchers have found that these "beaver-engineered" wetlands can sequester significantly more carbon per square meter than the surrounding dry forests.

"We used to view beavers as a minor part of the ecosystem," said Dr. Helena Vance, the study's lead author and a professor of hydrology. "But when you look at the sheer

scale of the carbon they are locking underground, they are effectively turning thousands of miles of American waterways into massive, natural carbon sinks."

Drought defense and wildfire buffers

Beyond carbon sequestration, the study highlights how beavers are helping the U.S. adapt to the increasingly volatile weather patterns caused by climate change. In the American West, where "megadroughts" have become a recurring threat, beaver ponds act as natural reservoirs. They hold water on the landscape longer, recharging groundwater and keeping streams flowing even during the hottest summer months.

Perhaps most visually striking is the role beavers play in wildfire prevention. Satellite imagery analyzed in the report shows that during recent record-breaking fire

seasons, "beaver-modified" areas remained vibrant green oases amidst charred landscapes. The saturated soil and lush vegetation created by the dams act as natural firebreaks, providing critical refuges for local wildlife when the surrounding forest is ablaze.

The "beaver believer" movement

The success of the study has energized a growing movement of "Beaver Believers"—landowners, ranchers, and conservationists who are actively working to reintroduce the animals to degraded lands.

In California and Idaho, some ranchers who once trapped beavers to prevent flooded pastures are now installing "Beaver Dam Analogues" (BDAs)—man-made structures designed to mimic the effects of a real dam and encourage beavers to move in. □

White House urges U.S. Congress to act on AI

Washington, United States

The Trump administration on Friday unveiled a sweeping legislative blueprint for regulating artificial intelligence, pressing Congress to establish a uniform federal standard and override a potential patchwork of state-level laws.

The four-page framework, billed by the White House as a "commonsense national policy framework," lays out broad priorities, including provisions on child protection, energy costs, intellectual property and free speech. The White House is also seeking federal preemption of state AI rules, after states moved to pass their own laws amid political gridlock that has blocked federal legislation in Washington.

"Congress should preempt state AI laws that impose undue burdens to ensure a minimally burdensome national standard consistent with these recommendations, not fifty discordant ones," the framework states. In a major shift, the difficulty in passing laws at the federal level has seen major AI companies pivot to supporting state laws they can get behind.

OpenAI said this week that in the absence of a national framework, states "should align around the emerging model in California and New York."

Google president of global affairs Kent Walker told Axios that state coordination on AI laws is welcome and flagged

legislation California and New York backed by pro-big tech governors as a good example to follow.

On child protection, the White House calls for age-verification requirements for AI platforms likely to be accessed by minors, parental controls over privacy settings and screen time, and mandatory features to combat sexual exploitation and self-harm risks.

On intellectual property, the Trump administration believes that the training of AI models on copyrighted material "does not violate copyright laws," but acknowledging arguments to the contrary, it "supports allowing the Courts to resolve this issue."

Despite the White House's push for swift action, like most



The Center for Tomorrow Founder and President Dex Hunter-Torricke speaks on stage during the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the world's biggest mobile technology showcase and fair in Barcelona on March 3, 2026.

attempts at tech regulation in the United States, the legislation faces a tough road to become law in Congress. Two previous attempts by the White House to enshrine federal preemption in Congress

have failed. The administration has also threatened to impose broadband and internet funding restrictions on states whose AI legislation is judged as too cumbersome. □

How All-Terrain technology is opening the American wilderness to everyone

DENVER, CO — **For decades**, the call of the great American outdoors has come with an asterisk for millions of citizens. While the National Park Service and state agencies have made strides in creating paved "accessible" loops, the true heart of the wilderness—the rugged ridgelines, the soft sandy dunes, and the rocky creek crossing—remained largely out of reach for those using traditional wheelchairs.

That narrative changed today. In a coordinated multi-state announcement, park officials in Georgia, Colorado, and Michigan revealed a massive expansion of their "All-Terrain Tracker" programs. The initiative provides specialized, electric-powered "Trackchairs" essentially wheelchairs equipped with tank-like treads instead of wheels to visitors at no cost. This milestone marks the largest single-day expansion of outdoor mobility access in U.S. history.



The freedom to roam

For David Miller, a veteran from Fort Collins who lost the use of his legs a decade ago, the program is more than just a piece of equipment; it is a restoration of identity.

"I used to spend every weekend on these trails before my injury," Miller said, gesturing toward a steep, pine-needle-covered incline at Lory State Park. "For ten years, I've sat in the

parking lot or stayed on the flat asphalt paths while my family hiked ahead. Today, for the first time, I made it to the overlook. I saw the valley the same way they did. I wasn't following behind; I was leading the way."

The Trackchairs are engineered to handle grades, mud, snow, and sand terrain that would instantly stop a standard manual or power wheelchair. Controlled by a simple joystick,

they allow users to navigate through forests and over obstacles with a sense of autonomy that was previously unimaginable in a wilderness setting.

A growing national movement

The push for "Total Access" has gained significant momentum over the last year. What began as small pilot programs in a handful of parks has blossomed into

a nationwide movement. State governors have begun allocating specific "Inclusion Grants" to ensure that the beauty of our natural resources is a birthright available to all, regardless of physical ability.

In Michigan, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced today that Trackchairs are now available at ten different state parks, including the iconic Sleeping Bear Dunes. Previously, the towering sand bluffs were an impossible climb for mobility-impaired visitors. Now, the "sand-munching" treads of the new chairs allow families to explore the shoreline together.

"Nature is a healer," says Elena Rodriguez, a physical therapist who volunteered at today's launch event in Georgia's Sweetwater Creek State Park. "When we provide the technology to get people into the woods, we aren't just giving them a ride. We are giving them mental clarity, a sense of adventure, and the dignity of choice." □

How Illinois is leading the midwest's composting revolution

CHICAGO, IL — In the bustling heart of the "Windy City," a quiet transformation is taking place under our feet. What was once destined for the dark depths of a landfill is now fueling a green renaissance across Illinois. This week, Chicago's Department of Streets and Sanitation announced a major milestone: the city's popular food scrap drop-off program has officially diverted more than one million pounds of organic waste since its inception.

What began as a modest pilot project with a few green bins in local wards has blossomed into a city-wide movement. Today, residents from Rogers Park to Beverly are trading their trash cans for compost buckets, proving that urban dwellers are eager to play a direct role in envi-

ronmental stewardship.

Turning waste into wealth

The success of the program lies in its simplicity. By providing accessible drop-off points at community gardens and city lots, Chicago has made it easy for residents to separate their coffee grounds, banana peels, and leftovers from general refuse. This "black gold," as gardeners call it, is then processed and returned to the earth as nutrient-rich compost.

"Seeing that million-pound mark is an incredible feeling," said Angela Vasquez, a volunteer coordinator at a community garden in Logan Square. "It's physical proof that small, daily choices by thousands of people add up to a massive, positive impact on our soil and our air."

A statewide ripple effect

The momentum in Chicago isn't staying within city limits. A landmark piece of state legislation recently went into effect, requiring large-scale event facilities such as stadiums, convention centers, and concert halls to implement comprehensive composting services. This move positions Illinois as a regional leader in the fight against food waste, ensuring that the remnants of a sold-out ballgame or a massive trade show are recycled back into the ecosystem rather than contributing to methane emissions in landfills.

In Springfield and Peoria, local officials are watching Chicago's success closely. Several mid-sized cities in Central Illinois have already begun scouting locations for their own municipal drop-off sites,



inspired by the high participation rates and the sheer volume of waste diverted in the northeast.

The economic "green" seed

Beyond the environmental benefits, the composting boom is sowing seeds for a new sector of the local economy. From specialized hauling companies to industrial-scale composting facilities, "green-collar" jobs are on the rise. These businesses are finding in-

novative ways to turn a "waste product" into a marketable resource for local farmers and landscapers.

"We're closing the loop," explained Dr. Marcus Thorne, an environmental scientist at the University of Illinois. "The food grown on Illinois farms comes to the city, the scraps are composted, and that compost goes back to the farms to grow the next harvest. It's the ultimate sustainable circle." □

Paul Thomas Anderson: eclectic filmmaker, critical darling

Hollywood, United States

Director Paul Thomas Anderson has often been on the outside looking in during an eclectic career of boundary-pushing filmmaking, but he received the ultimate insider's accolade Sunday the Oscar for best director of his acclaimed "One Battle After Another." The Los Angeles native has long been a critical darling, with a raft of previous Academy Award nominations dating back to his breakout film "Boogie Nights" and including his last feature "Licorice Pizza." But "One Battle After Another" with an all-star cast including Leonardo DiCaprio, Sean Penn, Benicio Del Toro and Teyana Taylor has proved unstoppable during awards season.

Anderson also took home the Academy Award for best adapted screenplay and shared the Oscar for best picture as a producer. "I'm so happy to call the movies home," Anderson told the audience. With "One Battle After Another" a quirky tale about a pot-addled revolutionary who must get back into the game to rescue his daughter, the 55-year-old Anderson bested Chloe Zhao for "Hamnet," Josh Safdie for "Marty Supreme," Joachim Trier for "Sentimental Value" and Ryan Coogler for "Sin-



Paul Thomas Anderson, winner of the Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Director and Best Picture Awards for "One Battle After Another", poses in the press room during the 98th Oscars at Dolby Theatre on March 15, 2026 in Hollywood, California.

ners."

The filmmaker had already won a BAFTA, a Critics Choice Award, a Golden Globe and a Directors Guild Award in the run-up to the Academy Awards.

- 'Boogie Nights' breakthrough -

Born in the Studio City neighborhood of Los Angeles in 1970, Anderson grew up in California and studied at New York University before dropping out after a single semester.

By then, Anderson had already developed a strong interest in film, having made

a 30-minute mockumentary about a male porn star during high school.

The subject of the film would form the inspiration for his 1997 breakthrough movie "Boogie Nights," often described as the best big-screen depiction of the porn industry, which earned Anderson his first Oscar nomination for best original screenplay.

The film also garnered an Oscar nod for Julianne Moore and burnished the reputations of a crop of young actors who subsequently went on to great success including Mark

Wahlberg, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Don Cheadle and John C. Reilly.

Anderson followed "Boogie Nights" with the 1999 drama "Magnolia," which skillfully interweaves the lives of several people living in the San Fernando Valley suburbs of Los Angeles.

The film which earned Anderson another Oscars nod for best original screenplay, and an acting nomination for Tom Cruise famously featured a bizarre biblical twist in which the sky suddenly rains down thousands of exploding frogs.

The quirky 2002 rom-com

"Punch-Drunk Love" followed, starring Adam Sandler as a hapless small business owner who falls for his sister's co-worker (Emily Watson).

While the film was a critical hit, it flopped at the box office, recouping only \$17 million against a \$25 million budget.

As a result, Anderson had trouble raising funding for his next film "There Will Be Blood," based on Upton Sinclair's 1927 book "Oil!" and shot in Texas for a budget of around \$25 million.

But it ended up with eight Oscar nominations and two statuettes for best actor Daniel Day-Lewis and best cinematography.

- Loyal company of actors -

Perhaps due to his habit of creating roles for his stars that result in critical accolades, several of Anderson's movies have seen him reunite with a stable of revered actors.

Anderson teamed up again with Hoffman for 1950s-set "The Master," which centered on a Scientology-inspired nascent cult called "The Cause." All three lead actors Hoffman, Joaquin Phoenix and Amy Adams were nominated for Oscars. Phoenix then worked again with Anderson on "Inherent Vice," the first-ever screen adaptation of a Thomas Pynchon novel. □

Shakira to wrap up world tour with Madrid residency

Madrid,

Spain

Pop superstar Shakira will

wrap up her record-breaking world tour with a con-

cert residency in Madrid at a custom-built venue, promoter Live Nation said Monday.

The six-night residency runs September 18-20 and September 25-27, with more dates possibly added depending on ticket demand.

The shows will be held at a temporary venue to be built in southern Madrid dubbed the "Shakira Stadium" with a capacity for roughly 50,000 people, the president of Live Nation Spain, Pino Saggiocco, told a news conference.

Shakira's Madrid concerts will be a "celebration of life" and Latin culture, he

added.

"Spain is where we're really going all out. The show's going to be something people have never seen before. I'm really excited," Shakira said in an interview published Sunday in daily Spanish newspaper El Pais. The concerts will mark her first performances in Spain in eight years, and her first since reaching a 2023 settlement with Spanish prosecutors to settle a tax fraud case.

As part of the deal, Shakira, 49, paid a fine of over 7.3 million euros (\$8.6 million), after previously settling 17.45 million euros with the Spanish tax agency.

The case centred on the period when the Colombian singer lived in Barcelona with Spanish football player Gerard Pique. The couple, who have two sons, broke up in 2022.

The residency will mark the final dates of Shakira's "Women Don't Cry Anymore" world tour, which has become the highest-grossing tour ever by a Latin artist.

Shakira kicked off the tour last year in Brazil, where she is set to perform a free concert on Rio de Janeiro's iconic Copacabana beach in May, following in the footsteps of Madonna and Lady Gaga. □

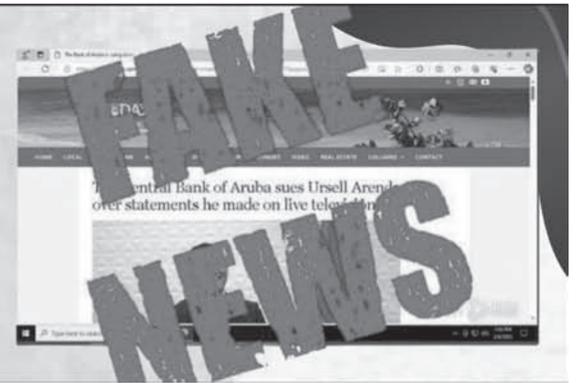


Colombian singer Shakira performs during her "Las Mujeres Ya No Lloran World Tour" at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, on August 5, 2025.

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Turkey in cultural diplomacy push to bring history home

Istanbul, Turkey

When an ancient bronze statue of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius landed back on Turkish soil after decades abroad, it was more than a symbolic homecoming.

It marked the latest victory in Turkey's increasingly assertive push to recover antiquities illegally taken abroad -- a campaign supported by a newly-developed AI tool for identifying cultural assets of Turkish origin.

The life-sized bronze, which dates back to the second- or third-century, was taken in the 1960s from the ancient city of Bubon near Turkey's southwestern Antalya resort.

After a years-long investigation involving research, scientific testing and statements from now elderly witnesses, the headless statue arrived back in Turkey last year.

Its repatriation from an Ohio museum involved cooperation with the US Department of Homeland Security and the Manhattan District Attorney's Office. For Zeynep Boz, director of Turkey's department for combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property, one moment stands out.

"I clearly remember when the computer finally processed the data and we saw the match come together. It was an exciting moment," she told AFP at Istanbul's archaeology museum.

That the statue survived at all is exceptional: in antiquity, bronze was a valuable raw material routinely melted down for weapons, coins or everyday objects. "For this reason, bronze statues of this scale have rarely



Zeynep Boz, director of Turkey's department for combating illicit trafficking of cultural property, poses at the Archaeology Museum in Istanbul, on February 5, 2026.

been preserved until today," she said.

For years, Cleveland's Museum of Art had dragged its feet, claiming there was insufficient evidence to prove where it came from, Boz said.

But that changed after archaeometry expert Professor Ernst Pernicka concluded there was "no doubt whatsoever" the statue came from Bubon, where an imperial shrine housed bronze sculptures of Roman emperors.

Soil and lead samples provided crucial scientific evidence which convinced the museum, Boz said.

"It was a long struggle. We were determined and patient and we won," Culture Minister Mehmet Nuri Ersoy said when the statue returned in July.

Turkey has stepped up efforts to combat illicit antiquities trading and in 2025 alone secured the repatriation of 180 cultural artefacts.

- AI to identify trafficked objects -

Although its newly-developed AI-powered "TraceART" system was not involved in recovering the Marcus Aurelius statue, the tool helped identify two 16th-century Iznik tiles that were recovered from Britain this month.

Developed by the culture ministry, it scans images on sales platforms, auctions and social media to identify any cultural assets of Turkish origin that may have been trafficked, with flagged items sent for expert assessment.

TraceART went operational in 2025 and has since identified hundreds of objects for review, Boz said.

In January, Turkey recovered an Anatolian-style marble head from Denver Art Museum in Colorado, said Burcu Ozdemir of the antiquities trafficking unit. The museum contacted Ankara because the piece

"had been donated by the wife of a US consul general who served in Istanbul in the 1940s", she said.

Turkey's campaign also involves returning items to countries like Iran, China and Egypt.

"We returned two of the artefacts stolen from temples in China," Boz told AFP.

Turkey also returned "a key of the Kaaba to Egypt" after realising it had ended up in Turkey illegally, she said of the cube-shaped stone structure at Mecca's Grand Mosque.

- Ottoman tiles at the Louvre -

Turkey is now seeking the repatriation of other antiquities taken during the Ottoman era: an ancient marble torso called the "Old Fisherman" from Berlin, and dozens of Iznik tiles held at France's Louvre museum.

"There's an assumption that artefacts taken in the 18th-19th centuries were acquired legally. We don't

share that view," Boz said. The illegal tile swap came to light in 2003 when one fell from the wall of an Ottoman-era library and on the back was the French manufacturer's mark.

The original and others were taken in the late 1800s by a Frenchman who claimed to be restoring them, then replaced them with fakes.

"We have repeatedly shared evidence with France and talked with the Louvre but no resolution has been reached," she said.

The tiles were on a panel by the tomb of Ottoman Sultan Selim II in the garden of the Hagia Sophia.

Today it bears a plaque in English, French and Turkish reading: "The tiles before us are replicas."

The originals are currently on display at a branch of the Louvre in Lens, 200 kilometres north of Paris, which says they were "bought in 1895".

The museum did not respond to several requests for comment from AFP. □





A child poses as he plays a video game on a tablet on the online game platform and game creation system Roblox developed by Roblox Corporation in Terville, northeastern France on March 11, 2026.

No 'silver bullet' for video game age restrictions: PEGI chief

Paris, France

The head of Europe's video game rating system, PEGI, has warned against supposed "silver bullet" child protection solutions such as age verification, in an interview with AFP.

A new set of PEGI (Pan-European Game Information) age ratings, coming into force from June, will take into account factors including in-game purchases, incentives to constantly revisit games or the ability to limit in-game messages from strangers.

It had taken "a couple of years" for PEGI to work out the new classification, its director general Dirk Bosmans told AFP.

The games sector has in recent years been the subject of debate, including over allegedly addictive mechanics such as "loot boxes" virtual items purchasable for real money that contain a random in-game reward.

PEGI's new ratings will not apply to games released before June this year even the most widely played titles, such as "Fortnite" or "League of Legends".

In future, "we will have to work out a plan of attack, an approach to live service games," Bosmans said,

"especially games that will continually provide new updates".

Introduced in 2003, PEGI is the only media age classification system harmonised across European countries, its chief noted although Germany has its own ratings.

As a self-regulatory mechanism by the games industry, its rules are applied by major console makers Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft, as well as by Google on its app store.

Apple has its own age rating system, while the dominant PC gaming platform Steam based in the US has not implemented one.

- 'Regulatory pressure' -

PEGI has updated its approach in part in response to growing "regulatory pressure" within the European Union, Bosmans said. Even as the EU has tightened digital regulation in recent years, member states are taking their own steps including a draft law in France barring under-15s from social media, which the government has warned would cover some online games with social aspects, such as "Roblox". If passed, the law will require all users to prove their age from 2027.

While automated online

verification "sounds like it's going to fix everything... data protection organisations are very concerned", Bosmans said.

"We first need to have a really good conversation before we start deciding on where to apply it."

He added that companies in the sector have welcomed the updated PEGI classifications.

"They understand that by making PEGI better and stronger, they are better protected against lack of nuance, quick fixes," Bosmans said.

- Parents needed -

Bosmans also spoke out against full-on bans of games for children below a certain age as mooted by French President Emmanuel Macron last month ahead of an expert inquiry. "A ban is not very nuanced. It's not very proportionate, no matter for what you apply it," he said, recalling that PEGI was created to avoid just such a scenario in the early 2000s.

What's more, in Australia where social media has already been banned for under-16s "there is now concern that kids are primarily busy with trying to circumvent the rules, sometimes with the help of their parents," Bosmans said. □



An old Soviet-era Lada car drives past a truck belonging to a private Cuban company (mipyme) parked in front of a gas station with an IsoTank of imported fuel in Havana on March 19, 2026.

After Cuba beckons, Miami entrepreneurs are mostly reluctant to invest in the island

Miami, United States

Havana announced this week that it would allow Cuban emigrants to invest to address the communist island's severe economic and energy crises. But in Miami, the epicenter of the diaspora, entrepreneurs are generally reluctant.

"I don't think a single businessman, not a single Cuban in exile, will invest in this island where there is no legal security," said Ivan Herrera, director of the Univista insurance company, calling the initiative "a huge scam."

The entrepreneur, whose grandfather was a political prisoner for 12 years before fleeing to Miami, refuses to invest under what he calls the "criminal" government.

This opening by Havana, a serious breach in the island's anti-capitalist system, comes as the Cuban economy teeters on the brink of collapse. The shortage of essential goods is worsening daily, and power outages have multiplied since President Donald Trump's administration cut off Venezuelan oil supplies.

Carlos Saladrigas, president of the human resources company Regis HR Group and the think tank Cuba Study Group, viewed the move as a step in the right direction, but said that Cuban authorities needed to resolve many unanswered questions to attract investment.

"Reintegrating the diaspora into the country's economic life is essential for Cuba's future," he said.

"But behind their words lies an entire legal framework that needs to be reformed," Saladrigas said.

"The government has to say: 'We are going to discard traditional socialism and a centrally planned economy and adopt market-based measures.'"

- 'Extremely risky' -

Hugo Cancio, owner of the digital media outlet On-Cuba and Katapulc, an online supermarket that allows the purchase and delivery of products in Cuba, was more enthusiastic.

"Of course I would invest in Cuba, and I would do so with great pleasure," he said. "Do you know why? Because it's not just an investment; I would be helping to rebuild my country."

But Pedro Freyre, a Cuban-American lawyer specializing in the island's regulatory framework, considers Cuba an "extremely risky" investment destination. □



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Po-Ké Ono Brings Bold Asian Fusion to Aruba's Dining Scene Innovative eatery blends island culture with modern Asian cuisine



In a culinary landscape known for its diversity and creativity, Po-Ké Ono stands out as a vibrant and contemporary addition to Aruba's restaurant scene. With locations at Azure in Palm Beach and the Renaissance Marketplace in Oranjestad, the concept introduces a refreshing take on Asian fusion dining—casual in style, yet refined in execution.

Established in 2020, Po-Ké Ono was envisioned as a space where flavor, culture, and creativity intersect. The menu features an array of signature dishes including poke bowls, steamed bao, and sushi, crafted with precision and a focus on freshness. Drawing on Asian influences, the restaurant delivers bold flavors in an approachable format, appealing to a broad audience of locals and visitors alike.

The ambiance is designed to be welcoming and relaxed, with a philosophy centered

around accessibility and enjoyment. Whether dining indoors or grabbing a quick bowl on the go, guests can expect a consistently high standard in both service and cuisine. With extensive menu options, including selections for vegan diners, Po-Ké Ono caters to a wide range of tastes and dietary preferences.

While the concept leans into fast-casual dining, the quality of ingredients and thoughtful



preparation reflect fine-dining roots. Many of the restaurant's core ingredients are sourced locally, emphasizing sustainability and support for Aruba's agricultural community. The result is a dining experience that honors both the island's spirit and the culinary traditions it draws inspiration from.

Open daily from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Po-Ké Ono continues to gain recognition as one of the island's premier destinations for sushi, poke, and

bao. Its growing popularity is a testament to Aruba's evolving food culture—one that embraces global influence while staying rooted in community and craft.

For those seeking a modern taste of Asia in the heart of the Caribbean, Po-Ké Ono offers a flavorful and memorable experience worth exploring. □



Fun facts about cacti hedges “Trankera”

(Oranjestad) – When off-roading in inland Aruba, you may notice some cacti hedges around various properties or lined up by certain pathways. These man-made hedges are called “trankera” and play an important role in maintaining our flora and fauna.

The trankera dates to colonialism, where settlers established several ‘cunucu’ (farm) on the island. People either used stone walls or trankera as a fence to ward off strangers and wild animals that can feed on the cunucu vegetation or cattle.

Nowadays, trankeras are less

common, and those that still stand are often not maintained. On the surface this seems like a bad development, however this proved to be beneficial for our flora and fauna. Naturally developed flora around the hedges offers more shelter for fauna. Another aspect is the propagation process. When pruning hedges, flowers and seeds were removed, which limits propagation to a minimum.

So, though trankeras don't play that big of a role in Aruba's agriculture anymore, our environment still reaps the benefits of these long-standing natural structures. □



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PALM BEACH, ARUBA —Weichert®- Aruba Realty, the Caribbean's first franchise of Weichert® Real Estate Affiliates, Inc. (WREA), is excited to share that our website is now live at weichertaruba.com and our new Palm Beach office is open for business. The Caribbean's first Weichert® office brings 56 years of proven real estate excellence to Aruba, locally rooted and dedicated to serving. This marks an important moment for real estate on the island. With a ribbon-cutting celebration just around the corner, we're thrilled to begin this new chapter with the Aruba community.

The office is led by the Founder and Managing Director; Eng. Victor Acosta is a third-generation civil engineer with over 30 years of roots on the island. What began as a professional project in Aruba grew into a lifelong commitment to its people, its neighborhoods, and its future. Under his leadership, PalmAruba Group became one of Aruba's most trusted development firms — and



Weichert®- Aruba Realty is its next step forward.

"This isn't just a business opening — it's a promise to the Aruban community," said Eng. Acosta. "We are here to serve the people of this island with the tools, the systems, and the heart that they deserve. Our team is local, our roots run deep, and our commitment is long-term."

A New Chapter for Aruba's Real Estate Market

Aruba's real estate market is growing, attracting international interest while a new generation of local professionals, families, and first-time buyers is stepping forward with ambition and a clear desire to invest in the island they call home. Weichert®-Aruba Realty opens its doors to serve them all.

The office operates with a full-strategic approach — guiding clients from bank readiness and pre-approval through to closing day. Its team of Property Strategists are trained to build a personalized real estate approach for every client, whether buying or selling, ensuring that no one navigates the process alone.

"Aruba's real estate community is strong, and we are proud to be part of it," said Eng. Victor Acosta, Founder and Managing Director of Weichert® - Aruba Realty. "We are here to contribute — bringing new tools, new resources, and a deep commitment to the people of this island."

Backed by Weichert's® 56 years of proven systems, comprehensive training programs, and a people-first philosophy, the office brings to Aruba the same infrastructure that has served millions of families across the United States — now applied with deep local knowledge and genuine community investment.

A Global Brand. A Local Heart.



Founded in 1969, Weichert® is the largest privately owned real estate company in the United States, now Weichert® - Aruba Realty combines decades of U.S. real estate know-how with a team that proudly calls Aruba home. We believe in genuine relationships and invest in our community, always putting relationships first.

Visit our new website, weichertaruba.com, to explore our listings and connect directly with our local team.

A Ribbon-Cutting to Remember

An official grand opening ceremony is being planned for the coming weeks, bringing together community leaders, local partners, and media to celebrate this landmark moment for Aruba's real estate landscape. Details of the event will be announced shortly.

"We are thrilled to welcome Weichert®- Aruba Realty to our growing international network," said Bill Scavone, President of Weichert Real Estate Affiliates, Inc. "Aruba is a thriving market with tremendous opportunity, and this team is exceptionally positioned to serve it."

The office is committed to serving the Aruban community with global systems and a local heart. Independently owned and operated.

🌐 weichertaruba.com
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 ☎ + 297 586 7300

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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 streetcar 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 va-

riety 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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Sun catchers: The different lizards in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit.

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. But there are a few exceptions.

Iguanas



Iguanas are easy to spot, as they are larger than most other lizards and when young, have a bright green color that makes them stand out.

The iguanas usually found in Aruba are the Iguana, known as the green iguana, or locally as Yuwana. The Yuwana are a mostly herbivorous species, and can grow up to 2 meters in size, including the tail, making them one of the largest in the iguana family. As you will see, despite their name, as they reach adulthood, the iguanas can take on a grey or blue tone instead of the bright green dis-

played by the young ones. In Aruba – as in the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the most usual color varies from green to lavender, black and sometimes a reddish brown.

Yuwana is a protected species, as it is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning that international trade is regulated through the CITES permit system. In the past, Arubans used to eat a popular Yuwana soup, as it was believed to give strength and help restore health – probably due to the protein boost it delivered. However, it is now illegal to catch, kill, buy or sell Yuwanas in Aruba, and this includes eating them!

Turnip-tailed gecko

The turnip-tailed gecko is known locally as the Pega-Pega, meaning sticky-sticky, due to the way it sticks to walls using the suction in its little fingers. They are found inside houses, and are mostly a nocturnal animal.

According to Etnia Nativa, the local Pega Pega is immediately recognizable by its large size, with a body length of up to 12 cm, and its large, swollen tail, approximately the same length or slightly shorter than its body; females are larger and more robust than males. It has short, robust legs with flattened toes and extensive basal webbing.

The undersides of its toes are covered in lamellae,

which are used as friction pads to cling to smooth vertical surfaces. Some can even walk around completely upside down. Its toes are covered with ridges, which are peppered with millions of microscopic bristle-like structures called setae that attach and detach when the animal wills them to, and they never get gunked up.

They are variable in coloration, from a mottled dark gray to orange-brown, and are capable of changing color depending on their mood and surroundings. Mottled and banded markings aid in camouflage against tree bark. They are harmless and fragile; you can hold one in your hands as long as you are VERY gentle.

Never put pressure on its tail because it will surely drop as a measure to try to distract the predator, and they are different from other lizards because they're long-lived, talkative, lack eyelids, and their small scales are situated next to each other like cobblestones rather than overlapping as is the case in most other lizards.

Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is

a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4–5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

The Pega-pega *Phyllodactylus Julieni* is also a protected species in Aruba, by law. It is illegal to kill them!

Blue Cododo



These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, *Cnemidophorus arubensis*, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.

These charming lizards eat mostly plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Cododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for

certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

Striped anole

The striped anole (*Anolis lineatus*) that lives in Aruba is known locally as Waltaka or Toteki. This is a species of lizard in the family Dactyloidae, and they are native to Aruba and Curaçao. It is usually found in dry areas, commonly where there are not large trees; rather they enjoy rocks, walls or tree trunks, as they prefer to stay close to the ground.

These lizards are about 7cm in length, have a brown color with a stripe on each side and typically, several stripes on the body and tail that are lighter in color. It has a dewlap which is orange-yellow – and what's unique about this species is that it is the only known species of anole where the dewlap is asymmetrically colored, with one side being a deeper orange and the other side a lighter yellow. Mostly this is seen in the males, as it is almost imperceptible in the females. If the Toteki shows you his dewlap, retreat! This is not a friendly greeting!

Lizards are wonderful creatures that are precious to our fragile, local ecosystem. Please be mindful of these residents as you enjoy your stay. □

Images: Some images are from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.

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YOU COULD BE HERE



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



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

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



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

A Stay Tailored to You

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

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

A Partner for Homeowners

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



maximize rental income while minimizing stress. Services include:

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

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

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

Rooted in Community and Sustainability

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

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

Dining in? Try making some local favorites! How to make “pan bati”

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever up for an Aruban snack, try making another Aruban classic appetizer called Pan Bati. Similar to a pancake both in appearance and cooking, this is a super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here's how to make it!

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of all purpose flour
- 1 cup grams of fine cornmeal
- 2 tbsp baking powder
- 1 1/3 cup of milk
- 1 pinch of salt
- 2 tbsp of granulated sugar
- Oil for cooking

Instructions:

Add all the dry ingredients in a bowl first, and stir until well mixed. Then add the milk and beat until reached a pancake-like consistency. If more moisture is needed, add some water until reached desired consistency.

In a hot pan with oil, pour in enough batter to cover the bottom of the pan. Just like pancakes, flip the pan bati when one side turns golden brown. When your pan bati is ready, place on a plate and cover with a clean kitchen towel.



Traditionally, pan bati is cut in triangle pieces, and is often eaten as a side dish with soup, fried fish

or stews. However, it is also casually enjoyed with some butter and cheese on top! □

Visit the historic museum at Fort Zoutman!



(Oranjestad)—Located in the middle of downtown Oranjestad, situated right next to the government building “Cocolishi”, is one of the oldest buildings of Aruba: Fort Zoutman. First constructed in 1796, this site has been used (or left unused) in many ways and have survived eras of war and attempted dismantling.

When anyone refers to Fort Zoutman, they are actually referring to two separate buildings that, over the years, have been merged: the fort and the tower. That's right, the iconic

5-story, squared tower was not part of the original structure of the fort, and is actually called “Willem III Toren”. Constructed in 1867, this tower was named after the then-reigning king of The Netherlands, Willem III. Willem III Toren was originally a light tower, but after a request from Lieutenant Governor Jan Helenus in 1866, it also became a bell tower.

The fort itself was originally constructed to protect the commerce bay of Paardenbaai from pirates and other disreputable characters roaming the

Caribbean Sea. Unlike the Willem III Toren, Fort Zoutman had a more tumultuous past, including the on-and-off reception of unwanted members of the English military several times (The Netherlands was at constant war with England back in the colonial era).

Over the years, both the fort and the tower had functioned as different government center points, including a tax and stamps office. For some time these two buildings also housed a police precinct and jail, and even experienced abandonment until the Cul-



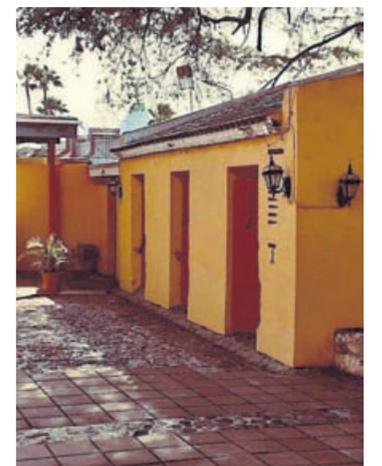
tural Center Aruba Foundation (CCA) petitioned for its renovation in 1964, turning the site into the Historic Museum it currently is.

Despite its small size, The Historic Museum guards a rich depository of the commercial, military and social history of Oranjestad, offering a glance into how the social culture of the town came to be. If you are interested in history and want to learn more about Aruba, then Fort Zoutman should definitely be included into your itinerary.

The museum is open Mon-

day to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm. □

Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog.



The Aruban way of life: Creating community with Cas di Torto

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban people understand that a happy life is spent in great ambience with your loved ones. Passed down from one generation to the other, building community has been a key aspect in forging our traditions and customs. The Cas di Torto (mud house) played a big role in cultivating community, bridging families together and forming close bonds with your neighbors—something we highly value today.

Cas di Torto: History and construction

The origin of the Cas di Torto is said to date back to the early 19th century in the Paraguana Peninsula in Venezuela. Refugees who sought sanctuary on Aruba introduced this building method to the island.

The uprights of the walls were made with sturdy and straight wayaca or kwihi wood, or from thin mangrove struts. Then, the wattle walls were weaved in using branches

and twigs from the warero and sisal plant, daubed with a mixture of grass and mud. Finally, the walls got a coat of white plaster to seal everything in.

For roofing, corn stalks, palm fonds and straws were used, allowing air to flow freely through the house. This method of roofing was known throughout the ABC islands (Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire), but the use of cornstalks in Aruba eventually got replaced with use of mud and white plaster for the roofs. The white plaster all around made the houses look like cake, hence the name “Torto” (Spanish for “cake”).

Building community

Building Torto houses was often a community effort. Young couples who were about to get married had to

have their house built before they could tie the knot and start their own family. This is where the help of the community comes into play.

Neighbors, extended family and friends would all help in the construction of a Torto House. And everyone had a role: The men oversaw the building of the house, and the women were tasked with collecting wood and straws, cooking and taking care of the little ones.

The couple's family were primarily responsible for feeding everyone who helped build the house. Before construction, someone usually had the task to prepare the meal; going fishing or slaughter farm animals like goats, chicken or sheep. Even the older kids had their tasks; the older children of the family usually helped with collect-

ing water and mixing the mud.

The average duration of constructing a Cas di Torto was 4 months.

At the end of a long day of work, everyone would gather around and enjoy a feast of hearty food. This type of help from friends and family became a tradition and was called “paga lomba”: You help me today; I'll help you tomorrow.

Nowadays, traditional Cas di Torto are rare, especially those that are still inhabited. Houses that do exist probably date back more than a century. □

Picture credits: Aruba National Library (BNA) and the Monumentbureau archive on Coleccion.aw



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

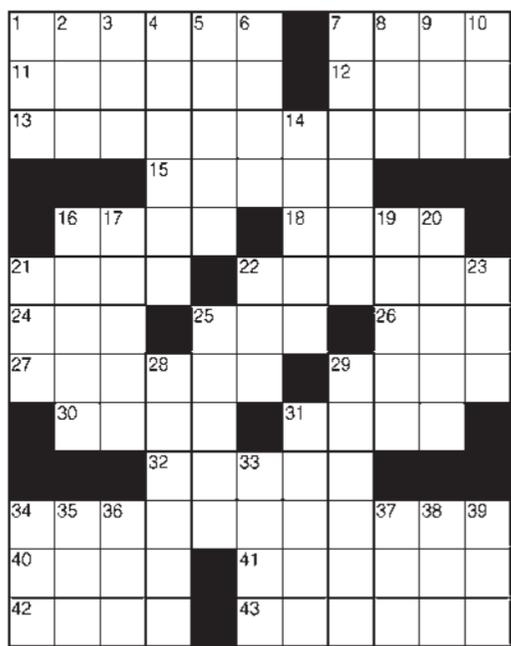


ACROSS

- 1 Drift onto the beach
- 7 Parting tool
- 11 Texas city
- 12 Lotion ingredient
- 13 Talked at length
- 15 Twin of Romulus
- 16 Docking spot
- 18 Go by
- 21 Tadpole's home
- 22 Con- tinuing story
- 24 Under the weather
- 25 Buck's mate
- 26 Carnival city
- 27 Prepared potatoes
- 29 Dis- patched
- 30 Cease
- 31 Euro division
- 32 Fighting
- 34 Applied liberally
- 40 Singly
- 41 "Raging Bull" star
- 42 Fencing sword
- 43 Put on, as a play

DOWN

- 1 Spider's home
- 2 Com- pletely
- 3 Mud bath setting
- 4 Enmity
- 5 Theater worker
- 6 Ode or ballade
- 7 Roman ruler
- 8 Archaic
- 9 Cow call
- 10 Writer Jonson
- 14 Indian coin
- 16 Magnet ends
- 17 Cove
- 19 Ambulance sound
- 20 Virtuous fellow
- 21 Card spot
- 22 Lawn starter
- 23 Place to park
- 25 Ocean measure
- 28 Despise
- 29 Venus's sister
- 31 Insertion sign
- 33 Ties the knot
- 34 Look upon
- 35 Pet perch
- 36 One in a hand
- 37 Really enjoy
- 38 Mine rock
- 39 Silent assent



A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

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

4-4

CRYPTOQUOTE

YDKL HAZ XRR PRWAGR HAZ, FH
WGMRTQ, MX LDR GRXZCL AW
K CMWRLMFR AW IDAIACKLR.

— BKLDKGMTR DRJPZGT

Cryptoquote: ONE DAY THE LITTLE RABBIT HEARD THE BOY TELL HIS NANNY THAT HE WAS REAL. HE WAS OVERCOME BY LOVE IN HIS HEART. — "THE VELVETEEN RABBIT"

Cruise ship Schedule: March 23 - 31 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	23	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
TUE	24	NORWEGIAN SKY OASIS OF THE SEAS	13.30 08.00	22.30 23.00	C I	1 1
WED	25	SERENADE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL VISTA	08.00 13.00	23.00 23.00	B C	1 1
FRI	27	REGAL PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
MON	30	EXPLORA II	09.00	18.00	C	1
TUE	31	CARNIVAL HORIZON AIDABLU NORWEGIAN SKY FREEWINDS	08.00 11.30 13.30 09.30	22.00 22.00 22.30 ****	B C I E	1 1 1 1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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



Electrical power

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



Drinking water

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



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do 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		8	2	5		3		
						6		
	9	2					5	8
7	8	9			2			5
						9	8	4
			8	1				7
9			6					3
8		1	9		7			
5		6	3	8	1	7	2	9

Difficulty: ★★

3/24

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★

3/23

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Planet trapped record heat in 2025: U.N.

Geneva, Switzerland

The amount of heat trapped by the Earth reached record levels in 2025, with the consequences of such warming feared to last for thousands of years, the UN warned Monday.

The 11 hottest years ever recorded were all between 2015 and 2025, the United Nations' WMO weather and climate agency confirmed in its flagship State of the Global Climate annual report.

Last year was the second or third hottest year on record, at about 1.43 Celsius above the 1850-1900 average, the World Meteorological Organization said. "The global climate is in a state of emergency. Planet Earth is being pushed beyond its limits. Every key climate indicator is flashing red," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "Humanity has just endured the 11 hottest years on record. When history repeats itself 11 times, it is no longer a coincidence. It is a call to act."

For the first time, the WMO climate report includes the planet's energy imbalance: the rate at which energy enters and leaves the Earth system.

Under a stable climate, incoming energy from the Sun is about the same as the amount of outgoing energy, the Geneva-based agency said.

However the increase in concentrations of heat-trapping greenhouse gases carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide "to their highest level in at least 800,000 years" has "upset this equilibrium", the WMO said.

"The Earth's energy imbalance has increased since its observational record began in 1960, particularly in the past 20 years. It reached a new high in 2025."

- Ocean heat record -

WMO chief Celeste Saulo said scientific advances had improved understanding of the energy imbalance and its implications for the climate.

"Human activities are in-



A person wears a hat for shade under the morning sun while walking along The Strand in Redondo Beach, California on March 20, 2026, during a heat wave.

creasingly disrupting the natural equilibrium and we will live with these consequences for hundreds and thousands of years," she said.

More than 91 percent of the excess heat is stored in the ocean.

"Ocean heat content reached a new record high in 2025 and its rate of warming more than doubled from 1960-2005 to 2005-2025," the WMO said. Ocean warming has far-reaching consequences, such as degradation of marine ecosystems, biodiversity loss and reduction of the ocean carbon sink, the agency said.

"It fuels tropical and sub-tropical storms and exacerbates ongoing sea-ice loss in the polar regions."

The Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets have both lost considerable mass, and the annual average extent of Arctic sea ice in

2025 was the lowest or second-lowest ever recorded in the satellite era.

Last year, the global mean sea level was around 11 centimetres higher than when satellite altimetry records began in 1993.

Ocean warming and sea level rise are projected to continue for centuries.

- 'Dire picture' -

WMO scientific officer John Kennedy said global weather is still under the influence of La Nina, a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that cools surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. It brings changes in winds, pressure and rainfall patterns.

Conditions oscillate between La Nina and its warming opposite El Nino, with neutral conditions in between.

The warmest year on re-

cord, 2024, was around 1.55C above the 1850-1900 average, and started in a strong El Nino.

Forecasts indicate neutral conditions by the middle of 2026 with a possible El Nino developing before the end of the year, said Kennedy. If so, "then we're likely to see maybe elevated temperatures again in 2027", he told a press conference. The World Meteorological Organization's deputy chief, Ko Barrett, said the outlook was a "dire picture".

She said the WMO provided the evidence it sees, hoping that the information "will encourage people to take action".

But there was "no denying" that "these indicators are not moving in a direction that provides for a lot of hope", she said.

With war gripping the Middle East and fuel prices soaring, Guterres said the world should heed the alarm call. □



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OTHER

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Noord	527 3200
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A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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American Airlines	582 2700
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Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
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Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
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Russia's Max: The unencrypted super-app being forced on citizens

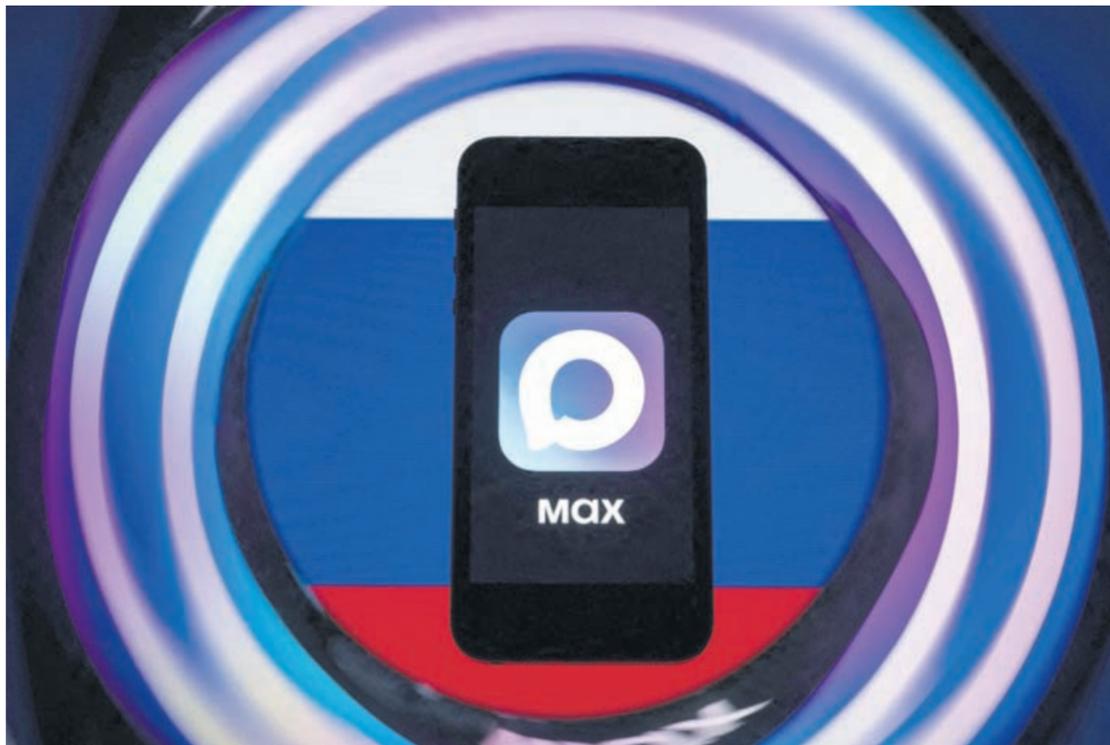
Warsaw, Poland

Russia is pushing its Max messenger a social media platform without encryption onto its citizens with a massive promotion campaign and the simultaneous blocking of Whatsapp and Telegram, the country's two most popular messenger apps.

The rollout has raised concerns among critics and digital rights groups that Moscow will use Max to surveil its citizens and further cut digital links to the West. "Any data that passes through this application can be considered to be in the hands of its owner, and in this case, the hands of the Russian state," cybersecurity researcher Baptiste Robert, CEO of the French company Predicta Lab, told AFP.

Launched in 2025 by Russian social media giant VK, the app has been compared to China's WeChat, combining social media and messaging functions with access to government services, a digital ID card system, banking and payments.

It is not officially mandatory, but the authorities are making it clear that life without Max will become increas-



This illustration photo shows the Russia MAX messenger logo displayed on a smartphone in Mulhouse, eastern France on February 13, 2026.

ingly hard. President Vladimir Putin has touted it as a more "secure" platform that meets Russia's demand for "technological sovereignty."

Moscow has been pushing that agenda for years. "This is the culmination of policies aimed at creating a sovereign internet," Mariëlle Wijermars, an associate professor of internet governance at Maastricht University told AFP.

"Russia wants to restructure the internet to better

control what is published" including "by migrating all Russians to platforms that are more state-controlled," she added.

- 'Forced' to download -

Max has been pre-installed on phones and tablets sold in Russia since September. The design is familiar and resembles Telegram, offering private messages, public channels and cute stickers.

Unlike Telegram and Whatsapp, it is also on Russia's

"white list" of approved digital services that stay online during the increasingly common forced internet blackouts that Moscow says are necessary to thwart Ukrainian retaliatory drone attacks.

Initially only available to users with a Russian or Belarusian SIM card, the app is now available in English and to those with phone numbers from 40 other countries only those Russia deems "friendly," like Cuba, Pakistan and ex-

Soviet republics in Central Asia.

It is not available in the European Union -- or Ukraine. That has not stopped Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vowing to infiltrate the messenger.

One of the reasons Russia wants to ditch Telegram is because it has become a platform used by Ukraine to recruit Russians for sabotage attacks, including assassinations.

Inside Russia, opinions are split.

"You can send messages, photos and videos. What more do you need?" said Yekaterina, a 35-year-old dance teacher.

Irina, a 45-year-old doctor, however, complained she has been "forced" to use Max for school activities for her children and to access the government's official online portal, Gosuslugi, where her patients make appointments.

She plans to "buy another SIM card to download Max on another phone."

Large businesses have been accused of forcing employees to download the app and schools have migrated all communication with parents to the platform. □

Germany to crack down on sexualised deepfakes

Berlin, Germany

Germany plans to crack down on sexualised deepfakes, the government said Friday, as a prominent TV personality accused her ex-husband of spreading AI-generated pornographic images of her online.

The charges brought by Collien Fernandes, 44, who is also a TV presenter, have triggered intense media debate about the "digital violence" increasingly perpetrated against on the internet, mostly against women.

German Justice Minister Stefanie Hubig will "very shortly" present a draft bill to punish the creation and distribution of sexualised deepfakes, ministry spokesman Eike Hosemann said.

"We want to ensure that perpetrators can no longer feel safe, that they must expect to be identified and effectively prosecuted," Hubig told the NTV news channel, adding

that police would be given greater powers to search suspects' computers. Hosemann said "the aim is to make the production and distribution of such deepfakes a criminal of-

fence", adding that Germany was "lagging behind technological developments in this area".

News weekly Der Spiegel first reported this week on the case of Fernandes, who spoke of her shock at discovering that hundreds of fake pornographic images of her had been circulating on the internet.

It was only more recently that she started to suspect they had been created and shared by her former partner, fellow actor Christian Ulmen, 50, via fake social media accounts that appeared to be hers, she said.

Fernandes has filed a legal complaint against him in Spain, where the couple had lived together on the

island of Mallorca before they separated in 2025, according to the report.

Writing on her Instagram account, she repeated her accusation of "sexualised violence" against her former husband.

German media cited Ulmen's lawyer as saying the reports contained "untrue facts based on a one-sided account".

Hubig, herself a former judge and prosecutor, told Der Spiegel that sexualised online crimes had a "devastating" impact on victims.

"That's why I make no distinction between analogue and digital violence. Every attack, no matter where or how it occurs, is one too many." □



German Minister for Justice and Consumer Protection Stefanie Hubig (SPD) addresses journalists on reform plans of the tenancy law, after a two-day retreat meeting of the German Social Democratic SPD party at its headquarters in Berlin on February 8, 2026.

Korda sends Alcaraz to another early exit in Miami, Sabalenka advances

Miami, United States

Sebastian Korda stared down Carlos Alcaraz on Sunday, sending the world number one crashing out of the Miami Open third round 6-3, 5-7, 6-4.

Korda, ranked 36th in the world, notched his first victory over a world number one, sending Alcaraz to his second straight early exit in Miami following defeat to 55th-ranked Belgian David Goffin in the second round last year.

Since that defeat, Alcaraz had built a remarkable 73-6 record, including a 16-0 start to 2026 that included an Australian Open triumph to complete a career Grand Slam and a title in Doha.

It looked like Korda had missed his chance to spring the upset when he served for the match at 5-4 in the second set and was broken at love.

Alcaraz won the next two games to force a third set, part of a run of five straight games for the Spaniard.

But Korda didn't buckle, and it was the American who seized a break for 4-3 in the third when Alcaraz sailed a forehand wide.

He held his next service game with confidence, slamming down an overhead winner on game point and after Alcaraz



Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus returns a shot against Caty McNally of the United States during Day 6 of the Miami Open at Hard Rock Stadium on March 22, 2026 in Miami Gardens, Florida.

held serve Korda served for the match again, this time making no mistake.

"It feels great," said Korda, who has been ranked as high as 15th in the world but has endured two seasons disrupted by injuries.

"I took the scenic route, that's for sure a little more stress than I would want but happy with how I played, happy with how I stayed with it."

Alcaraz said Korda played an "incredible" match.

"A lot of tight, tight moments that I just didn't make the most of it," Alcaraz said. "I think he was better on those points, on those moments. I would say that was the key of the match."

Korda will face Spanish qualifier Martin Landaluce for a place in the quarter-finals after Landaluce ousted 14th-seeded Russian Karen Khachanov 6-3, 7-6 (7/2).

- Sabalenka marches on -

World number one Aryna Sabalenka kept her title defense on track with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over 72nd-ranked American Caty McNally that was tougher than the score indicated.

They were on serve after exchanging four breaks in the opening set when Sabalenka gained the decisive break in the final game. The Belarusian star, trying to complete the "Sunshine Double" after capturing her first Indian Wells title last

week, wasted one chance to break in the second set before ramping up her return pressure to break McNally's on her last two service games.

"She played really great tennis," Sabalenka said, adding that her hold for 5-4 in the opening set, in a game that went to deuce five times, was key.

"(I'm) super happy to close this match in straight sets," said Sabalenka, who booked a meeting with China's Olympic gold medalist Zheng Qinwen a 6-2, 6-4 winner over Madison Keys.

It was Zheng's first win over a top-20 player since elbow surgery last July.

World number two Elena Rybakina, who beat Sabalenka in the Australian Open final but fell to her in the Indian Wells title match, moved smoothly into the last 16 with a 6-3, 6-4 victory over Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.

Rybakina next faces Australian qualifier Talia Gibson, who knocked off another seed with a 6-2, 6-2 victory over 18-year-old 18th seed Iva Jovic.

Gibson, who reached the quarter-finals at Indian Wells, had ousted former world number one Naomi Osaka in the second round. □

Ineos's Godon wins Tour of Catalonia opener by a whisker

Sant Feliu de Guíxols, Spain

Ineos's French rider Dorian Godon won stage 1 of the Tour of Catalonia on Monday as Belgian Remco Evenepoel came second in a photo finish and Tom Pidcock was third.

The 105th edition of this seven-day tour is packed with stars, with Jonas Vingegaard favourite to win after his masterclass at Paris-Nice.

The opener was a hilly 172km race that left the coastal resort of Sant Feliu de Guixols, took in Girona, a category 1 climb and

then sped back to the Costa Brava coast.

Godon said he had been planning a win here for years.

"I did my studies in Girona and live there now and often said I'd win a stage like this one day," said the newly-signed Ineos rider. Godon appeared to have made his run too early.

"It would have been better to wait a bit, the last 50m seemed to last an hour," he said after holding off a counter bid from Evenepoel.

Another hero of the day Kiwi second-tier rider Josh Burnett, was the last of the breakaway to be caught, 10km from the finish as the cast of stars jostled to keep up with a high closing pace. Burnett did enough, however, to win the combativity award.

Other contenders such as Joao Almeida of UAE, Evenepoel's Red Bull teammate Florian Lipowitz, Oscar Onley of Ineos, and Lidl trio Giulio Ciccone, Derek Gee and Mattias Skjelmose all came home safely a few seconds off



INEOS Grenadiers' French rider Dorian Godon celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 7th stage of the Paris-Nice cycling race, 47 km between Le Broc and Isola-Village, on March 14, 2026.

the pace.

Stages four, five and six will be contested in the Pyrenees, while the finale takes

in seven circuits of Montjuic in Barcelona where the Tour de France starts in July. □

Hodgkinson in 'shape of her life' with eye on Kratochvilova's record

Torun, Poland

Keely Hodgkinson's rivals will be grateful there is not a world outdoor champs or an Olympic Games this season as the Briton boasted of being in "the shape of her life" after wrapping up world indoor 800m gold.

The 24-year-old left the competition for dead in an impressive gun-to-tape performance in Torun, Poland, on Sunday that saw her win in a blistering 1min 55.30sec.

Her time was not only a championship record but also the second fastest time run over the distance indoors, Hodgkinson herself having set a new world indoor 800m record last month.

All eyes will now turn on Hodgkinson's plans for the outdoor season which offers up European and Commonwealth titles on home soil and ends with World Athletics' Ultimate Championships in Budapest in September.

Given her new world indoor record, there is the mouth-watering possibility of a potential tilt at the oldest world record in athletics the 1min 53.28sec for the outdoor 800m set by Jarmila Kratochvilova of the then-Czechoslovakia in 1983.

- Golden training partner -

"It feels so, so nice being



British gold medal winners, women's 1500m winner Britain's Georgia Hunter Bell (L) and women's 800m winner Britain's Keely Hodgkinson celebrate during the World Athletics Indoor Championships Kujawy Pomorze 2026 in Torun, Poland on March 22, 2026.

able to run and win. This is my first world title," said Hodgkinson, whose victory came fast on the heels of that of training partner Georgia Hunter Bell in the women's 1,500m.

"I have been in so many finals, I have been a favourite so many times and I had not won so to do that and prove to myself that I can do it, remove the pressure and win the gold, it's nice," she said, having accrued 11 international medals but also been denied three

times at the world outdoors, winning two silvers and a bronze.

"My word this year has been 'domination' so when I'm in the shape of my life, why leave it to chance? If you want to beat me, you're going to have to work hard. I never, ever go down without a fight."

Hodgkinson and Hunter Bell are coached by the husband and wife team of Trevor Painter and Jenny Meadows, the latter having won world outdoor bronze

(2009) and indoor silver (2010) over 800m.

"Me and Georgia, we work hard and we push each other at every practice we are both in the shape of our lives," Hodgkinson said.

"It's great to have someone who can challenge me in training. I am really grateful for our friendship, our rivalry and our training."

"I had no doubts about Georgia. She's an incredible athlete. We've both been training so well, and we've just enjoyed every-

thing. We can work so well together, and we have an amazing friendship."

- Leading relay split -

After her dominant 800m victory, Hodgkinson was soon back on the track as part of Britain's 4x400m relay team in the championship-ending event.

Running the anchor leg, she had been left too much to do to push for the podium and the team eventually finished fifth.

But tellingly, Hodgkinson produced the quickest leg of any athlete in the event with a 50.10sec split.

"I am actually so impressed with myself about that. I really wanted to do it!" said Hodgkinson, who announced herself on the international stage by winning a first major title at the European indoors in Torun in 2021 before going on to claim silver on her Olympic debut in Tokyo later that summer.

"I wouldn't have gone for the 4x400 if I didn't think I had it in my legs... I wouldn't do something if I didn't think I was capable."

Hodgkinson added: "I managed to have such a clean winter with no interruption. "It has been such a fun few days.

I'm really grateful to be here and to be healthy. I'm glad I could show what I know I can do." □

Wolves rally past Celtics, Nuggets sink Blazers

Los Angeles, United States

The Minnesota Timberwolves shrugged off the injury absence of Anthony Edwards to complete a

come-from-behind 102-92 road victory over the Boston Celtics on Sunday. Minnesota trailed by 15 points early in the second

quarter but rallied decisively in the fourth with a 16-0 run to outscore the Celtics 26-15 and silence a 19,156 crowd at Boston's TD Garden.

With Edwards missing due to right knee inflammation, Bones Hyland led Minnesota with 23 points off the bench, while Jaden McDaniels had 19 points and Ayo Dosunmu 17.

Minnesota improved to 44-28 and remain in sixth place in the Western Conference.

The New York Knicks improved to 47-25 to remain hard on the heels of the Celtics in the East with a 145-113 demolition of the Washington Wizards.

Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 26 points, 16 rebounds and three assists while Jalen Brunson added 23 points as the Knicks cruised to a wire-to-wire victory over a Wizards team who have lost 16 games straight.

Washington are one place off the bottom of the Eastern Conference at 16-55 and are vying with the Indiana Pacers (15-56) for the worst record in the league. In the Western Conference, Nikola Jokic's 35th triple-double of the season powered the Denver Nuggets to a 128-112 defeat of the Portland Trail Blazers. Jokic tallied 22 points, 14

rebounds and 14 assists while Jamal Murray also scored 22 points, including four three-pointers.

Denver improved to 44-28 to remain in fifth place in the standings behind Houston (43-27).

Denver's win marked a rare start for their first-choice starting line-up, with Cam Johnson, Aaron Gordon and Christian Braun alongside Jokic and Murray, with Peyton Watson also returning from the bench.

"We know we've got a good team and it's been a while since we've had our full team," Watson said.

"I think when we're healthy, nobody can beat us." □



Ayo Dosunmu #13 of the Minnesota Timberwolves drives past Jayson Tatum #0 of the Boston Celtics during the second half at TD Garden on March 22, 2026 in Boston, Massachusetts.