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America's power grid powers up with record-breaking renewables

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a historic shift that marks a turning point for the American energy landscape, the U.S. power grid is officially entering its "Greenest Year Ever." New data released today by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) confirms that 2026 will be the year renewable energy moves from the periphery to the podium, with solar, wind, and battery storage accounting for a staggering 99% of all new electricity generating capacity.

For a nation that has long balanced the scales between traditional fuels and emerging technologies, the 2026 forecast represents more than just a statistical win—it's a testament to American innovation and a shared commitment to a sustainable future.

The solar surge

Leading the charge is solar energy, which continues its meteoric rise. Across the Sun Belt and beyond, massive utility-scale solar farms are sprouting up, turning vast stretches of land into "harvesting fields" for the sun's rays.

"We aren't just seeing growth; we are seeing an evolution," says Dr. Elena Vance, a senior analyst at the Clean Energy Institute. "The efficiency of photovoltaic cells has reached a point where solar isn't just the 'right' choice for the planet—it's the most logical choice for the pocketbook. It is now the cheapest form of new electricity in the history of the United States." From the deserts of Arizona



An aerial view of wind turbines at the Altamont Pass wind farm on January 13, 2026 in Livermore, California.

to the rolling hills of North Carolina, solar panels are being deployed at a pace never seen before. In 2025, renewables already made up 88% of new capacity. The jump to 99% in 2026 signifies that the infrastructure and investment are finally in total alignment.

Wind: The invisible workhorse

While solar captures the headlines with its gleaming panels, wind energy remains the steady, invisible workhorse of the American heartland. Coastal states are also joining the fray, with offshore wind projects finally reaching completion. These "sea-based giants" are tapping into the consistent, powerful breezes of the Atlantic and Pacific, providing a stable flow

of power to dense coastal cities.

In states like Iowa and South-Dakota, where wind turbines have long been part of the skyline, the economic benefits are tangible. Farmers who lease their land for turbines are seeing a "new kind of crop" one that isn't dependent on rain or soil quality, but on the very air itself. This "wind-fall" of income is revitalizing rural communities, funding new school wings, and paving roads.

The battery revolution: Solving the "after dark" problem

Perhaps the most inspiring part of the 2026 data is the role of battery storage. For years, critics of renewable energy pointed to the "intermittency problem" the simple fact that the sun sets

and the wind occasionally stops blowing.

Enter the "Battery Boom." Of the new capacity planned for this year, massive battery storage systems represent a critical piece of the puzzle. These systems act like a giant "save button" for the grid, soaking up excess energy during peak production hours and releasing it precisely when it's needed most.

"Batteries are the glue holding our new grid together," explains Sarah Jenkins, an engineer at a leading storage facility in Texas. "We've solved the reliability question. We can now bottle the sunshine and use it at midnight."

A community-driven future
What makes this transition

truly special isn't just the technology—it's the people. Small towns across the country are seeing a surge in "green-collar" jobs. From technicians who climb 300-foot turbines to software developers managing smart-grid AI, a new generation of American workers is finding purpose in building the future.

Furthermore, the environmental benefits are already being felt. Cleaner air and reduced water usage for power plant cooling are leading to healthier local ecosystems. In vacation spots and national parks, the shift toward quiet, emission-free energy means that the natural beauty tourists flock to see remains pristine for generations to come.

The path ahead

As we look toward the remainder of 2026, the message is clear: America is no longer just dreaming of a clean energy future; we are living in it. The transition is being driven by a rare harmony of economic sense, technological prowess, and a collective desire to leave the world better than we found it.

For the readers of our vacation-style newspaper, this news serves as the ultimate "good vibe." Whether you're charging your electric car for a cross-country road trip or simply enjoying the hum of an air conditioner powered by the afternoon sun, you can rest easy knowing that the light at the end of the tunnel is powered by the cleanest sources on Earth. □

The slope of enlightenment: How 2026 became the year we outsmarted heart disease

BOSTON, MA – For decades, the fight against cardiovascular disease has been described in terms of a battlefield. But today, standing in the bustling heart of Boston's medical district, the conversation has shifted. Experts are no longer just talking about fighting disease; they are talking about outsmarting it. According to leading researchers at the American Heart Association's latest summit, 2026 has officially entered the "Slope of Enlightenment" a period where cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence (AI) and precision gene-silencing therapies have finally converged to transform preventive cardiology from a dream into a daily reality.

The silent risk: Cracking the genetic code

For years, doctors have warned patients about the "usual suspects" of heart health: high blood pressure, smoking, and LDL cholesterol (the "bad" kind). However, many patients followed every rule eating greens, running marathons, and taking statins only to suffer unexpected heart attacks. The culprit was often a shadowy genetic factor



known as Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a).

Unlike lifestyle-driven cholesterol, Lp(a) is determined entirely by your DNA. Until recently, there was no effective way to lower it. But today, the medical community is buzzing with the success of Pelacarsen, a revolutionary "antisense" therapy. By essentially "turning off" the messenger RNA that tells the body to produce Lp(a), Pelacarsen has shown the potential to reduce these dangerous levels by up to 80%.

"We are moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach," says Dr. Julian Thorne, a lead investigator

in the Phase 3 clinical trials. "We can now look a patient in the eye and tell them that their genetic history is no longer their destiny. We are rewriting the script of their health before the first symptoms even appear."

AI: The Guardian in Your Pocket

While gene-silencing therapies tackle the internal blueprint, Artificial Intelligence is revolutionizing how we monitor the heart in real-time. In 2026, the stethoscope is being supplemented by sophisticated algorithms that can detect "silent" heart conditions through a simple

smartphone interface or a wearable watch.

New AI software, recently cleared by the FDA, can now analyze the subtle electrical patterns of a person's heartbeat to predict the onset of atrial fibrillation or heart failure weeks before a patient feels a single palpitation. These "digital twins" virtual models of a patient's heart allow doctors to simulate the effects of different medications or lifestyle changes in a digital environment before ever prescribing a pill.

"The AI doesn't just see what is happening now; it sees what is coming," explains

Sarah Chen, a biomedical engineer. "It's like having a world-class cardiologist sitting on your wrist 24/7. This technology is saving lives by turning 'ER visits' into 'pharmacy pickups.'"

The Power of "Positive Prevention"

Perhaps the most inspiring shift in 2026 is the move toward Positive Prevention. Hospitals and community centers across the U.S. are moving away from the "fear-based" model of medicine. Instead of focusing on the dangers of heart disease, new initiatives are celebrating the "Joy of Vitality."

In cities like Boston and San Francisco, "Heart Cafés" and "Movement Hubs" are popping up, where residents can get free, non-invasive heart screenings in a relaxed, social atmosphere. These centers focus on the "four pillars of the vibrant heart": restorative sleep, social connection, nutrient-dense joy, and consistent movement.

Data from the first quarter of 2026 shows that these community-led programs have increased screening rates by 40% among young adults. □

Teens launch "Another Bounce" to break world record and save the environment

PACIFIC PALISADES, CA

While many high school students spend their spring weekends focused on college applications or social plans, a group of twelve dedicated teenagers from the Los Angeles area is tackling a global environmental crisis hidden in plain sight: the staggering waste of racket sports. Known as the Habits of Waste Junior Board, these student-athletes have launched a bold new initiative called Another Bounce, aiming to set a Guinness World Record for the most tennis and pickleballs collected for recycling.

A massive problem on the court



The scale of the issue is immense. According to the group's research, an estimated 500 million non-biodegradable tennis and pickleballs are discarded into landfills worldwide every year. In the United States alone, roughly 125 million tennis balls are tossed annually, each taking over 400

years to decompose. "We play the sport, we see the waste, and we aren't waiting for adults to fix it," the group stated in a collective call to action. The board includes several top-tier athletes, such as Ford and Boone Casady, the nation's top-ranked U18 junior pickleball doubles team.

Transforming trash into treasure

The Another Bounce campaign is more than just a collection drive; it's a masterclass in circular economy. The teens have partnered with Ridwell in Los Angeles to shred, wash, and pelletize the collected balls. This raw material is then repurposed into a variety of industrial products, including:

Nursery plant pots and plastic packaging.

Carpeting and other commercial textiles.

New pickleballs, through a partnership with Bounce-Back Pickle in Florida, which creates 100% recycled equipment.

A community movement

The campaign will culminate in a massive Earth Month collection event on April 19, 2026. Residents within a 30-mile radius of Pacific Palisades can drop off their old gear locally, while supporters across the country are encouraged to ship their used balls to the team's warehouse in Santa Monica.

Beyond the world record, the Junior Board is advocating for systemic change. They have already begun speaking at city council meetings and have issued a formal call to major manufacturers including Wilson, Penn, and Franklin to establish national take-back programs. □

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Kaiāulu: Local artists sought to paint Hawaii's resilient future!

HONOLULU, HI – In a vibrant fusion of creativity and civic duty, the Hawaii State Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission has officially launched its Climate Action Residency Program. This groundbreaking initiative isn't looking for engineers or data analysts; instead, it is calling upon the islands' most visionary artists to help translate the complex language of climate change into the universal language of art.

The program is currently recruiting four local artists to serve in year-long residencies within various county departments. The goal is simple yet profound: to move the conversation about sustainability from the laboratory to the town square.

The heart of the mission

For years, scientists have used charts and spreadsheets to track the changing tides and shifting temperatures of the Pacific. While this data is vital, it often feels distant to the average resident. The Climate Action Residency aims to bridge that gap. By embedding artists directly



into the machinery of local government, the state hopes to spark an emotional connection to the environment that numbers alone cannot achieve.

"Art has a unique power to make the invisible visible," says Leilani Kealoha, a spokesperson for the Commission. "When people see a beautiful mural or experience an interactive installation about food waste, it stays with them. It changes how they look at their plate, their trash can, and their coastline."

Focusing on solutions

The four selected artists will focus on specific, high-

priority themes that are crucial to Hawaii's future. These include:

Sustainable Agriculture: Highlighting the beauty and necessity of locally grown food to reduce the islands' dependence on imports.

Waste Reduction: Transforming the concept of "trash" into a conversation about circular economies and resourcefulness.

Coastal Resilience: Creating visual stories that celebrate the protective power of coral reefs and native mangroves.

Renewable Energy: Celebrating the transition to 100% clean energy through

public art that honors the sun, wind, and water.

One of the most exciting aspects of the residency is its focus on "Food Waste to Wealth." An artist embedded with the Department of Environmental Services might create a sculpture made entirely of recycled materials or a community garden project that doubles as a living art piece. The intent is to show that "going green" isn't a sacrifice it's an act of creation.

A Legacy of "Aloha 'Āina"

This initiative draws deep inspiration from the traditional Hawaiian concept of Aloha 'Āina a love for

the land that is central to the islands' identity. By inviting artists to the table, the state is honoring a long history of storytelling as a tool for preservation.

The program isn't just about making things look pretty; it's about making progress look possible. The residency provides a monthly stipend and a budget for materials, ensuring that the artists can focus entirely on their mission. Their work will be displayed in public spaces, from community centers to beach parks, ensuring that every resident and visitor can engage with the message.

An invitation to imagine

As Hawaii moves toward its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2045, the Climate Action Residency serves as a reminder that the path to a better future is paved with imagination. It asks the community to stop seeing climate change as a looming shadow and start seeing climate action as an opportunity to redesign our world. For the readers of our vacation-style newspaper, this story is a beacon of hope. □

'Wake-up call': Megan Thee Stallion falls ill during Broadway show



Megan Thee Stallion makes her Broadway debut in *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* at Al Hirschfeld Theatre on March 24, 2026 in New York City.

New York, United States

American rapper Megan Thee Stallion said Wednesday that she had a "wake-up call" after she was taken to hospital in the middle of a Broadway performance of "Moulin Rouge!" in New York City.

"I've been pushing myself past my limits lately, running on empty, and my body finally said enough. It honestly scared me," the 31-year-old wrote on Instagram.

"I thought I was gonna faint on stage, I really tried to push through my performance but I just couldn't."

Megan Thee Stallion, who has been playing club owner Harold Zidler in the musical, was replaced halfway through the show Tuesday night after she fell ill.

She said she would be back on stage

Thursday after taking off Wednesday to rest.

A spokesperson for the artist, who has won three Grammy awards, said she was transferred to a hospital after experiencing "concerning symptoms."

"Doctors ultimately identified extreme exhaustion, dehydration, vasoconstriction and low metabolic levels as the cause of her symptoms," the spokesperson told AFP.

"Megan has since been treated, discharged and is now resting."

One of the leading women in American rap alongside the likes of Cardi B and Nicki Minaj, Megan Thee Stallion is known for her powerful stage presence, freestyles and aggressive flow. □

Sacred leaf offers hope for Vanuatu's threatened forests

Vanuatu

The feather-shaped namele leaf is so central to Vanuatu it features on the national flag, and now it is being enlisted to protect some of the country's most important forests.

By invoking a traditional taboo against touching the sacred leaf, conservationists and locals hope to keep loggers away from places like Vathe Conservation Area a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage status.

Located on Vanuatu's largest island Espiritu Santo, Vathe is home to astonishing biodiversity, hosting over two-thirds of the South Pacific archipelago's land and freshwater birds and many of its endemic species.

But just a single ranger, traditional chief Bill Tavue, patrols the 2,720-hectare site, whose name means "estuary" in the local Na language.

Lack of funding for conservation projects, disregard for government regulations and the need to clear land for farming means that logging is common, making Tavue's battle to protect the forest all the harder.

So he hopes that the glossy green leaf of the namele, which resembles a small palm, can help him protect what remains.



This picture taken on February 1, 2026 shows ranger and traditional chief Bill Tavue posing during an interview in his home village of Matantas, located within the Vathe Conservation Area on Espiritu Santo island, Vanuatu.

The plant, known to science by the botanical name *Cycas seemannii*, grows across the western Pacific region, but holds particular significance in Vanuatu.

"In our culture, no one is allowed to touch the namele, only the moli," Tavue said, using a local word for chieftain.

When a namele leaf is placed somewhere, people know not to touch anything nearby, he explained.

- Leaf of peace -

Tavue comes from Matantas, a small village on the north coast of Espiritu Santo, one of the more than

80 islands that make up the Vanuatu archipelago.

When Portuguese navigator Pedro Fernandez de Quiros landed there in 1606, he believed he had discovered the fabled "Great Southern Land".

In those days, Vanuatu's tribes used the namele leaf to mark boundaries that could not be crossed on pain of death a technique applied after wars to protect peace agreements.

More recently, locals in Matantas realised the leaf could help protect the forest, and began publicising its presence in Vathe as a way to keep outsiders

away.

The idea has caught on, and the government in Vanuatu's capital Port Vila now officially advocates that chiefs elsewhere use similar taboos to protect nature.

Traditional law still holds real sway in Vanuatu the country's Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs is made of up custom chiefs from across the nation and holds real political power.

Proponents of invoking the namele leaf taboo for conservation say it has helped keep Vathe Conservation Area largely intact, despite

few other protections. But they acknowledge that the leaf and even growing national and international attention to Vathe's importance are far from enough. After one recent cyclone, Chinese loggers working in Vanuatu were given permission to pick up dead wood in the reserve.

But locals allege that was used as cover to log inside the area.

Officials at Vanuatu's Department of Forests and Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation did not respond to AFP's requests for comment about those claims.

While Vanuatu has tough forestry laws, it is unclear how effective those measures have been in practice.

- 'We don't destroy' -

The leaf taboo holds weight in Espiritu Santo's mountainous west as well, where grassroots environmentalists created the Santo Sunset Environment Network to protect their forests.

They make educational visits to schools in villages often only accessible by hours-long boat rides and have persuaded chiefs there to ban logging and invoke the namele leaf and other taboos to enforce it. □

Germany halts rescue efforts for stranded whale

Berlin, Germany

Experts said Wednesday they were halting rescue efforts for a humpback whale struggling in shallow waters off the German coast and had given up hope for its survival.

The 13.5-metre (44-foot) animal has been floundering off Germany's Baltic Sea coast for more than a week, having first been spotted stuck on a sandbank on March 23 near the city of Luebeck.

The creature managed to free itself but then became stuck again several more times near the city

of Wismar. Coverage of its struggle for survival has gripped much of the German public.

Experts had hoped the whale's odyssey would end with it finding its way back to its natural habitat in the Atlantic Ocean.

But on Wednesday scientist Burkard Baschek, who had taken part in the rescue efforts, told reporters: "We are convinced that the animal is going to die" near Wismar.

The whale's ordeal had severely weakened it, its breathing had become

"very, very irregular" and it was exhibiting "virtually no" reaction to the presence of human beings, he added.

The chances of it freeing itself again were "very low" and any further rescue efforts would therefore "be pure animal cruelty".

Since it was spotted last week the whale had prompted a large-scale rescue operation involving firefighters, scientists and the maritime police.

"Now we have the task of giving him some peace," said Till Backhaus, the environment minister for the



This aerial handout photo taken and released on March 29, 2026 by non-governmental environmental organisation Greenpeace Germany shows a humpback whale in shallow coastal waters in Wismar Bay in the Baltic Sea, off Wismar, northern Germany.

state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. The animal will now "have to depart this life," he said.

An exclusion zone of 500 metres will be put in place around the whale in order to avoid disturbing it. □

Germany's WWII munitions a toxic legacy on Baltic Sea floor

Kiel, Germany
Below the waves off Germany's northern tourist beaches, a toxic time bomb lurks on the Baltic Sea floor -- enormous quantities of World War II munitions that are slowly rusting away. Scientists warn that as salt water corrodes the metal casings on rockets, artillery shells and bombs, they will release contaminants such as the explosive TNT into the marine environment.

To better map the dangers, a research vessel set sail this month from the port city of Kiel, whose bay is among the most polluted with unexploded ordnance. A dozen scientists from Germany, Poland and Lithuania, backed by an 11-strong crew, are to spend three weeks on the Alkor, operated by the Kiel-based GEOMAR oceanographic research centre.

The voyage will take them past a sunken torpedo boat, a destroyer, a minesweeper and a submarine, all identified from naval logbooks and other records in the German military archives. "One of the goals of the project is to develop some new tools for cleaning it up," Aaron Beck, a scientist leading the expedition, told



This undated handout photo made available by the Kiel-based GEOMAR oceanographic research centre on March 23, 2026 shows a groundmine with TNT in the foreground on the seafloor of the Baltic Sea.

AFP aboard the ship. "The idea is, what can we do to prevent this before the pollution comes out?" Along the German coast, about 1.6 million tonnes of munitions litter the seafloor, especially near the ports of Kiel and Luebeck, making it one of the world's most contaminated areas. Most munitions were hastily dumped there by the victorious Allied powers after Germany's 1945 surrender, to quickly eliminate what remained of the Nazi war machine.

- Traces found in shellfish -
Almost 80 years on, traces of carcinogenic explosives have been detected in shellfish and other sea life throughout the area. The Baltic is shallow, with only a narrow passage between Sweden and Denmark leading to the open ocean, meaning pollution tends to linger. A modern-day boom in undersea construction of pipelines, telecom cables and offshore wind farms has cast a new spotlight on the

issue. The scientists on the ship are using an underwater robot to film the seabed, as well as probes to collect sediment and water samples. They are also dispersing packets of mussels, which they will later retrieve to study the levels of contamination ingested. Beck, however, reassured that the pollution does not pose an immediate danger to humans. "For a human being to ingest, at current concen-

trations, a concerning amount of explosive compounds, they would have to consume seven kilos (15 pounds) of fish a day for more than a year," he said. Ammunition on the sunken warships is not the only environmental danger. "On some of these ships, you have 10 tonnes of ammunition, but 200 tonnes of fuel. That's undoubtedly the biggest problem," Beck said. One wreck still holding fuel is the Franken, a German navy tanker torpedoed by Soviet forces on April 8, 1945. It sank off what is now the Polish city of Gdansk, at the time still the German city of Danzig.

Uwe Wiechert, 70, a former German naval officer and part of the research team, called it a "time bomb". The Franken also poses a legal conundrum, he said: who will pay to pump this fuel from a German ship, sunk by the Soviets, that now rests in Polish waters?

- Slow disposal efforts -
Seafloor munitions dumps are a global problem, with other major sites located along the coasts of the United States, Britain, Japan and Australia and even in Swiss lakes. □

The 'million dollar' Senna helmet bought at Japan GP

Suzuka, Japan
When Canadian collector Darren Jack discovered that an Ayrton Senna helmet he values at a million dollars was for sale in Japan, he jumped on a plane to acquire the piece of sporting history that the legendary Brazilian driver had with him during his fatal final Formula One Grand Prix.

Jack, who AFP met at the Japan Grand Prix last weekend, showed off the iconic yellow helmet in its original 'A.S.'-initialised bag, which both belonged to the three-time world champion, who was killed aged 34 in a crash at the Imola circuit in San Marino on May 1, 1994.

The Bell helmet is not the one Senna wore during that fatal race. But it is one of the three or four he had with him at the start of the 1994 season in Brazil, Japan and Imola, Jack claims. "(Senna) definitely wore it in Brazil during the race weekend. But it travelled with the team to round two in Pacific Grand Prix and



Darren Jack, a Canadian motorsports memorabilia collector from Toronto, poses with the racing helmet worn by late Formula One legend Ayrton Senna, in Nagoya on March 30, 2026.

to Imola in this final race weekend," Jack said.

"It was the only race weekend he had the Senna logo on. So this was added for Imola, which is significant because it means it was there. And it's quite a crazy moment to think that (it's a) part of life and part of history."

As evidence, Jack presented photos and videos from that period, which have been compared and analysed using recognition software, along with authentication letters, serial numbers, and letters from the manufacturer Bell and the Japanese seller.

Jack, the CEO of a motorsport memorabilia collection, refused to reveal how

much he paid for the item, but insisted "it's clear that it's a million-dollar helmet". However, despite already receiving lucrative offers -- including from inside the F1 paddock at Suzuka -- Jack said he won't sell the helmet... yet.

"I love having it. I'm proud to own it. I'm a passionate collector first. That's how I started the business," the 46-year-old said. "So for me, it's a dream. What would I spend the money on?"

"There was a current F1 driver, who shall remain unnamed, who basically said, 'what if I gave you a million dollars now for it in the paddock this weekend?' And I said, 'no, not for sale'." □

Three Aruban organizations have a chance to win an “Appeltje van Oranje” The Oranje Fonds has announced which organizations are eligible to receive this recognition

(Oranjestad)—Ten social organizations from the Caribbean islands, including three from Aruba, are eligible for an Appeltje van Oranje. The Oranje Fonds awards this prize every year to three organizations that contribute in a special way to a more connected society in the Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. A ten-day voting period and a presentation day (pitch day) will determine which ten organizations become nominees. Three of them will receive an Appeltje van Oranje on October 8 from Queen Máxima. The Oranje Fonds received 99 nominations this year. A complete list of all 50 candidates can be found at www.appeltjesvanoranje.nl

The 3 Aruban candidates are:

- Stichting Trampolin pa Trabao – Aruba

- Fundacion Pa Nos Comunidad – Aruba
- Fundacon ADRA Aruba

Breaking poverty together
An essential link in the fight against poverty

Poverty remains a persistent problem in the Caribbean. Its impact is significant and affects health, opportunities, and the ability to participate in society. One in three residents in the Caribbean lives in poverty. Existing policies to combat poverty are often complicated or insufficient, which causes people not to receive the support they need. That is why social initiatives are indispensable in reducing and preventing poverty. They are close to the people, have their trust, and provide the help people truly need.

For this edition of the Ap-

peltjes van Oranje, the Oranje Fonds is looking for organizations that help break the cycle of poverty and debt in a sustainable way. In other words, organizations that empower people with knowledge and skills. An important selection criterion is that the organizations aim to prevent or reduce poverty.

Voting period and presentation day

The voting period will take place from May 18 to May 27. Through the website www.appeltjesvanoranje.nl, everyone can vote once for one of the fifty candidates. The organization with the most votes will become the first nominee. The other nine will be



selected after the presentation day in June, where they present themselves to each other and to a jury. The jury has the final say on which organizations will be nominated.

Appeltjes van Oranje

Each year, the Oranje Fonds awards three Appeltjes van Oranje to organizations that work toward

a connected society. Initiatives that are indispensable and have been active for at least two years are eligible. The prize is a recognition of their work and dedication. The theme changes every year. The award consists of a bronze statue, designed by Princess Beatrix, and a cash prize of €25,000. Queen Máxima will present the award. □

Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill



(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamanota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the

Arikok National Park.

The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □

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Ever heard of the cah'i orgel? A key instrument in Aruban folklore music

(Oranjestad)—The cah'i orgel music box is an important and unique instrument that is used on the ABC islands in the Dutch Caribbean. This instrument is a staple in our folklore music, and its significance in the traditions of Aruba has and continues to bring together the old and young.

The origin of the cah'i orgel is said to have come from Europe around 150 years ago. A cross breed between the barrel piano and the organ, the most popular stories said that the instrument came from either England or Germany, but made its way to Italy down to Venezuela, where in 1881, Mr. Horatio Sprock (1866-1949) from Curacao was first introduced to it. After that, Sprock made his own cah'i orgel "Josefina", and suc-



cessfully debuted it on the streets of Barquisimeto. Back in Curacao, he started his own cah'i orgel business along with his brother Luis. In

Aruba, it is said that the cah'i orgel was introduced by Rufo Wever, who later in his career became one of the composers for the Aruban national anthem.

Rufo Wever was a young musician in 1937 when he established his own cah'i orgel business on the island. Before that he experimented with his uncle's cah'i orgel, and he over the years he learned to build and repair the instrument. In fact, he was incredibly skilled in this, and he was one of the few to have recognized from the start that the cah'i orgel is an instrument that needs preserving.

As mentioned, the cah'i orgel is a music box. Made from mahogany wood, it contains a cylinder with a maximum of eight music pieces.

By rotating the lever on the front side of the box, the cah'i orgel produces music similar to that of a piano, and is accompanied often by someone else playing the "wiri", a percussion instrument made out of steel and reminiscent to the Spanish guiro. Back then, you would often also find someone playing the triangle alongside the cah'i orgel and wiri. In Aruba, the cah'i orgel and wiri is used for traditional music genres, such as the Aruban waltz, tumba, mazurka and more.

Fun fact: another name for the cah'i orgel is the "tingilingi box." □

Source: "E Cilinder Magico entre Aruba y Curaçao" by Marilyn Alcalá-Wallé, Herta Parabirsing-Balentina and Nidia Rosaria-Wallé.

The Lionfish and its threat to our marine wild life

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

Originating from the Indo-Pacific Ocean, the lionfish is a relatively small fish. It has no teeth, but it does protect itself against predators using its sharp, colorful spikes. It is said that the sting of a lionfish can be up to 100 times more painful than that of a bee's sting. Its natural predators in the Indo-Pacific are sharks and

barracudas, but in the Caribbean Sea, local fish do not recognize the lionfish as part of their diet. In other words, the lionfish has no predators in the Caribbean Sea. And this becomes a major problem for our local marine life; if there are no predators to stimulate population control of lionfish, these fish can continue to reproduce and expand to other parts of the Atlantic, become more invasive and dangerous for other types of fish.

For Aruba, the lionfish is a problem especially for our local coral reefs. According to Patrick van Brakel, lionfish expert and hunter from the Hunting Lionfish Aruba foundation, every reef has a "cleaning station"—tiny fish that eat algae and other

types of waste on a reef, thus maintaining the reef's health and providing food to the fish population in the area. However, as the lionfish feeds off of these tiny fish, it becomes harder for the coral reef to maintain its health.

Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlantic happened in Florida, where people would buy lionfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish were too much upkeep, they were let out into the ocean to roam free. From continental USA, the lionfish travelled to and invaded the entire Caribbean area, from Aruba, Bonaire

and Curacao up to New York. In Aruba, lionfish were discovered in 2009.

Controlling the lionfish population is challenge, as each female fish can lay up to 40,000 eggs a day. Luckily, we have people like van Brakel who dedicate their lives hunting and capturing these invasive species, using them for consumption and jewelry making.

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



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Best spots to view the sunset

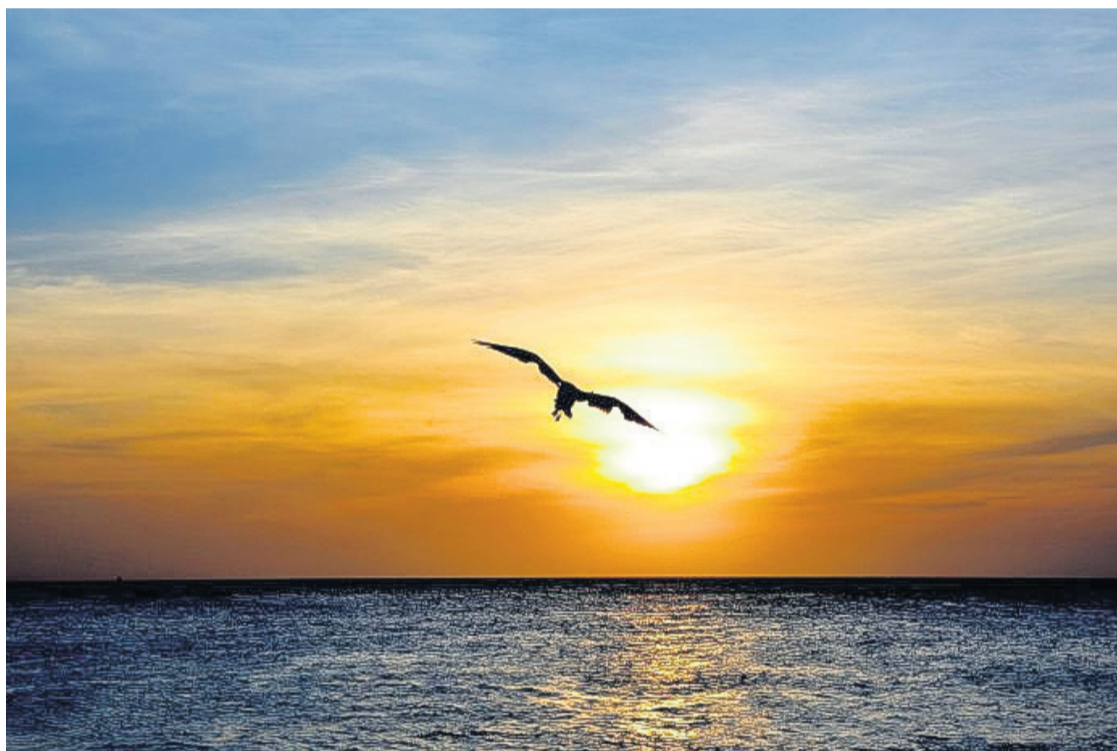
(Oranjestad)—What can be more romantic than surprising your partner with a date watching the sunset? Aruba's sunset leave many speechless, and luckily, the best spots to view the sunset are entirely accessible and easy to find. Here are some of the best places to view the sunset on the island.

California Light House

Of course, being one of the highest points easily accessible to locals and tourists, the California Light House hill not only offers a tremendous view of the sunset, but also a breath taking scenery of most of the island. In the distance you can spot all the hotels, the western shoreline and the wild waves that crash on the northern side of the island.

Manchebo & Eagle Beach

Speaking of the western shoreline, the best spots for viewing the sunset on



the beach has to be either Manchebo Beach or at Eagle Beach, which stretch along the entire western coast of the island. The sunset on these beaches is truly breathtaking; the sky and ocean look so big and spacious, and paired with

the orange/pink hue of the sunset, the white sandy beaches and the soft sounds of waves crashing—it can only be described as an experience!

Arashi Beach

Another beach that has to

be considered as another great spot to view the sunset. Arashi Beach is the last beach you will find along the western coast line, just before you drive up the hill to the California Light House. A favorite for surfers and body boarders,

the Arashi sky stretches out for miles, lending a spectacular canvas for the sun to create a masterpiece of orange, pink and purple

Hooiberg Hill

These last two options are for more active couples. If you and your partner like to hike, the Hooiberg Hill may be a great place for you to get your daily workout in and enjoy a beautiful view of the sunset and the island as a little reward. Climb on top the 587-step stairs and reach the top to enjoy this incredible scenery.

Casibari Rock Formation

If you're a rock climber, you might enjoy watching the sunset on top of the Casibari Rock Formation. It's no Yosemite, but it does offer a fun little exercise to get to the top. But if you prefer not to get your hands a little dirty, you can always use the stairs in the back.hue.☐

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Picuda", a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Picuda.

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name is Sphyræna barracuda. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year

in our waters, where it is a so-called "ambush predator" that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names vary according to size.

In Aruba:

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picu-

da, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions.☐

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Santo Rosa).



Picuda
Greater Barracuda
Sphyræna barracuda

Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort Honored to Be Recommended Again by Forbes Travel Guide

(Oranjestad)—Recognized for exceptional service and luxury hospitality on Aruba's famed Eagle Beach, **Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort**, has once again earned the prestigious Forbes Travel Guide Recommended designation, reaffirming its standing among the world's most exceptional luxury hospitality experiences.



How Forbes Travel Guide evaluates the world's exceptional hotels

Forbes Travel Guide is regarded as the independent, global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants, spas, and ocean cruise ships. Each year, its anonymous inspectors visit properties around the world, evaluating them against as many as 900 objective standards that prioritize genuine service and the overall guest experience.

Inspectors stay at least two nights and pay their own way, ensuring every rating reflects the same experience a traveler would have.

A globally respected benchmark for luxury hospitality

In its official listing, *Forbes Travel Guide* highlights Bucuti

& Tara as a 14-acre adults-only beachfront retreat located on the widest stretch of Eagle Beach. Known for its peaceful atmosphere and romantic focus, the resort offers an intimate experience with just 104 rooms, where personalized service and environmental leadership go hand in hand.

Forbes also recognized Bucuti & Tara as the Caribbean's first and only certified carbon-neutral hotel and one of the region's most eco-certified properties. As the first hotel to receive the United Nations 2020 Climate Neutral Now Award, an honor typically reserved for large global corporations, this recognition is something the team holds with deep gratitude. It reflects

a continued commitment to doing what is right for Aruba's environment, while demonstrating that even a small, boutique resort can contribute meaningfully on a global stage. In doing so, Bucuti & Tara has helped set a new standard for responsible luxury hospitality, while protecting the island's natural beauty for generations to come.

"Forbes Travel Guide represents one of the most respected authorities in luxury hospitality," said Crescenzia Biemans, Managing Director of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort. "Being recognized once again is a meaningful moment for our team and one we receive with gratitude. It reflects the dedication of our Bucuti Associates,

whose genuine care and attention to detail create an environment where guests feel truly welcomed, valued, and deeply connected during some of the most special moments of their lives."

Hospitality that makes guests feel valued

Among the inspector's highlights, Bucuti & Tara's strong service culture and standout culinary experiences are defining elements of the guest journey. Service that creates meaningful guest experiences is central to the Forbes Travel Guide inspection process, which emphasizes how hospitality makes guests feel during their stay. Bucuti Associates consistently deliver thoughtful and intuitive service that transforms everyday moments into lasting memories.

During the inspection, Bucuti Associate, Juan Vasquez, was recognized by inspectors as a standout staff member. "He remained professional at all times and provided efficient service. He made us feel appreciated. We loved his positive attitude every morning."

Moments like these illustrate the spirit of hospitality that defines Bucuti & Tara, where every guest receives attentive care while enjoying the natural beauty and tranquility of Eagle Beach.

Where serenity, romance and nature come together

A serene Caribbean escape defined by romance, wellness and sustainability, Bucuti & Tara offers beachfront and gardenview accommodations, a comprehensive wellness program customized to each guest, exclusive romantic offerings and exceptional dining led by the resort's celebrated culinary team at *Elements Restaurant* and the recently debuted *Terra by Jeremy Ford*.

Together with its leadership in sustainable tourism and dedication to guest wellbeing, Bucuti & Tara continues to deliver a refined Caribbean escape where service, serenity and sustainability exist in harmony.

Learn more at Bucuti.com.

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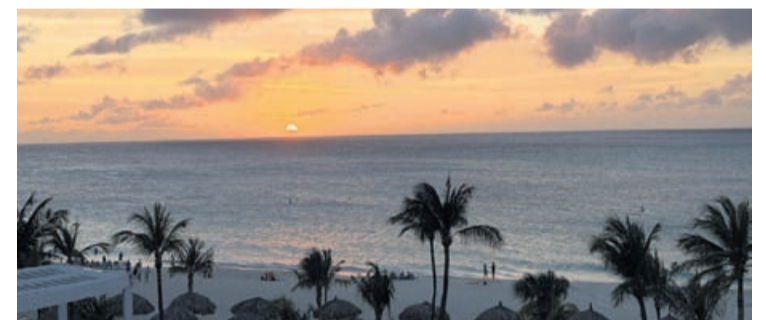
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What Aruba means to William!



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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 William Ryan.

He wrote to us saying: "Aruba is fuel for the soul. Peaceful, spiritual, reinvigorating, and a gateway to Heaven on earth."

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

Get to know the history of the gold industry on Aruba



(Oranjestad)— We have talked about the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin before and its brief history during the gold industry on Aruba, but get to know a little more about the history of the “Aruban Gold Rush.”

The first hint of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when rumors about gold being found in dug up treasure chests of the Spanish colonial era prompted the first official exploration for gold on the island, commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some specks of gold, it was not enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young farmer boy named Willem Rasmijn found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep in the area of Rooi Fluit on the north coast. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold.

When the colonial governor in Curacao, Governor Cantz'laar, heard about the news, he sent his adjutant, Capitan van Raders, to start harvesting gold. This was in July 1824. In August of that same year, the governor followed suit to the island, accompanied by high-ranking military officials. When citizens started swarming the area in search for gold, The Netherlands sent more troops to safe guard the gold.

Prominent places where gold was found was in Daimari, Wacobana, Arikok, Rooi Fluit, Hadicouradi and later West punt, where gold ore was found. Because of a lack in advanced technology and materials to harvest the gold, the process took a more primitive approach: Clay rocks containing traces of gold were left to dry in the sun. Then, workers would start chipping the clay away on a large canvas to catch the gold particles that were left behind after the wind blew away the dust from the clay. In the harvest period of 1824-1825, there was a total of 71,000 kilos collected through commissioned harvesting. Locals themselves reportedly found about 25 pounds worth of gold in the nearby rivers. The following years after that first big harvest, commission work fell off, and in 1828, the direc-

tor of the goldmines, Johan Gravenhorst, decided to halt harvesting.

Almost 40 years later, the London-based Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was granted concession. The firm built their gold mines on Bushiribana, and in the port of Oranjestad a long road that connected the gold mill to the port. The ores themselves came from Sero Plat en Sero Cristal.

By this point, workers were still using primitive methods to harvest the ores. For example, when someone had to go into the mines, there were no stairs or lifts; the person had to be brought down in a big bucket, with two or more workers holding the bucket by a thick rope above ground.

Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. reportedly operated until 1899, and right after the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. was established, coincidentally also based in London. This time, the gold mill in Balashi was built, and more mines were dug up all around the island. The gold ores that were found were transported via track engine, locally called the “trekinchi”. Despite being more equipped for the job, the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. could not produce any

real profit, and so the concession was terminated just eight years later, in 1908.

A local firm, the “Aruba Goud Maatschappij” (Aruba Gold Company) took over the concession, along with all the materials and equipment. In the beginning, the company saw good profit, and for a while, the island's economy depended primarily on the mining and harvesting of gold. But just like its predecessors, the streak of luck for the Aruba Gold Company came to an end when WWI broke out.

The main reason why production stopped this time was reportedly because of a lack in dynamite for extracting the ores from the mines, as well as a lack in raw materials like German cyanide for the refining process. By the time the war ended, the equipment that was left at Balashi were too old to use again. After the war, gold production on the Aruba was left to a standstill.

According to an issue in Aruba Esso News paper in 1953, Henny Eman wanted to start up digging again, this time using independent miners. He argued that there was proof of more gold to be discovered. Plus, hiring independent miners would boost the island's employ-

ment rate.

When it was proven that gold was in fact still present, the executive board on the island promised to fund the project only if the gold dug up proved to be valuable. However, nothing else was reported after this, so it could be concluded that there was no real profitable market on the island anymore. The ruins of the Bushiribana and Balashi Gold Mills are still standing, and open for the public to visit. These structures offer a glance into the past, to a time where Aruba experienced one of its first wave of industrialization. Today, these structures are persevered as historical monuments. □

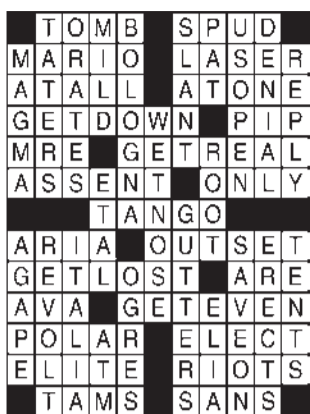
Source:

1. “De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)” by Evert Bongers.
2. Aruba Esso News, 1953 issue.

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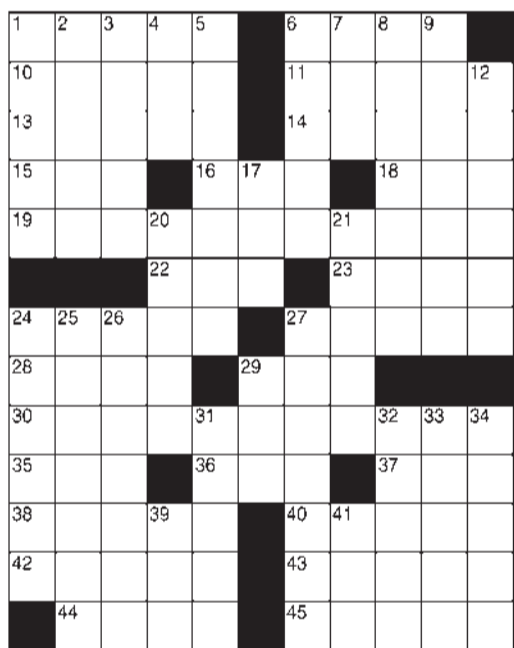


ACROSS

- 43 Make blank
- 1 "To — own self be true"
- 44 "Edward Scissor-hands"
- 6 May honorees
- 10 Arrested
- 11 Regions
- 13 Lent a hand
- 14 "Divine Comedy" writer
- 15 Mamie's husband
- 16 Online address
- 18 Play division
- 19 Fancy boat
- 22 View
- 23 Lively folk dance
- 24 In the future
- 27 Move like a crab
- 28 Musical number
- 29 Gorilla, for one
- 30 Fancy car
- 35 Cry of discovery
- 36 Tiny
- 37 Period
- 38 Find another purpose for
- 40 Fashionably dated
- 42 Spud

DOWN

- 1 Hike route
- 2 17-syllable poem
- 3 Almanac section
- 4 Never, in Germany
- 5 Lasted
- 6 One way to be in love
- 7 Singer Rita
- 8 Threatened
- 9 Big bag
- 12 End a lawsuit
- 17 Reuben pitcher
- 20 Grammar fellow
- 21 Disney's mermaid
- 24 Classify name
- 25 Impetuous one
- 26 Between travel points
- 27 Balls
- 29 Star
- 31 Annoying fellow
- 32 Luggage clip-on
- 33 Code name
- 34 Sioux tribe
- 39 Fall mo.
- 41 Stretch of years



4-17

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.

4-17

CRYPTOQUOTE

RESC IKQGCP TBAS, SHSC JES
VBWIS IKQGCP, JESQS RSQS
CD KQDFWSAI SOTSKJ RESQS
JD FS EBKKGSIJ. — SQCSIJ
ESAGCPRBN

Cryptoquote: IN A GENTLE WAY,
YOU CAN SHAKE THE WORLD. — MAHATMA
GANDHI

Cruise ship Schedule: April 1 - 6 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
WED	01	SERENADE OF THE SEAS ZUIDERDAM	08.00 07.00	23.00 16.00	C B	1 1
THU	02	MSC DIVINA BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS	08.00 08.00	18.00 23.00	B C	1 1
FRI	03	NORWEGIAN STAR	11.00	20.00	C	1
SUN	05	FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-
MON	06	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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



Electrical power

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



Drinking water

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



Safety

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

SUDOKU

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

King Classic Sudoku

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

Difficulty: ★★★

4/2

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

4/1

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Meta watchdog says grassroots fact checks risk harm to users

Paris, France

The body created by Facebook to review content moderation decisions warned Thursday that user-generated fact-checks could harm people living under repression or conflict if they are introduced worldwide.

Facebook parent Meta announced last year that it would end its use of external fact-checkers in the US. That scheme had employed third parties including AFP to expose misinformation.

Instead, Meta said it would ask ordinary users to verify controversial claims in a system known as "community notes", aping methods on X and other social networks.

If rolled out worldwide, that scheme "could... pose significant human rights risks and contribute to tangible harms," Meta's Oversight Board said in a Thursday advisory.

That was especially true in "repressive human rights regimes, in particular electoral contexts and in ongoing crisis and conflict situations," it added.

AFP was one of 23 organisations whose public comments were accepted by the Oversight Board as it prepared its advisory.

The independent board is often referred to as Instagram and WhatsApp owner Meta's "supreme court", ruling on moderation decisions and advising on policy.

Created and voted on by ordinary social media users, community fact-checks generally rely on independent journalism to back up their claims.

This is difficult or impossible in repressive regimes, the board noted.

During conflicts, some groups may be cut off from access and unable to weigh in with their side of the story, they added.

The board recommended that community notes should not be introduced where there is active fight-



An illustration photo shows letters cut out of newspapers arranged to read "Fake news", set up in front of a screen displaying social media logos, in Mulhouse, eastern France, on February 20, 2025.

ing or widespread obstacles to getting online. Free media and civil society are also needed for ordinary people to fact-check claims in the midst of elections.

Without them, "the program risks publishing misleading notes", the board said.

And in some parts of the world, "malicious actors have repeatedly demonstrated the ability to coordinate large numbers of accounts to promote deceptive information" and could do so via Meta's community notes, it added.

"This risk will become more acute as artificial intelligence facilitates the scaled creation and operation of these networks," the board warned, suggesting that Meta rule out

countries with histories of disinformation campaigns. Other factors to take into account included language barriers and political polarisation.

The board urged Meta to test for "risks related to contributor anonymity, coordinated disinformation campaigns and gaming of the system, language representation and contributor participation" before launching community notes in a country.

It should also grant outside researchers access to data on the scheme. □

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Sta. Cruz	527 2900
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'I'm really proud': first Black astronaut candidate reflects on historic Moon mission

United States

In the 1960s Ed Dwight was the first Black astronaut candidate -- but he never got his chance to go to the Moon.

He said he's now living out that once-denied dream vicariously through Victor Glover, who is set to make history on the Artemis 2 Moon mission that could take off as soon as Wednesday.

Glover is a 49-year-old veteran astronaut set to become the first Black person and first person of color to embark on a lunar voyage. For Dwight, the achievement is personal.

The 92-year-old paved the way for diversifying the astronaut corps more than half-a-century ago, and later served as a mentor to Glover.

"I have a personal attachment and affiliation with Victor, because I met him when he was 15 years old, and we had a program



(L-R) Victor Glover, Ed Dwight and Leland Melvin attend the World Premiere of National Geographic's "The Space Race" during the Tribeca Film Festival at Village East by Angelika on June 12, 2023 in New York City, New York.

where we were trying to encourage young Black candidates to go to pilot training and to get into flying," Dwight said.

"And never in a thousand years did I ever think that Victor would take it to heart and take it to the Moon, which is what he's done,"

the pioneering astronaut told AFP. "I'm really living my old 92 years through Victor. I'm really proud."

- Racist backlash -

In 1961, the civil rights movement was intensifying across the United States as

Dwight was serving as a pilot in the US Air Force. He was invited to join a training program that would set him up to become the nation's first Black astronaut. Dwight says that it wasn't until later in his career that he understood that President John F. Kennedy at

the time was seeking to garner Black support, and that "it was proposed to him that if he were to appoint a Black astronaut, it would ensure him the Black vote."

The move immediately sparked fierce backlash. "The people who make astronauts fought it and said 'This guy will last about six weeks,'" Dwight recalls.

"It was so crazy, all the stuff that I went through and had to face, all that criticism that Black people were too ignorant and ill-equipped."

But he held his ground: "I ended up ranked higher in the class than 10 white guys." But in 1963, JFK was assassinated in Dallas -- a tragedy that marked the end of Dwight's spaceflight dreams.

He was repeatedly told that America wasn't ready for a Black astronaut, and that he'd arrived "20 years too early." It wasn't until 1983 that NASA flew its first African American astronaut, Guion Bluford. □



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First U.N. high seas summit proposed for January in New York

United Nations, United States

Countries that ratified a landmark treaty to protect the high seas on Monday set January 2027 as the proposed date for their first summit, known as a con-

ference of the parties. After years of delays, the treaty was ratified in September by 60 countries. The law aims to protect biodiverse areas in international waters, beyond countries' exclusive eco-

nomie zones. Belizean diplomat Janine Coye-Felson, co-chair of the committee working on implementing the treaty, said the group would recommend "that the first meeting of the COP be convened from 11 to 22nd January 2027 at U.N. Headquarters" in New York city. The preparatory committee is holding its final meeting in New York to lay the groundwork for January's summit, where operating rules and the location of a new secretariat must be decided.

The treaty, adopted in June 2023, aims to counter the myriad threats facing the world's high seas, including climate change, pollution and overfishing. Teeming with life, the oceans are responsible for creating half of the globe's

oxygen supply and are vital to combatting global warming because they absorb significant amounts of the CO2 emitted by human activities, conservationists say.

The high seas begin where a country's exclusive economic zone ends up to 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from the coast and fall outside the jurisdiction of any single nation. Although they cover nearly half the planet, the high seas have been long overlooked in the fight to preserve the environment.

Today only about one percent of the high seas is subject to conservation measures. In 2022 at the COP15 biodiversity conference, the world's nations committed to protect 30 percent of global lands and oceans by the year 2030. □



Handout picture released by the Brazilian Presidency shows (L to R) Paraguay's President Santiago Pena, Brazil's Environment Minister Marina Silva, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and COP15 President Joao Paulo Capobianco posing for pictures on the eve of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP15) in Campo Grande, Brazil on March 22, 2026.

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A student practices a game of chess at the SOM Chess Academy in Katwe, a Kampala suburb, on September 29, 2016.

Mind games: How football stars are fuelling chess boom

London, United Kingdom
Erling Haaland and Mohamed Salah are among the Premier League stars "addicted" to chess, helping to spark a surge in the game's popularity among younger people. Manchester City striker Haaland is so fascinated by the game that he recently invested in a ground-breaking new chess tour to capitalise on the increased profile bestowed by its celebrity players.

As well as Haaland, Liverpool forward Salah and England team-mates Harry Kane, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Anthony Gordon are all avid chess players. Salah is obsessed by playing the faster 'blitz' version of chess using an anonymous online profile. "I'm addicted to chess. Every day, literally every day," the Egyptian said. Arsenal midfielders Martin Odegaard and Eberechi Eze are both keen players, with the latter winning

an amateur tournament in 2025.

Chess grandmaster Magnus Carlsen, a five-time world champion, is a huge football fan and the Norwegian's love for both games has played a role in the surprise crossover. Alexander-Arnold often plays chess with his brothers and once levelled-up to face Carlsen, who defeated the Real Madrid defender in a 17-move rout that lasted just five minutes. AC Milan winger Christian Pulisic has the queen chess piece tattooed on his arm in tribute to his grandfather, who taught him the game as a child. France World Cup winner Antoine Griezmann and Real Madrid's Dani Carvajal are also aficionados. On the surface, the contemplative, cerebral nature of chess is a stark contrast to the physicality and aggression of football. But dig deeper and there are more similarities than

you would expect. "Chess is an incredible game. It sharpens your mind, and there are clear similarities to football," Haaland said. "You have to think quickly, trust your instincts, and think several moves ahead. Strategy and planning are everything."

- 'It's remarkably similar' -
Backed by the International Chess Federation (FIDE), the new tour will feature four tournaments each year in different cities, with a world champion crowned across three disciplines -- fast classic, rapid and blitz. Each season will have a minimum prize pool of £2 million (\$2.7 million). "Seeing a world-class athlete like Erling Haaland join the Total World Chess Championship Tour is a powerful signal of the global attention and cultural relevance that chess enjoys today," FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich said. □



Luka Dončić #77 of the Los Angeles Lakers reacts after a three-point shot against the Cleveland Cavaliers in the first half at Crypto.com Arena on March 31, 2026 in Los Angeles, California.

Dončić returns with 42 as Lakers down Cavs

Los Angeles, United States

Luka Dončić returned from suspension to score 42 points as the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers 127-113 to extend their impressive form with a fourth straight victory on Tuesday.

The Lakers, who have emerged as genuine title contenders after winning 15 of 17 games in March to climb up the Western Conference standings, took control with big quarters either side of half-time to cruise to victory.

The Lakers outscored Cleveland 33-19 in the second quarter and then erupted for 45 points in the third to put the game away.

Dončić finished with 42 points, 12 assists and five rebounds, shooting 6-of-13 from three-point range. Dončić's latest virtuoso performance also saw him break Kobe Bryant's record for the most points scored by a Lakers player in a calendar month, which had stood at 578 set in 2006.

Dončić said extending the Lakers' winning run meant more than setting personal records. "If you don't win, it doesn't really mean anything," Dončić told reporters.

"So the run that we've been on it really means a lot. We've got to keep playing like that." Austin Reaves added 19 points while Deandre Ayton scored 18 as six Lakers players finished in double figures. LeBron James finished with 14 points as the win saw him pass yet another statistical milestone. The 41-year-old's 1,229th career win in regular season and playoff games breaks the record previously held by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Lakers coach JJ Redick singled out James for praise in helping knit the team together during their recent resurgence. "He's great on both sides of the ball," Redick said. "He's just doing a little bit of everything at a super high level for us. □

PGA Tour, Masters chairman support Tiger recovery pause

Washington, United States

Tiger Woods received support from the PGA Tour and Augusta National chairman Fred Ridley after stepping away from golf to work on his health and well-being after a traffic accident.

The 50-year-old golfing legend was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence last Friday after the crash on Jupiter Island, Florida, in which no one was injured.

Woods, who passed a breathalyzer exam but refused to take a urinalysis, pleaded not guilty to driving under the influence on Tuesday and later said in a statement he was stepping away from golf to work on himself.

"I know and understand the seriousness of the situa-



U.S. golfer Tiger Woods lines up a putt on the 17th green on the opening day of the 152nd British Open Golf Championship at Royal Troon on the south west coast of Scotland on July 18, 2024.

tion I find myself in," Woods said.

"I am stepping away for a period of time to seek treatment and focus on my health. This is necessary in order for me to prioritize my well-being and work toward lasting recovery.

"I'm committed to taking the time needed to return in a healthier, stronger and more focused place, both personally and professionally." Woods had not dismissed talk of playing in next week's Masters when he competed in a TGL indoor simulator event last week, but his status was listed as a non-playing past champion on the Masters website on Wednesday.

"Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament fully support Tiger Woods as he focuses on his well-being," Augusta National chairman Ridley said in a statement.

"Although Tiger will not be joining us in person next week, his presence will be felt here in Augusta."

That likely means Woods will not be attending next week's Masters Champions Dinner.

Woods, a 15-time major winner, also quickly drew support from the PGA Tour. "Tiger Woods is a legend of our sport whose impact extends far beyond his achievements on the course. But above all else, Tiger is a person, and our focus is on his health and well-being," the PGA Tour said in a statement.

"Tiger continues to have our full support as he takes this important step."

Woods has not competed at the PGA Tour level since the 2024 British Open. He last completed 72 holes in an event at the 2024 Masters, where he finished 60th. PGA Tour chief executive officer Brian Rolapp said in a statement that Woods had helped him adjust to his role, which he began last June. "Tiger Woods is one of the most influential figures the sports world has ever known," Rolapp said. □



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