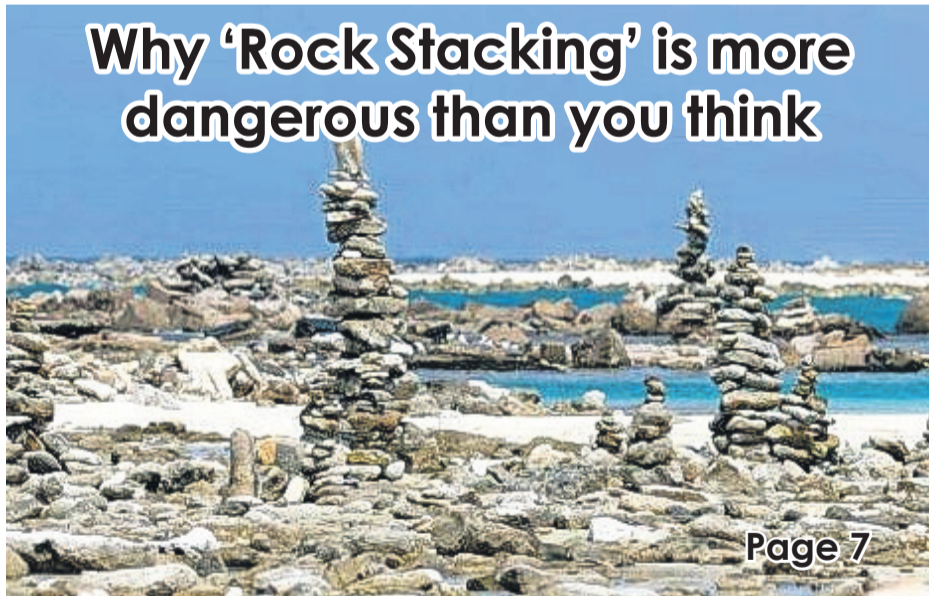




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Coastal communities lead nation in marine restoration

A wave of hope is sweeping across America's coastlines as local communities achieve record-breaking success in marine conservation. From the seagrass meadows of Florida to the kelp forests of California, citizen scientists and local volunteers are proving that collective action can heal our oceans. Recent data shows a 15% increase in healthy coral coverage in protected Hawaiian zones, a direct result of community-led nurseries. These grassroots efforts are not just saving fish; they are uniting neighbors under a shared purpose. Local families are spending weekends transplanting mangroves and cleaning beaches, turning environmental stewardship into a joyful communal hobby. This surge in "blue-green" volunteerism shows that when we work with nature, the rewards are as vast as the sea itself.

The rise of the citizen scientist

The traditional model of marine biology—driven primarily by large academic institutions—is being augmented by a passionate army of "citizen scientists." In the Pacific Northwest, recreational divers are now trained to track the health of sunflower sea stars, providing vital data that helps researchers protect these keystone species. This de-



Members of the non-profit Combat Wounded Veteran Challenge (CWVC) and MOTE (Marine Laboratory and Aquarium), an independent research institution, stick a micro fragment of coral on a reef rock to help restore corals reefs, about 2,600 feet (800 meters) offshore Key West, Florida on July 13, 2023.

mocratization of science has turned a simple vacation activity into a mission of restoration.

Travelers visiting coastal regions are no longer just passive observers of the beauty; they are becoming active participants in its preservation. "We used to just come for the sun and the surf," says one volunteer in the Florida Keys. "Now, we spend one morning of our trip out on the reef, clearing invasive species and checking the health of the coral we helped plant last year. It makes the va-

cation feel meaningful."

Healing the blue carbon sinks

One of the most inspiring developments in this national movement is the focus on "Blue Carbon"—the carbon captured by the world's ocean and coastal ecosystems. Coastal communities in the Chesapeake Bay and the Gulf Coast are leading massive replanting efforts for seagrass and salt marshes. These ecosystems are powerhouses of restoration, filtering water and providing nurseries for countless marine species.

What makes these projects unique is their community-led nature. Local fishing cooperatives, once at odds with conservationists, are now the primary champions of these "living shorelines." They have seen firsthand how healthy marshes lead to healthier fish stocks. By blending traditional ecological knowledge with modern restoration techniques, these communities are creating a sustainable cycle of growth that benefits both the economy and the environment.

A future of abundance

The success of these marine restoration projects is sending a clear message: the narrative of "inevitable decline" for our oceans is being rewritten. In Southern California, the restoration of giant kelp forests has led to the return of vibrant ecosystems that had been dormant for decades. The sight of leopard sharks and bright orange Garibaldi fish weaving through golden kelp canopies is a testament to what happens when humans decide to be a "keystone species" for good.

As these success stories multiply, they create a "ripple effect" of inspiration. Schools along the coast are incorporating marine restoration into their physical education and science curriculums, ensuring that the next generation grows up with a deep-seated connection to the water.

Your coastal connection

The beauty of the "Marine Restoration" movement is that it invites everyone to the table. Whether you are a lifelong resident of a coastal town or a traveler visiting for a week, there is a place for you in the tide. We are learning that the ocean isn't just a backdrop for our lives; it is a living, breathing partner that thrives when we offer our care. □

National parks witness record "quiet" growth



A vehicle kicks up dust during a long-duration heat wave which is impacting much of California on July 9, 2024 in Death Valley National Park, California.

In a world that often feels increasingly loud, a profound silence is reclaim-

ing the American wilderness. The National Park Service (NPS) has reported

a record-breaking trend for the current travel season: "Quiet Growth." While iconic landmarks remain popular, a new generation of travelers is bypassing the crowded photo-ops in favor of the deep, restorative stillness found in the country's hidden gems. From the star-filled basins of Nevada to the fog-drenched forests of Isle Royale, the American public is rediscovering the value of silence as a natural resource.

The Search for "Soundscape Integrity"

For decades, the metric of success for a National Park

was the sheer volume of visitors. Today, the metric is shifting toward "Soundscape Integrity." Travelers are trading the bustling boardwalks of Yellowstone for the wind-swept silence of Great Basin National Park. This shift toward "Quiet Tourism" is helping to distribute foot traffic more evenly across the 63 National Parks, protecting over-visited ecosystems while bringing vital support to lesser-known wilderness areas.

"People aren't just looking for a view anymore," says one park ranger in the North Cascades. "They are looking for a feeling.

They want to hear the sound of a hawk's wings or the trickle of a snowmelt stream without the hum of a distant engine. They are coming here to listen to the Earth breathe."

The Health of the Silent Trail

The benefits of this trend extend beyond conservation. Modern research into "Forest Bathing" and acoustic ecology suggests that even a few hours of natural silence can significantly lower cortisol levels and improve cognitive function. This has turned America's quieter parks into "Wellness Destinations." □ In the Midwest, Voyageurs

The great American tech renaissance: human-centric innovation

The Silicon Valley narrative is shifting. For decades, the tech industry was defined by "disruption"—a word that often implied breaking old systems to make room for the new. But a quiet, powerful Renaissance is unfolding across the American tech landscape. Today, the most exciting innovations aren't designed to keep us glued to our screens; they are designed to get us off them. This is the era of Human-Centric Innovation, where technology is finally being used to rebuild the physical and social bridges that define our communities.

From "user" to "neighbor"

In the early 2010s, social media promised connection but often delivered isolation. In response, a new generation of American startups—headquartered not just in Palo Alto, but in burgeoning tech hubs like Austin, Columbus, and Salt Lake City—is flipping the script. These "Kindness Apps" and "Hyper-Local Platforms" are seeing a 40% surge in domestic users this year.

Unlike the algorithmic feeds of the past, these tools are built to facilitate real-world action. One popular platform allows neighbors to list tools—ladders, drills, sewing machines—for free borrow-



ing. Another matches able-bodied volunteers with elderly residents who need help with grocery runs or tech troubleshooting. The goal isn't "engagement time" on the app; it's the handshake that happens at the front door. This shift represents a maturing of the industry, moving away from digital addiction and toward genuine empowerment.

Engineering with empathy

The Renaissance isn't limited to software. American hardware engineers are pivoting toward "Appropriate

Tech"—devices designed to solve fundamental human problems with simplicity and grace. In rural clinics across the Appalachian trail and the Midwest, new solar-powered medical diagnostic kits are appearing. These devices, developed by small firms in Boston and Seattle, allow local nurses to perform complex screenings without the need for a massive power grid or a million-dollar lab. Similarly, we are seeing a boom in "Green-Tech" for the home that prioritizes ease of use over complexity. Smart irrigation systems for com-

munity gardens and energy-sharing grids for suburban blocks are turning neighbors into partners in sustainability. This technology doesn't demand your attention; it works quietly in the background to make life a little brighter, a little easier, and significantly more connected.

The human-first workplace

This tech rebirth is also changing how we work. The "hustle culture" that once defined the industry is being replaced by a focus on well-being and purpose. Companies are increasingly integrating AI

not to replace workers, but to remove the "drudgery" of administrative tasks, allowing human employees to focus on what they do best: creative problem-solving and empathetic communication. Founders are discovering that when technology serves human needs rather than exploiting human weaknesses, the business model becomes more sustainable. Investors are taking notice, too, shifting capital toward "Social Impact Tech" that promises long-term societal health over short-term viral growth.

A future of connection

The Great American Tech Renaissance is a reminder of what our legendary ingenuity is truly for. We are moving past the novelty of "the next big thing" and entering a season of "the next good thing." It is a future where the most advanced piece of technology in your pocket is the one that reminds you to go outside, talk to a neighbor, and participate in the vibrant life of your town.

By putting the human being back at the center of the circuit board, American innovators are proving that the digital age doesn't have to be a lonely one. We are building a world where technology doesn't just calculate—it cares. □

Sustainable skies: The rise of greener travel

The golden age of travel is undergoing a green transformation, ensuring that our desire to explore the world no longer comes at the cost of the planet. Across the United States, the aviation and hospitality industries are hitting major milestones in sustainability, turning the "guilt-trip" into a "green-trip." From the introduction of carbon-neutral fuels to the rise of eco-conscious resorts, the future of vacationing has never looked brighter or cleaner.

Reaching new heights with sustainable fuel

For years, the environmental impact of flying was the "elephant in the room" for avid travelers. However, a breakthrough in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is

changing the flight path. Major American carriers are now successfully testing flights powered by 100% SAF, which is derived from renewable resources like used cooking oils and agricultural waste.

These innovations are reducing the carbon footprint of a single flight by up to 80%. As production scales up at refineries in states like California and Texas, the dream of "zero-emission" air travel is moving from the laboratory to the runway. For the vacationer, this means that the journey across the country—or across the ocean—is becoming an act of supporting a cleaner future.

The rise of the "regenerative" resort

Once travelers land, the commitment to the earth continues at their destination. The American hospitality industry is moving beyond simple "towel reuse" signs and toward "Regenerative Tourism." This new model focuses on leaving a destination better than it was found. In the Pacific Northwest and the Florida Keys, luxury eco-lodges are now designed with "closed-loop" systems. These resorts generate their own solar power, harvest rainwater, and compost 100% of their organic waste to fuel on-site organic gardens. Many are also partnering with local conservation groups, allowing guests to spend an afternoon planting native trees or restoring dunes. These activities provide a



This handout picture released by the Brazilian Presidency shows Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva autographing an airplane turbine powered by green fuel during the Green Leadership Brazil Expo in Brasilia on October 8, 2024.

profound sense of connection to the local landscape, proving that luxury and responsibility can walk hand-in-hand.

A cultural shift in the skies

The most inspiring part of this green revolution is the

cultural shift among travelers themselves. A recent survey shows that over 70% of American travelers now prioritize sustainability when booking their trips. This demand is pushing the industry to be more transparent and innovative. □

A new era of American craftsmanship: The quality comeback



For decades, the American consumer landscape was defined by the "disposable" era. It was a time of rapid consumption, where items were bought cheaply, used briefly, and discarded without a second thought. However, a quiet revolution is taking place in workshops, studios, and small-scale factories from the rugged coast of Maine to the high deserts of Arizona. A new era of American craftsmanship has arrived, and it is defined by a singular, powerful concept: the "Buy It For Life" movement.

This resurgence of quality is more than just a retail trend; it is a profound cultural shift toward intentionality, sustainability, and a deep respect for the human hand.

The return of the master maker

At the heart of this movement are the makers—artisans who have traded mass-production lines for workbenches. In Nashville, leatherworkers are hand-stitching hides using techniques that date back centuries, creating bags and belts designed to outlive their owners. In North Carolina, the historic home of American textiles, small mills are humming back to life, producing raw denim and organic cotton towels that grow softer and stronger with every wash.

These craftspeople are not just selling products; they are selling a philosophy. They operate on the principle that if something is worth making, it is worth making to last. This commitment to durability requires a slower

pace of production and a higher grade of raw materials, but the result is a product with a soul—a "heirloom-in-waiting" that carries the story of its creation.

The conscious consumer

This "Quality Comeback" is being driven by a new generation of conscious consumers. Tired of the "planned obsolescence" of modern electronics and fast-fashion garments that fall apart after three washes, Americans are looking for something more substantial. They are choosing to own fewer things, but better things.

There is a unique joy in owning a tool, a piece of furniture, or a garment that performs its function perfectly year after year. Consumers are finding that while the initial investment in a handcrafted item might be higher, the "cost-per-wear" or "cost-per-use" over a decade is significantly lower than replacing a cheap alternative five times. This shift represents a return to fiscal wisdom and environmental stewardship, as durable goods stay in our homes and out of our landfills.

Strengthening the local fabric

The impact of this movement extends far beyond the workshop floor. By supporting local craftsmanship, consumers are reinvesting in their own communities. These small-scale manufacturers often provide stable, dignified jobs that require high levels of skill and offer a sense of pride that is often lost in automated industries.

Furthermore, these businesses tend to have transparent supply chains. They source their wood from sustainable American forests, their wool from local ranchers, and their steel from domestic foundries. This creates a "virtuous cycle" of economic support, where a single purchase at a local craft fair or boutique helps sustain a network of regional suppliers and families.

A future built to last

The "Quality Comeback" is a testament to the enduring American spirit of ingenuity and excellence. It proves that in an increasingly digital and ephemeral world, we still crave the tactile, the permanent, and the real. We are rediscovering that there is a profound dignity in manual labor and a quiet beauty in a well-made object.

As we look to the future, the growth of American craftsmanship offers a hopeful blueprint for a more sustainable and connected society. It encourages us to slow down, to appreciate the details, and to value the hands that build our world. Whether it's a hand-forged kitchen knife, a solid oak dining table, or a pair of Goodyear-welted boots, these items remind us that quality isn't just an aesthetic—it's a way of life.

In this new era, we aren't just buying products; we are preserving traditions, supporting neighbors, and building a legacy that will stand the test of time. The era of the disposable is fading, and in its place, the American masterpiece is making its triumphant return. □

The silver student boom: Lifelong learning takes center stage



State universities across the country are reporting a record-breaking surge in students over the age of 65, sparking a vibrant movement known as the "Silver Student Boom." This shift is transforming traditional campuses into intergenerational hubs where wisdom and energy collide. From Art History to Sustainable Agriculture, older adults are returning to the classroom, proving that curiosity has no expiration date.

A new chapter of growth

For many in the "Silver Boom," higher education isn't about chasing a promotion or a paycheck; it's about the pure joy of discovery. These students are filling lecture halls with a unique sense of purpose. Freed from the pressures of starting a career, they bring a level of focus and enthusiasm that professors find infectious.

"I spent forty years in accounting," says 72-year-old Martha Chen, a sophomore studying Marine Biology at a coastal university. "Now, I'm learning about the migration patterns of whales. It's not just a hobby; it's a second act that makes me feel more alive and connected to the world than ever before."

The intergenerational bridge

One of the most heartening outcomes of this trend is the breakdown of ageist stereotypes. In dorm-side coffee shops and library study groups, 19-year-olds and 70-year-olds are finding common ground. These "Age-Diverse" classrooms foster unique mentorships that work both ways. Younger students often find solace in the perspective of their older peers, who have

weathered life's storms and can offer a calming influence during stressful finals weeks. In return, younger students act as "digital natives," helping their older classmates navigate new research software or creative media tools. This exchange is creating a more empathetic and well-rounded campus culture, where every generation is seen as both a teacher and a learner.

Economic and social vitality

Universities are welcoming this demographic with open arms. Many states now offer tuition waivers or deeply discounted "Audit" programs for seniors, recognizing that a diverse age range enriches the academic environment. This influx of "Silver Students" is also boosting local economies in college towns. These students often stay in the area long-term, patronizing local bookstores, theaters, and cafes, and bringing a steady, sophisticated presence to the community. Moreover, research suggests that lifelong learning is a key factor in cognitive health. By staying intellectually active and socially engaged, "Silver Students" are maintaining their vitality and independence, reducing the social isolation that often accompanies aging.

The lifelong journey

The "Silver Student Boom" is a beautiful testament to the fact that the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong journey toward fulfillment. It challenges the traditional "three-stage" model of life—education, then work, then rest—and replaces it with a more fluid, exciting alternative.

As graduation ceremonies across the nation feature more and more silver-haired scholars crossing the stage, the message is clear: the classroom is a place for everyone. We are never too old to ask "why," never too late to start a new degree, and always capable of growing into the person we were always meant to be. □

Red or black: Thai men tempt fate at military draft draw

Bangkok, Thailand

Nearly 70 young Thai men sat on flimsy plastic chairs, faces tense as they waited to draw their fate from a jar an annual ritual deciding whether they will serve in the military.

The conscription lottery, held across Thailand each April, has taken on added weight this year following several rounds of border clashes with Cambodia that killed dozens of soldiers and civilians on both sides. A fragile ceasefire has held since December, but tensions persist along parts of the two countries' disputed 800-kilometre frontier.

At a temple on the outskirts of Bangkok on Tuesday, nervous chatter rippled through the crowd of potential recruits, as family members hovered nearby, watching uniformed soldiers oversee the draw. One by one, the men aged between 18 and 29 stepped forward to pick a card from a jar placed before them.

The outcome can only go two ways: a black card means exemption from military service, while red signals conscription.

Among the first to draw a black card, Jessada Charoenkhao, 21, threw his arms joyfully into the air after learning he would not be drafted.



A man picks a black ballot, meaning exemption from service, during the Thai military conscription drawing at Watmatchantikaram School in Bangkok on April 7, 2026.

"I just want to live like a normal young person and be free," he told AFP.

Military service might benefit others by instilling discipline, he added, "but it's just not for me".

- Nationalism and career options -

For the capital's Bang Sue district alone, the military required 36 recruits across the army, navy and air force during this year's enlistment period, a military official told AFP -- a figure that fluctuates every year depending on needs. Fifteen had already volun-

teered, leaving 21 places to be filled by lottery among the 68 eligible men present.

Nationwide, nearly 30,000 men have volunteered for military service this year, a jump of almost 50 percent from 2024, according to the army.

Some observers attribute the increase to rising nationalism following last year's clashes with Cambodia as well as limited job prospects.

"The rise of nationalism in Thailand could be a factor, while a career in the military may be seen as stable

when economic opportunities are uncertain," political analyst Yuttaporn Issarachai told AFP.

Those conscripted serve for two years, though university graduates may serve a reduced term of one year, and volunteers serve for six months.

They receive a monthly salary of about 11,000 baht (\$340) slightly above Thailand's minimum wage with food and accommodation provided.

Men who have not completed three years of compulsory military training in high school must report for

the draw, though exemptions can be requested annually for personal reasons like illness and caring for family.

Before taking part, men must pass a physical examination, including meeting a minimum height requirement of 160 centimetres (five feet three inches).

One military staff member measured a topless man's chest with a tape measure, while another checked a recruit's height using a wooden measuring stick.

- 'Honourable' -

Some families arrived in the early morning, watching from the sidelines and waiting hours for the moment of truth.

Taweepong Boonliang, a motorbike delivery driver, stood with shaking knees as he waited for his 21-year-old nephew's turn.

"He doesn't want to join (the military) because he has to work and take care of his partner," Taweepong said.

The uncle added that he favoured a voluntary military system and increased benefits for soldiers, since "many people now want to join the military".

Some men who drew red cards slumped in visible disappointment, covering their faces, while one shouted in frustration. □

Streaming channel for pets launched in China

Beijing, China

Cats and dogs can now fill the hours their owners are at work with a dedicated all-day streaming channel for pets launched by Chinese tech giant Tencent. Clips of a duckling swimming in a bath or two happy poodles patrolling their neighbourhood are examples of the curated programming on "PetTV". The new channel on Tencent Video China's most popular online streaming platform is meant to keep pets company while alone or can act as an activity for animals and humans to enjoy together.

"This is all dog content, when will the cat programme be on?" one person engrossed in the service wrote in the chat-room on PetTV's streaming page.

Tencent Video described PetTV as a "24-hour happiness hub specially designed for your furry kids" in a post on social media app WeChat introducing the service last weekend.

Dogs and cats' senses are different to humans', so the channel's colours, refresh rates and audio frequencies have been designed to suit their specific

needs, it said.

PetTV is available to paid subscribers of Tencent Video, which said its market research found that 66 per cent of dog owners leave the television on for their pets when they are out. But the streaming service isn't the only pet specific media on the market.

Popular Headspace mindfulness app posted a YouTube video this week titled: "When your pets miss you, play this: 6 hour calming music for dogs and cats". Tencent Video will also take advantage of third-party content including airing America's DogTV



A cat participates in a pet fashion show in Shanghai on October 31, 2025.

the world's first TV channel and streaming service for pets.

The value of China's growing urban pet market is estimated to reach 405 billion yuan (\$59 billion) in 2028, according to a re-

cent report by PetData.cn. On average last year, Chinese households spent more than 3,000 yuan (\$435) on each dog and more than 2,000 yuan on each cat for their care needs. □

Dubai dog lovers revel regardless of Mideast war

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

A Dubai beach was chock full of dogs and their owners milling between the sea, beauty competitions and stalls selling everything a pet owner could want, as revellers at Barkfest paid no heed to the war gripping the Gulf.

The city has been a continual target for Iranian drones and missiles for more than a month, as Tehran lashes out at neighbouring Gulf states in the war against the United States and Israel, but neither those on two legs or four at Barkfest seemed to mind.

Two huskies wearing pink ski goggles posed for photos in front of a machine blowing bubbles, followed by a chihuahua and its owner in matching sombreros.

In the distance, a jet ski skipped across the sea.

"For now it's fine," said Poppy, a British 27-year-old who works in the import and export of fake eyelashes.

She was visiting the event alongside her partner, an online fitness coach tattooed from neck to wrist, and one of their French bulldogs.

The other was suffering from an ear infection and had to stay at home, said



A man sits with his dogs during the Barkfest dog festival at Barasti Beach in Dubai on April 4, 2026.

Poppy, dressed in leggings and a sports top.

The Emirati authorities have been working hard to protect Dubai's image as a safe haven in a turbulent region, despite the Iranian barrages.

The country's expensive air defence systems have worked well, intercepting the vast majority of the more than 2,000 drones and 500 missiles launched by Tehran.

Nevertheless, at least 10 people have been killed

since the start of the war, while sites across the country have been damaged.

Pictures of the damage are hard to find though, with the authorities having made it illegal to share images of the attacks, arresting dozens of people.

As a result, images of burning hotels, shattered flats and smoke-filled skylines are now rare on social media.

- 'I'm making the most of it' -

"Think before sharing. Spreading rumours is a crime" punishable with a \$55,000 fine and two years in prison, Dubai police posted on its X account.

Another post encouraged people to be "the eyes" of law enforcement by reporting "negative behaviour or actions that threaten the security of the community". On social media, the authorities report successful interceptions of incoming Iranian attacks, but only ever talk of "sounds" and

not explosions.

Reclining on a lounge with her two young Peruvian hairless dogs, Barbie and Claudia, protected from the sun by anti-UV t-shirts, Maria said she was "really glad that these kinds of events are organised".

The 35-year-old Latvian, a fertility specialist, said she felt "safer here than going back to London", without elaborating on what dangers she might face in the British capital.

The line is a common refrain among Western expats in the glitzy Gulf city, where crime levels are extremely low.

But not all residents are as indifferent to the consequences of the war. Many, especially those with children, continue to leave the city, while neighbourhoods are sometimes abandoned when Iran threatens specific US businesses with facilities there.

Barkfest, though, managed to escape warnings of missile or drone threats.

Sarah, a 40-year-old in a long dress, dark glasses and a straw hat, said the deadly conflict that has spread throughout the region had not affected her lifestyle in fact it may have improved it. □

Greece to ban social media for under 15-year-olds: PM

Athens, Greece

Greece will ban access to social media for children under 15 from January 1, 2027, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said Wednesday, the latest country to do so as concern grows over the platforms' impact. "We have decided to go ahead with a difficult but necessary measure: ban access to social media for children under 15 years old," he said in a video posted on TikTok.

"Greece is among the first countries in the world to adopt such a measure," the prime minister said, adding that he would put pressure on the European Union to follow suit.

Mitsotakis said he used social media to make the announcement so he could address teenagers and

children directly: "I know that some of you are going to be angry.... Our aim is not to keep you away from technology but to combat addiction to certain applications that harms your innocence and your freedom."

"Science is clear: when a child is in front of screens for hours, their brain does not rest," he said.

In a letter to EU chief Ursula von der Leyen, Mitsotakis called for a "unified European framework" to be in place by the end of 2026.



Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis speaks at a press conference during the EU Summit at the EU headquarters in Brussels, on March 19, 2026.

He called for a European "Digital Age of Majority" at 15, with biannual age re-verification by platforms to ensure continuous compliance and prevent circumvention of access controls. A growing body of research suggests too much time online is taking a toll on teen well-being.

Greek government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said children born from 2012 onwards will be barred from platforms that promote "endless scrolling" -- Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat.

Messaging and video platforms such as Messenger, WhatsApp, Viber and YouTube are not affected, Marinakis said.

"The list of platforms is dynamic. This means that if others with the same char-

acteristics emerge, it will, of course, be updated accordingly," Marinakis said. Platforms will be obliged to verify user age, he said.

"Our goal is not to place the burden of responsibility on children, but to pressure the platforms to adopt more effective policies," Marinakis said.

Australia in December became the first country in the world to require TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat and other top sites to remove accounts held by under-16s, or face heavy fines.

However, three months since the landmark laws came into effect, Australia's online safety watchdog has found a "substantial proportion of Australian children" were still scrolling banned platforms. □

Why 'Rock Stacking' is more dangerous than you think

(Oranjestad)—Recently on social media, a video began circulating showing a tour operator in Aruba taking action against stacked rocks by knocking them down. The video received mixed reactions. However, both locals and tourists supported the action, mainly due to the negative impact that stacking rocks has on our ecosystem and nature.



To understand the growing opposition to the practice of stacking rocks, it is necessary to understand the deep and negative impact behind it. The act, called rock stacking, has been practiced for thousands of years and was originally used to guide people on hikes or travelers in mountainous regions, as well as for rituals, burials, and memorials. However, the modern trend is quite different. Today, the popularity of rock stacking has less to do with utility and tradition and more to do with social media. An American artist based in Colorado, Michael Grab, noted that the trend really began gaining popularity around 2014 and 2015, before it exploded and became an international art form.

The reasons behind participation vary widely, rang-

ing from something purely practical or a tradition from the past, to an activity for its "beauty." For many, it is about leaving a mark, creating "art," or simply enjoying the process of balancing rocks. In recent times, those who participate in this—especially in Aruba—do so to leave proof of their presence or simply to post on social media.

Although it may seem harmless, there are several problems and negative impacts behind it. One of these is that many animal species hide under rocks to live, reproduce, or escape predators. If you move a rock, you may be destroying a home. If you stack one on top of another, you may expose prey to predators. Whether

this is done in nature areas, along the coast, or in desert environments, it can destroy entire colonies and, in the worst case, threaten species that are already endangered.

There are microorganisms and small species such as insects or certain snakes that live in the soil beneath rocks commonly used for stacking. These rocks help trap moisture underneath, allowing the ecosystem to sustain itself. When you remove a rock, the soil is exposed and the moisture can dry up, killing all living organisms that depend on that humid environment.

Additionally, each rock is full of life—everything from aquatic plants to microor-

ganisms attaches to them. Especially when it comes to rocks near the sea, they create habitats for some marine animals. Holes in the rocks can hold eggs, supporting them until the animals hatch. An expert explained that removing rocks from a fragile environment is essentially the equivalent of removing bricks from someone's house while also taking everything out of their refrigerator.

There is also the issue of erosion and soil damage, because rocks help hold the ground in place, sealing the surface and helping manage excess water, even allowing new life to grow. When these rocks are removed, the soil becomes loose, significantly increas-

ing the rate of erosion in that area.

This erosion can cause sedimentation in nearby bodies of water, negatively impacting aquatic habitats and water quality.

Rocks along the coast are part of a natural ecosystem and play an important role in protecting the shoreline from erosion and the force of the ocean. When people remove or stack rocks, it affects coastal stability, increases the risk of erosion, and damages ecosystems. According to South African National Parks, this is particularly relevant for an island like Aruba—especially considering that most, if not all, rock stacking on the island takes place near coastal areas.

It is understandable that rock stacking may seem like a fun activity to do while off-roading; however, the survival, protection, and conservation of the island are just as important—if not more so—to ensure that in the future there will still be an island for both locals and visitors. We want our visitors to appreciate what Aruba has to offer—in a healthy and sustainable way. □

Aruban snacks and where to find them



ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change? How about some Aruban snacks that you can find all around the island? Hop in your car, and go to these locations to find some of the most popular and tasty snacks that are beloved by our locals.

One of the staples of Aruban cuisine and snacks is the Pastechi. Pastechi is a Caribbean fried pastry that is filled with cheese, meat, chicken, veggies and sometimes even fish! Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, locally called a "kroket," which is a crusty fried snack

with typically a meat and dough mix filling. The Aruban kroket is based on its Dutch counterpart, the "bitterbal".

These two snacks are typically found in all local snack trucks, which can be found all over the island, including on the side of the main road that stretches from San Nicolas to the Hotel Area. You can also find them at local bakeries all over the island. These places may also sell other snacks and sandwiches too, perfect for on-the-road lunch break.

While you're at it, why not accompany your snack with a refreshing "batido"? Batidos are fruit shakes, typically made with added milk for some creaminess. However, you can also ask to hold the milk. Batidos are commonly found in snack shops too. You may find some batidos along the flea market downtown.

If you are looking for something a bit more fresh and healthy, why not try some coconuts, or shaved ice from local vendors? These vendors carry their little shop at the back of their truck, so they are ever-moving around the island. However, there are a few spots where you can

almost always find a coconut/shaved ice vendor:

- Right next to the Red Anchor in San Nicolas, on the way to Baby Beach.
- Along the main road next to the airport field.
- At the California Light House.
- At the Alto Vista Chapel.

These vendors may also sell other delights, like the beloved coconut-based dessert "cocada" or peanuts. All in all, in Aruba, you can always find some place to take a break and have a bite of something local, you maybe just might have to look for them! □

Photo credit: wheninaruba.com



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Nestled in the heart of Palm Beach, Aruba, L’Avenue brings a fresh breeze of Belgian charm to the Caribbean. Just over a year since its grand opening, this intimate bistro has quickly made its mark with its warm hospitality, authentic cuisine, and elegant yet approachable ambiance.

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At L’Avenue, every dish tells a story — one of tradition, seasonality, and bold yet balanced flavors. From crispy croquettes and perfectly poured Belgian beers to steaming pots of fresh mussels flown in weekly, the menu offers something both comforting and surprising.

Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches—with a healthy selection of bread options—if you're going for a light meal, but just like their dinner selection, also includes steak, chicken, fish, and even rabbit if you're craving a bit more of L’Avenue’s exquisite menu. And let's not forget their wide selection of Belgian beer and European wine to complete the tasty experience! But that's not all! L’Avenue is offering their guests their Early Bird Special, available every day from 4pm to 7pm. Enjoy this affordable and delectable 3-course meal special at a comfortable price of \$29.50 per guest, which includes a selection of their fine in-house wine.

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Prohibited by law: leaving the island with seashells, white sand or corals

(Oranjestad)—Often times, the customs department at the airport intercepts many tourists leaving the island with seashells, white sand and/or corals as souvenirs.

Conforming to the international treaty of CITES and our local law which protects our Flora & Fauna, it is absolutely prohibited to take any seashell, sand and coral outside of Aruba. This is to protect our environment. The high number of seashells, coral and amount of sand confiscated is very strange and it is suspected that our own locals are the ones selling these to the tourists, which is unacceptable.

Upon confiscation at the airport, you can also face a fine that you have to pay before leaving. This would surely not be a pleasant experience. Though we love to accommodate our visitors, let's all give nature the respect it deserves by protecting our environment. Stop collecting seashells, white sand and corals from our shores and stop buying or accepting these from local sellers or companies.

We want our future generations and visitors to enjoy the beauty of our beaches, shells and corals in a sustainable way, without destroying or disrupting the Aruban ecosystem. Help us protect what is ours! □

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Escape Game over Aruba: a family story of passion, built from Amsterdam to The Caribbean



What started as a self-made family business in Amsterdam has now arrived in Aruba.

Escape Game Over Aruba is not just another entertainment concept, it is the result of years of dedication, creativity, and passion, built together as a family. Founded by Geraldine Macqueron, who successfully created and runs multiple escape rooms in Amsterdam together with her sons, the concept has grown into a strong, experience-driven brand. Now, that same energy and vision is being brought to Aruba, where her daughter Senna leads the operation on the island.

For this family, creating unforgettable experiences is simply in their DNA.

Escape Game Over Aruba introduces a new level of immersive entertainment: high-end escape rooms where storytelling, technology, and atmosphere come together to fully transport players into another world.

This is not just a game. It's an experience. Players step into cinematic environments where they must solve puzzles, uncover secrets, and work together under pressure to escape before time runs out.

Designed for tourists, friends, families, and corporate groups, Escape Game Over Aruba offers a unique activity that goes beyond the traditional island experience.

"We built this as a family, and that's what makes it special. It's personal. Every

detail matters."

Whether you're visiting Aruba or living here, Escape Game Over Aruba is a must-try experience.

Location: Palm Beach 164A
 Website: www.escapegameoveraruba.com

For bookings and more information, visit the website or follow us on social media. □



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. □





Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!

(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health

and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They

were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times on the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and

rare remnant of geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete action in protecting and preserve our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! ☐

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 Cultural 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 Monday to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm.

Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog. ☐

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Basic driving rules on Aruba: Traffic signs

(Oranjestad)—Though Aruba's traffic is relatively easy to manage, driving here—especially if it's your first time visiting—can be foreign. To help you out, here's a breakdown of some traffic signs you might encounter on the road.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also encounter a traffic sign that says "bebou-

wde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates

that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide



to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive over-

view of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □

Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com

Share your Aruba memories with us!



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

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

Parade you attended last week. All is welcome!

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

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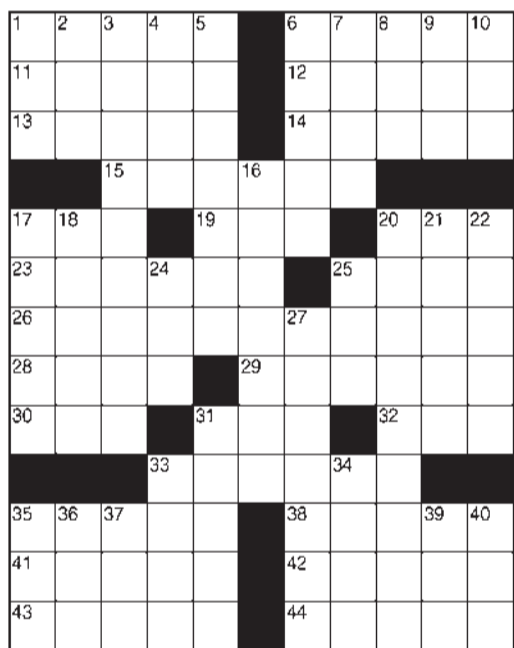
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 44 Scatter

- 1 Move borders, perhaps
- 6 Common eye color
- 11 Fragrance
- 12 Banish
- 13 Show uncertainty
- 14 Bona fide
- 15 Tooth layer
- 17 Outdated
- 19 Brooch
- 20 Get-up-and-go
- 23 Untie, perhaps
- 25 Titled woman
- 26 Asked to one's home
- 28 Julia Louis-Dreyfus show
- 29 Astaire's partner
- 30 Mess up
- 31 Traffic snarl
- 32 Do fabric work
- 33 Quilt cloth
- 35 Fable fellow
- 38 Fit for the fleet
- 41 George W.'s wife
- 42 Musical drama
- 43 Hog the mirror

DOWN

- 1 Bitterly cold
- 2 Pitching stat
- 3 Made way, in a way
- 4 Choir word
- 5 Fort feature
- 6 Daughter of Leda
- 7 Skating jump
- 8 Make a sharp turn
- 9 Yale rooster
- 10 Rent out
- 16 Geologist's concern
- 17 Martini garnish
- 18 Solitary sort
- 20 Made a lot
- 21 Abrasive powder
- 22 In itself
- 24 Cautious taste
- 25 Pound choice
- 27 Spotted game pieces
- 31 Kyoto setting
- 33 Heart
- 34 Lt.'s superior
- 35 The Matterhorn, for one
- 36 Lobe spot
- 37 Take to court
- 39 "You — Here"
- 40 Statue



4-20

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.

4-20 CRYPTOQUOTE

PIMSTPC JTEE MLVP G YGP'Q
SIYB TP MI G FGQMEB YIVB
ALTFHEN GPK BWBFBMTDBEN
MSGP G KGFSQSLPK. — ALBBP
DTFMIVTG

Cryptoquote: TRUST ME THAT AS I IGNORE ALL LAW TO HELP THE SLAVE, SO WILL I IGNORE IT ALL TO PROTECT AN ENSLAVED WOMAN. — SUSAN B. ANTHONY

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.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

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.



CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

07 TUE	OASIS OF THE SEA Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
08 WED	REGAL PRINCESS Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: B SERENADE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: I FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: **** Berth: E
09 THU	OCEANIA INSIGNIA Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 20:00 Berth: B CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 20:00 Berth: C GRAND PRINCESS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: I
10 FRI	NORWEGIAN JEWEL Arrival: 11:00 Departure: 20:00 Berth: C
12 SUN	FREEWINDS [Departure] Arrival: **** Departure: 22:30 Berth: E

SUDOKU

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

King Classic Sudoku

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

Difficulty: ★★★

4/9

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

4/8

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'Pinprick of light': Artemis crew witnesses meteorite impacts on Moon

Washington, United States

During their historic lunar flyby, astronauts on NASA's Artemis II mission witnessed meteorites striking the rugged surface of the Moon, a sight that has piqued scientists' curiosity.

"That was definitely impact flashes on the moon. And Jeremy (Hansen) just saw another one," mission commander Reid Wiseman reported on Monday while flying around the Moon the first such journey by humans in more than half a century.

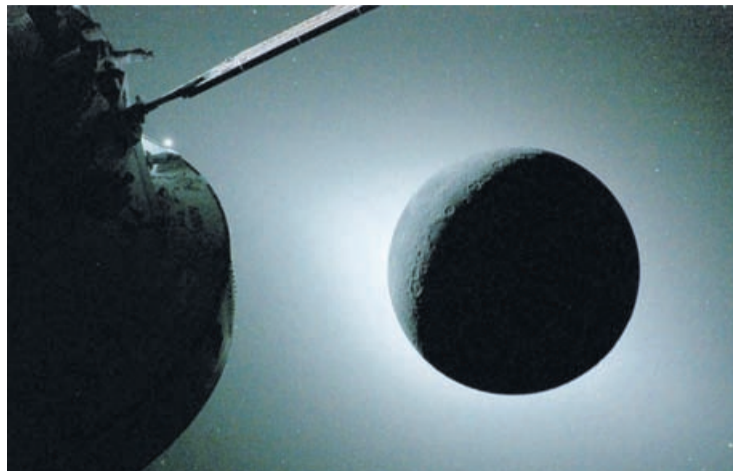
"Amazed," replied Kelsey Young, the mission's lunar science lead, as she followed the spacecraft from more than 250,000 miles (400,000 kilometers) away on Earth.

"I don't know if I expected to have the crew see any on this mission, so you probably saw the surprise and shock on my face," she said, recounting the strikes at a press briefing the next day.

Among NASA's team in Houston, there were "audible screams of delight" from scientists when the crew described flashes of light caused by meteorite impact, Young said.

The phenomenon is "something that we have not witnessed often," the mission's backup astronaut Jenni Gibbons told AFP.

"They were really high priority science for us, so the fact that they saw four or



This handout picture released by NASA on April 7, 2026, shows the Orion spacecraft (L) and the Moon backlit by the Sun during a solar eclipse on April 6, 2026.

five was just outstanding."

- 'No doubt' -

As the astronauts hurtled towards home, NASA asked them on Tuesday about the meteorite strikes they saw during their nearly seven-hour observation period.

"Were they prolonged? And did you notice any color?" Young asked.

"It's a pinprick of light," replied Canadian crew member Hansen. "I would suspect there were a lot more of them."

"I would say they were a millisecond, like the fastest a camera shutter can open and close," added Wiseman, who said the flashes were "white to bluish white."

"To me there was no doubt we were seeing it, and we were all seeing it," he added. According to NASA's tally, the team which broke

the record for the furthest distance from Earth during their flyby reported a total of six meteorite impacts on the lunar surface.

Ground crews are now working to match these observations with data from a satellite orbiting the Moon, said Young, adding that the majority of the sightings took place during a solar eclipse, when the Moon passed in front of the Sun. □



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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Wave of nostalgia as 2000s TV makes a comeback

New York, United States

In the early 2000s, television viewers first discovered "Malcolm in the Middle," the hilarious tale of a teenager trying to survive the antics of his dysfunctional family.

Twenty-five years later, the "Malcolm" gang is back on Disney+, with nearly all of the original cast including Emmy winner Bryan Cranston part of a wave of revivals tapping into a public craving for cozy nostalgia. The strategy is also a moneymaker for networks and streaming services, as tried-and-true content comes with minimal financial risk and often huge fan interest.

From the Trojan War to Superman, "we've been continuing to take characters, universes, dramatic spaces, and repurpose them for a long, long time," says Robert Thompson, a professor of media and pop culture at Syracuse University. But the trend has soared in the streaming era, because "going back to properties that are already established is one way of avoiding a lot of potential risks in that," Thompson told AFP. "All of the millions of dollars that were spent marketing, promoting, establishing the brand of those things way back when they were on in



(L/R) Actors Christopher Masterson, Justin Berfield, Jane Kaczmarek, Bryan Cranston and Frankie Muniz attend Hulu's "Malcolm in the Middle: Life's Still Unfair" premiere at the DGA theater in New York on April 7, 2026.

the first place -- those bills have already been paid."

Beyond the rebooted "Malcolm in the Middle: Life's Still Unfair," medical sitcom "Scrubs" which originally ran from 2001 to 2010 returned to ABC and Hulu early this year, with most of the original cast including Zach Braff and Donald Faison.

In July, Amazon's Prime Video will debut "Elle," a prequel series focused on the high school years of Elle Woods, the pink-obsessed

heroine played by Reese Witherspoon in the "Legally Blonde" films that debuted in 2001.

Not all of these projects come to fruition.

Hulu opted not to move forward with a much-anticipated reboot of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (1997-2003), despite having a filmed pilot ready to go.

But Fox is relaunching "Baywatch," the sun-kissed 1989-2001 series focused on California lifeguards that made Pamela Anderson a household name.

And some series that debuted in the 2000s, like "Grey's Anatomy," "NCIS" and "Law and Order: SVU," are still going strong -- with both new episodes airing on networks and older episodes figuring among the most streamed content each year.

- 'Comfort' -

So why are viewers, who are bombarded with content choices, going back to shows made a quarter-century ago?

For Sohni Kaur, who re-

searched the subject while pursuing psychology and media studies at Scripps College, it comes down to good old nostalgia.

"I think this is a pretty common coping mechanism for a lot of people" to return to shows they enjoyed in their youth, Kaur said.

During the coronavirus pandemic, she rewatched all of the "Twilight" vampire romance films, which were released from 2008 to 2012, and Bollywood flicks from the 1990s.

"It does really provide a lot of comfort to me" to watch older films and TV shows, said the practicing psychologist.

"Looking back and revisiting something that we already know about kind of relieves that anxiety, or it kind of just distracts us from all of the current changes that are happening."

Some television series such as "Friends" (1994-2004) or "Gilmore Girls" (2000-2007) naturally generate more nostalgia because they feature families or close-knit friend groups, Kaur said.

But even the "Scream" horror movies, which debuted in 1996, are still going strong, with "Scream 7" taking in more than \$200 million worldwide so far this year, according to Box Office Mojo. □

Now it's all come together: Forgotten Beatles photos released

Tokyo, Japan

The venue that hosted The Beatles' only concerts in Japan has released long-forgotten photos of the legendary British band six decades after the gigs.

At the height of Beatlemania in 1966, when the quartet was the world's most famous pop group, the Beatles staged five summer performances in Tokyo in front of screaming fans. Crowds reportedly thronged their hotel, where they stayed in the finest suite. Then in 2009, more than 100 photos shot during the gigs "were discovered on a shelf" inside an office at the concert venue Nippon Budokan, the arena's operator

told AFP.

But the 19 rolls of negative film reportedly wrapped in

paper and labelled in such a way that it suggested they belonged to Japanese newspaper the Yomiuri

Shimbun remained "stored as they were" until recently, the operator in a statement.

However, as the 60th anniversary of the Japan tour approached, the venue operator asked a Beatles expert to examine the negatives, and "his assessment revealed that the photos appear to have never been published" in newspapers or other media.

Among the photos released by the concert venue is a shot of John Lennon smiling beside a Japanese doll that resembles a figurine featuring on the album cover of the 1967 album "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band".

The global stars were under tight security during their visit, but the doll may have been purchased during a hurried shopping trip, the Yomiuri Shimbun daily said. The newspaper is investigating who took the photos and why the negatives had been kept in Nippon Budokan despite being wrapped in paper labelled "The Yomiuri Shimbun archives room", it said.

The photos capture "the atmosphere of that one and only Japan tour -- now remembered as a historic event as well as various moments from their stay in Japan," the Nippon Budokan statement said. □



This photo taken on June 29, 1966 shows members of the British band The Beatles, (L to R) Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr and George Harrison, holding a press conference in Tokyo at the start of their tour.

Medvedev thrashed at Monte Carlo as Zverev battles through

Monte Carlo, Principality of Monaco

Daniil Medvedev slipped to an embarrassing 6-0, 6-0 thrashing by Matteo Berrettini in the Monte Carlo Masters second round on Wednesday, as Alexander Zverev dug deep to beat Cristian Garin.

Medvedev completely unravelled against Berrettini after missing two break points in the opening game, making 30 unforced errors and serving five double faults.

Medvedev did not win more than two points in any of the last 11 games and his frustrations boiled over in the second set, smashing his racquet into the court four times.

Berrettini wrapped up the double-bagel victory, the first such defeat of former world number one Medvedev's career, in just 49 minutes.

"I think it was one of the best performances of my life," Berrettini said.

"I think I missed three shots in the entire match and it is not easy against a tricky player like Daniil. I think the game plan was perfect



Russia's Daniil Medvedev smashes his racket on the clay as he plays against Italy's Matteo Berrettini during the Monte Carlo ATP Masters Series Tournament round of 32 tennis match on Court Rainier III at the Monte-Carlo Country Club in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, south-eastern France on April 8, 2026.

and my weapons were working."

The former Wimbledon runner-up, now ranked 90th, will face Joao Fonseca in the last 16 after the Brazilian teenager beat Arthur Rinderknech 7-5, 4-6, 6-3.

World number three Zverev, who is hoping to complete the set of all three clay-court Masters 1000 titles this week, staged a late come-

back to edge out Chilean qualifier Garin 4-6, 6-4, 7-5. Zverev has reached the semi-finals at each of the Australian Open, Indian Wells and the Miami Open this year but was in danger of a shock exit after losing the first set and then trailing 4-0 in the third.

Garin also served for the match when 5-3 ahead in the deciding set, but Zverev broke and then sealed vic-

tory as he reeled off five consecutive games.

He had to stave off three break points in a nervy 12th game to avoid a tie-break, but eventually got the job done on his third match point.

"My level was not there at all to be honest," Zverev said after taking two hours and 50 minutes to get over the line.

"But it was my first clay-

court match in 11 months. I didn't have much time to prepare as I played well in Miami.

"I am happy to get the win. It was a tough match and he is someone playing well, especially here."

The 28-year-old will face unseeded Belgian Zizou Bergs, who downed 2023 champion Andrey Rublev 6-4, 6-1, in round three.

Zverev has not won an ATP title since Munich 12 months ago, while the last of his seven Masters triumphs came in Paris in 2024.

- Musetti sent packing -

Fourth seed Lorenzo Musetti slumped to a 7-6 (8/6), 7-5 defeat by Monaco's Valentin Vacherot in just his second match since retiring from his Australian Open quarter-final in January with an upper leg injury. Musetti lost on his return at Indian Wells last month and then withdrew from Miami with an arm issue.

He finished runner-up in Monte Carlo last year to Carlos Alcaraz and reached the last four at Roland Garros, Madrid and Rome, but suffered an early exit to start this season's European clay swing. □

Rockets comeback sinks Phoenix on Durant return

Los Angeles, United States

Kevin Durant scored 24 points against his former team to help inspire the Houston Rockets to a come-from-behind 119-105 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday.

Durant, who was traded from Phoenix to Houston last year, received a mixed reception upon his return to Arizona, with sections of the Suns home crowd subjecting him to boos throughout a see-saw game.

Phoenix needed a victory to keep their faint hopes of bagging an automatic playoff spot in the Western Conference alive.

And the home side got off to a dream start after surging into a 21-point first-quarter lead against a stunned Rockets line-up.

But Houston recovered before outscoring Phoenix 38-21 in the fourth quarter to complete a victory that means the Suns will miss out on direct entry to the playoffs.

"They hit us with a good punch early on...I love how we weathered the storm and stayed together and took that first punch," Durant said.

"It's a great team win." The Minnesota Timberwolves will instead be assured of the final playoff ticket from the Western Conference after cruising to a 124-104 defeat of the struggling Indiana Pacers.

After the Pacers led briefly in the first quarter, Minnesota quickly asserted their superiority and led by eight points heading into the second quarter.

The Timberwolves -- once again missing Anthony Edwards with a knee issue never looked like surrendering that advantage and led by as many as 31 points midway through the fourth quarter as they closed out a comfortable victory.

Ayo Dosunmu led the Minnesota scoring with 24 points from 10-of-17 shooting while Julius Randle and Bones Hyland added 19 points apiece.

The Toronto Raptors kept their automatic playoff hopes on track with a 121-95 blowout of the Miami Heat.

Miami had needed a win to keep their slim chances of securing a top-six finish alive in a razor-thin Eastern Conference playoff race. But Toronto took the lead



Kevin Durant #7 of the Houston Rockets and Dillon Brooks #3 of the Phoenix Suns look on during the first half of the NBA game at Mortgage Matchup Center on April 07, 2026 in Phoenix, Arizona.

early in the second quarter and steadily pulled away for a victory which leaves them occupying the sixth and final direct entry playoff place in the Eastern Conference standings.

Scottie Barnes scored 25

points and Brandon Ingram 23 to guide Toronto to the win. The Raptors are now 44-35 with three games of the regular season remaining, one game ahead of the seventh-placed Philadelphia 76ers. □

Five U.S. multiple major champions seek first Masters win

Augusta, United States

Five Americans with multiple major triumphs but no green jacket made final preparations Wednesday at Augusta National on the eve of the 90th Masters.

For two-time major winners Xander Schauffele, Justin Thomas, Collin Morikawa, Bryson DeChambeau and five-time major champion Brooks Koepka, a firm and fast layout will test their shot-making skills.

"They are in a really good spot. They are definitely firm," 10th-ranked Schauffele said of the greens. "Speed on the greens is going to be crucial, as always. Big accomplishment to keep three-putts off the card. "If you can really be disciplined, make sure your good shots are great but make sure your bad



Xander Schauffele of the United States, Scottie Scheffler of the United States and Sam Burns of the United States practice bunker shots on the fifth hole during a practice round prior to the 2026 Masters Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club on April 07, 2026 in Augusta, Georgia. M

shots are in the correct spots, that's how you need to play to be in contention.

"The hard part is doing it." Schauffele, the 2024 British Open and PGA Championship winner, was third at the Players Championship and fourth at the Valspar Championship in his final Masters tuneups.

"It's nice to have a few good events under my belt," Schauffele said. "Definitely working on a few things and trying to get myself back into the picture here."

The 2019 Masters runner-up has five top-10 finishes in the past seven Masters.

Seventh-ranked Morikawa, the 2020 PGA Championship and 2021 British Open winner, has battled a back injury. "I'm taking it day by day. It's not exactly where I want to be, and it's unfortunate, but that's just the body and I can't push it," Morikawa said.

"It has been a little bit of a mental battle, just trying to trust with where it's at."

For Morikawa, third at the 2024 Masters and in the top five in three of the past four years, it means seeking new ways to do familiar things.

"Sometimes you've got to find other ways to get around a golf course. I'm making a different game plan than I've come up with in the past," he said.

"It's frustrating, but at the same time, I can't do anything stupid... What's amazing is chipping and putting still feel great. Just got to be able to get the ball there."

World number 15 Thomas, the 2017 and 2022 PGA Championship winner, underwent microdiscectomy back surgery last November to address nagging hip pain and returned to play in February.

- Proud and happy -

Thomas, who won last year's PGA Heritage title the week after the Masters, was eighth at last month's Players Championship in just his second event back.

"Coming off of six months off competition, definitely proud and happy of that and hopefully just get a little bit of momentum," Thomas said. "I felt very comfortable." □



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