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Page 8

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Page 7

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# The magic of the mountains: How radical kindness sustains the Appalachian spirit

In the quiet, emerald-canopied stretches of the Blue Ridge Mountains, a unique phenomenon occurs every spring. As thousands of hikers embark on the 2,190-mile journey of the Appalachian Trail (AT), they carry heavy packs, blistered feet, and a common dream of reaching Maine's Mount Katahdin. However, the most enduring memories of the trail often have nothing to do with the vistas or the mileage. Instead, they center on a culture of radical generosity known simply as "Trail Magic."

At its heart, Trail Magic is the act of providing unexpected hospitality to strangers. In the small town of Damascus, Virginia—famously known as "Trail Town, USA" this spirit is woven into the very fabric of the community. Here, the boundary between the rugged wilderness and the warmth of a neighbor's porch disappears. It is not uncommon to see a local resident leaning over a backyard fence to offer a weary hiker a cold glass of



View of an unused coal mine at Black Mountain, Virginia, on April 18, 2017.

lemonade or a place to dry their rain-soaked gear.

The practitioners of this kindness are called "Trail Angels." These individuals, many of whom are former hikers themselves, understand the physical and mental toll of the long-

distance trek. They set up "magic stations" at trail crossings, appearing like mirages in the woods. On a humid afternoon, a hiker might emerge from the dense forest to find a cooler filled with chilled sodas, a basket of fresh seasonal fruit, or even a portable grill

cooking up hot dogs. There is no expectation of payment for these gifts. The only "currency" accepted is the exchange of stories. A hiker might share a tale of a close encounter with a black bear or the thrill of seeing the sunrise from McAfee Knob; in return, the

Trail Angel offers a reminder of the world's inherent goodness. These interactions serve as a vital lifeline, refueling the hikers' spirits just as much as their bodies.

This culture of kindness extends beyond food and drink. It is found in the "hiker boxes" located in post offices and hostels, where travelers leave behind surplus supplies for those who might need them more. It is found in the local "shuttle drivers" who often go out of their way to ensure a hiker reaches a doctor or a gear shop. In Damascus, the annual "Trail Days" festival sees the entire town erupt in a celebration of this bond, welcoming hikers with open arms and a parade that celebrates their grit and determination.

The impact of Trail Magic ripples far beyond the Appalachian mountains. For the hikers, many of whom are at transitional points in their lives, the kindness of strangers becomes a transformative lesson. □

## California's Coastal Sanctuary: Finding Renewal Along the Cliffs of Big Sur

Driving the stretch of Highway 1 through Big Sur, California, is more than a road trip; it is a masterclass in the power of perspective. To the east, the ancient redwood forests reach toward the clouds with a stoic, vertical majesty. To the west, the Pacific Ocean crashes against jagged cliffs in a rhythmic display of raw energy. This iconic stretch of the Pacific Coast Highway encourages travelers to do the unthinkable in our modern, fast-paced world: pull over, turn off the engine, and simply listen.

The journey begins as the suburban sprawl of the Monterey Peninsula fades, replaced by the winding, two-lane ribbon of asphalt that clings to the edge of the continent. For many, the highlight is the Bixby Creek Bridge. Its elegant

concrete arch is a testament to human engineering, but it is the scenery it spans that truly captivates. Standing at the overlook, the salt spray hits your face, and the vastness of the horizon seems to stretch the very limits of your vision. It is a place where the ego



The peloton rides by a field of California poppies on their way from Morro Bay to Monterey County Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca during Stage 4 of the Amgen Tour of California on May 18, 2016 in Big Sur, California.

feels small, and the soul feels expansive.

Further south, the landscape shifts into the heart of Big Sur. Here, the air changes. It becomes cooler, scented with the heady aroma of damp earth, sage, and sea salt.

The "Big Sur Spirit" is a real phenomenon—a palpable sense of peace that settles over the region. It is why artists, writers, and seekers have flocked to these cliffs for decades. There is no cell service for long stretches, a technical limitation that serves as a profound gift. Without the constant ping of notifications, the soundtrack of the trip shifts to the bark of sea lions echoing from the coves and the wind whistling through the cypress trees.

One of the most restorative stops is McWay Falls in Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park. It is one of the few waterfalls in the world that empties directly into the ocean—a "tidefall." Watching the silver ribbon of water drop eighty feet onto the pristine sands of a turquoise cove is a hypnotic experience.

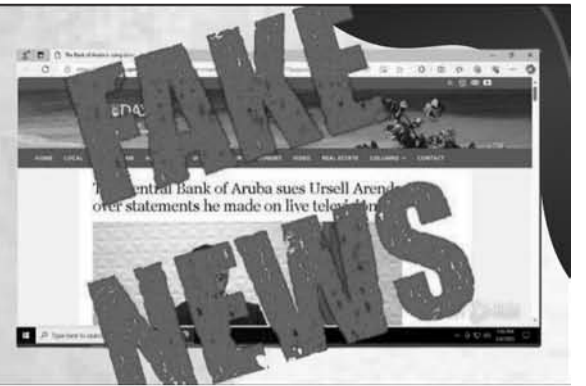
You cannot hike down to the beach; it is a protected sanctuary. This boundary reminds us that some of the world's most beautiful places are meant to be witnessed and respected, rather than occupied.

As you continue the drive, the road dips and climbs, offering a new "greatest view of your life" around every hairpin turn. You might spot a California Condor soaring on a thermal or, during the winter months, the tell-tale spout of a migrating Gray Whale. These sightings are reminders of the world's natural rhythms, which continue regardless of our busy schedules or daily stresses. The trip concludes (or begins) near San Simeon, where the rugged cliffs eventually soften into rolling golden hills. □

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## 'Howl at the Moon': NASA's bid to boost space enthusiasm

### Houston, United States

When NASA flight director Zebulon Scoville was working a shift during the uncrewed Artemis I test flight, he realized the US space agency wasn't consistently livestreaming the spacecraft's journey to Earth.

"They said, well, we don't have bandwidth, we've got to get all this vehicle and engineering data down," Scoville recalled. "I was like wrong."

"This program will be over if people don't buy it and they don't come with us." NASA eventually got a low-bandwidth live stream up for that 2022 uncrewed mission.

And once it was over, senior officials named the NASA veteran "imagery czar" to boost engagement.

He told AFP he spent two years working across the agency to figure out how better to take the public on NASA's new Moon missions. That included adding an optical communications system onto the Orion spacecraft, a laser that transmitted to a ground station on Earth, sending streaming video in higher resolution.

Throughout the more than nine-day Artemis II crewed test flight which ended Friday with an emotional splashdown off the California coast NASA has maintained live programming on its own streaming platform and across social media.

That, combined with third-party streamers and broadcast news, has earned millions of views.

And as NASA official Lori Glaze said Friday: "To all of our new followers out there, please stay tuned."



NASA's Artemis II mission astronauts, commander Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canadian Space Agency's Jeremy Hansen pose for a photograph during a press conference at Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, on April 16, 2026.

### - NASA on Twitch -

From social media posts clipped from livestreamed events with the astronauts to an extraordinary portfolio of celestial photographs, viewers caught an eyeful of Artemis II.

Institutions including museums held Artemis splash-down parties, and some teachers integrated the launch into their lessons. Alex Roethler, a Wisconsin physics teacher, said watching the mission helped his students get "more engaged," and made lessons "feel more real."

"I love having the livestream available, and I also think it's cool that they use Twitch," Roethler said, referring to a video streamer site favored by gamers. "That is a platform more of our students use."

The crew themselves have been integral to the story-

telling.

During the nearly seven-hour lunar flyby, astronauts Christina Koch, Victor Glover, Jeremy Hansen and Reid Weisman gave near-literary descriptions of lunar surface features and left scientists in Houston awe-struck.

With Artemis II, there have been "just smiles and actually showing emotion through NASA, where we have sometimes had a history of being a little bit dry," Scoville said.

"It's okay to jump up and down and howl at the moon," he added.

### - Apollo-Artemis parallels -

Before Artemis II, the United States hadn't sent astronauts around the Moon since 1972 for the Apollo 17 mission the last of that famed space program that saw humans walk on the lunar surface.

In the lead-up to the 10-day test flight, NASA faced

both a blase populace and a fractured media environment.

The space agency had to battle for attention across traditional and social media in a way the three-TV-channel era of Apollo never experienced. The Apollo 11 Moon landing in 1969 saw approximately one-fifth of the global population tune in.

Yet for all the mythical qualities of Apollo, Jack Kiraly, director of government relations at the Planetary Society, said "nostalgia" perhaps "glosses over some of the issues that the program at the time faced."

"Everything that led up to that was actually broadly unpopular with the American electorate, with the public writ large," Kiraly told AFP.

Still, even with that in account, the analyst said "I don't think this moment is

living up to the hype" of most Apollo missions, and added he hopes NASA's communications strategies continue to improve.

### - 'Longing for something good' -

Ahead of Artemis II, Scoville had conversations with mission commander Reid Wiseman in which they reflected on parallels between the Apollo 8 lunar mission and this most recent Moon flyby.

The United States in 1968 was politically fractured and at war.

Nearly 60 years later, not so much has changed.

"We're watching the news today, with wars, with division, and, like, how much everyone is just so longing for something good to happen," Scoville said.

In a recent space-to-Earth press conference, Wiseman said their only news source during the mission was their families, who said Artemis has captivated people worldwide, though he admitted they are "biased."

Wiseman said he hoped the trip could "have the world pause" to take in the beauty of our planet and universe.

"I think for the folks that decided to tune in -- and it sounds like it was quite a few this has happened," he said.

Throughout their journey, all four astronauts emphasized how unified Earth looks from afar a takeaway they hoped would permeate public consciousness.

"People are wanting to reach out to their inner rocket nerds," Scoville said. "This is just a glimpse of what's to come." □

## Sails, sunsets, and solidarity: The weekly heartbeat of Annapolis

Every Wednesday evening, as the workday winds down in Maryland's capital, a transformation takes place. The narrow, brick-lined streets of Annapolis begin to hum with a specific kind of energy. Residents in boat shoes and sun-bleached caps move with purpose toward the water, while visitors line the railings of Ego Alley. Out on the Chesapeake Bay, the horizon begins to bristle with hundreds of white masts. This is the Wednesday Night Race series, a tradition that has turned the local waters into a symphony of sails and a masterclass in community spirit.

The Chesapeake Bay has long been the lifeblood of this historic city, but during these mid-week races, it becomes something more: a shared living room. The event, hosted by the Annapolis Yacht Club, features over 130 boats across various classes. Yet, despite the competitive nature of sailing, the atmosphere is overwhelmingly one of joy and connection. From sleek, high-tech racing machines to sturdy family cruisers, the fleet represents a cross-section of the city



From left, U.S. entry Chessie Racing, Monaco's Merit Cup and U.S. entry Toshiba lead the Whitbread Round the World Race fleet as they pass under the Chesapeake Bay Bridge at the restart of the race 03 May near Annapolis, Maryland.

itself.

As the starting horn echoes across the harbor, the "symphony" begins. It is a dance of physics and intuition. Sailors work in rhythmic unison, winches grinding and sails snapping as they catch the breeze. To an observer on the shore, the sight of the boats tacking in tight formation against the backdrop of the Maryland State House dome is a breathtaking reminder of the city's timeless relation-

ship with the wind and the waves.

However, the true magic of the Annapolis sailing scene isn't found in the trophies or the standings; it is found in the "afterglow." Once the sun begins its descent, casting a golden, honeyed light over the Severn River, the fleet returns to the docks. The intensity of the race dissolves into laughter and camaraderie. It is a common sight to see rival crews sharing a drink on the pier, dissecting the day's ma-

neuvers with good-natured ribbing.

For the landlubbers watching from the docks, the spectacle is equally nourishing. Families gather with picnic blankets and ice cream cones, children pointing out their favorite boat colors. Strangers strike up conversations about the tide or the peculiar shift in the evening breeze. In these moments, the bay acts as a Great Equalizer, stripping away the stresses of the week and replacing

them with a shared sense of wonder.

The sailing culture in Annapolis also serves as a vital steward for the environment. The sailors are often the first to notice changes in the water quality or the health of the local crab populations. This deep-seated love for the bay fosters a community of conservation, where protecting the "playground" is just as important as winning the race. The Wednesday night tradition serves as a weekly reminder of why the Chesapeake is a national treasure worth preserving.

As the last of the light fades and the boats are tucked away in their slips, a quiet peace settles over the harbor. The sailors head home with salt-crusted skin and tired muscles, but with spirits that are undeniably recharged. Annapolis reminds us that even in a fast-paced world, there is immense value in slowing down to follow the wind. It is a city that doesn't just live by the water; it breathes with it, proving every Wednesday that the best way to move forward is often to set sail together. □

## Judge extends White House ballroom ban but lets bunker work proceed

**Washington, United States**

A U.S. federal judge on Thursday extended an order barring construction of President Donald Trump's White House ballroom but gave the green light for work to proceed on a proposed underground bunker.

Trump reacted furiously to the ruling, taking to his Truth Social platform to brand District Judge Richard Leon "highly political" and "out of control."

"This is a mockery to our Court System!" Trump said. "The Ballroom is deeply important to our National Security, and no Judge can be allowed to stop this Historic and Militarily Imperative Project."

Leon ordered a halt last month to Trump's \$400 mil-

lion ballroom, ruling that congressional approval is needed for the project, which has already seen the historic East Wing of the White House abruptly torn down.

In an amended order on

Thursday, Leon extended his ban on any above-ground construction of the proposed ballroom on the former site of the East Wing, which previously housed the offices of the First Lady. But he said building of a

proposed underground national security facility can go ahead.

"Below-ground construction may proceed, including the construction of any 'top-secret excavations, bunkers, bomb shelters, protective partitioning, military installations, and hospital and medical facilities,'" the judge said.

Work can continue on the underground bunker provided it does "not lock in the above-ground size and scale of the ballroom," he said.

"National security is not a blank check to proceed with otherwise unlawful activity," he said.

The judge, who was appointed by Republican president George W. Bush,

stayed his order for one week to allow the administration to appeal.

In his initial ruling halting the ballroom project, Leon said the president is a "steward" of the White House. "He is not, however, the owner!" he said.

The ballroom has become a passion project for Trump during his second term and he has addressed it in public appearances, press conferences and meetings.

Trump has argued that a large ballroom is needed to host, among other key events, state dinners for visiting dignitaries.

In his Truth Social post on Thursday, he emphasized the security aspects of the project. □



Demolition work continues where the East Wing once stood at the White House on December 8, 2025 in Washington, DC.

## Thai farmers pin hopes on microbes to end annual burning crisis

### Chiang Rai, Thailand

Rice farmers Siriporn and Amnat Taidee used to burn their paddy fields between plantings a common method of clearing crop residue partly blamed for toxic smog that blankets much of Thailand every spring.

A quick and affordable way to prepare for a new growing cycle, the practice has long been seen as the only feasible option for millions of Thai rice farmers. But for the couple from Chiang Rai, abandoning what Amnat called "the old way of doing things" for new microbial solutions has been a boon.

Thanks to the hungry bacteria that chew up post-harvest leftovers their soil is softer, their yields are up and their fertiliser bills are down.

"My life has changed," said Siriporn, 63, as she slogged through a verdant paddy field in Chiang Rai. "I'm so happy... we don't have to burn anymore."

Every year between January and April, smoke from crop residue, forest fires and industrial emissions compounded by smog drifting over from neighbouring countries pushes Thailand's air quality to dangerous levels.

Bangkok has restricted burning for years, but a recent crackdown has put



In this photo taken on March 10, 2026, Thai scientist Wichien Yongmanitchai, who developed a microbial product called Soil Digest, designed to eliminate the need for the burning of rice stubble, poses at his factory in Samut Sakhon.

government environmental goals on a collision course with traditional agricultural practices.

The threat of heavy fines and even prison has frightened farmers but many feel they still have no alternative.

"It simply pushes the burden onto farmers," Witsanu Attavanich, an environmental economist at Kasetsart University, said of the ban on open burning.

### - The price of change -

The Taidees were early converts, using a product called Soil Digest developed by a Thai scientist

using five strains of Bacillus bacteria one of which is derived from traditional fermented soybeans.

Siriporn said the solution decomposed the "terrible" stubble on the fields in a matter of days and helped restore the soil.

"The rice is coming in great and the soil is healthy," she says. "This microbial stuff is a game-changer."

Last year, authorities in Chiang Rai one of Thailand's main rice-growing provinces began encouraging local farmers to try microbial solutions.

So far, around 2,000 have made the switch a fraction

of the province's 100,000 rice farmers, but a start.

"If we are to stop the burning, we must provide them with multiple alternatives," said Orracha Wongsaroj, a provincial agricultural official.

Microbial products have long been used in Thai agriculture, but demand for newer formulations targeting straw decomposition has grown sharply since the burning crackdown intensified a few years ago.

The Thai government promotes free access to microbial products for farmers but officials told AFP that stocks had run out and they

were struggling to scale up supply.

For those who cannot access government supplies, private market alternatives can be pricey.

In Pathum Thani, a rice-growing province in central Thailand, farmer Samart Atthong spent 1,200 baht (\$37) hiring an agricultural drone to spray Soil Digest over his fields.

"People may only see the extra cost of the microbes, but they should look in the long run," Samart said.

"Once the soil heals, we won't need nearly as much fertiliser," he said. "Where I live, burning has dropped to nearly zero."

### - Making microbes work -

Striding through air thick with dust from yeast, retired professor Wichien Yongmanitchai watches the whirring machines producing his microbial concoction.

He started by isolating local bacterial strains, convinced that native ones would work best in Thailand's tropical environment.

He hopes his invention sold as Soil Digest will fix Thailand's annual air crisis for good.

Without microbial treatment, rice straw takes around 30 days to soften enough to till his solution works in five to seven days. □

## Greenland celebrates new international airport

### Qaqortoq, Denmark

A commercial aircraft landed on Thursday for the first time in Qaqortoq, Greenland's fourth-largest town, whose new airport means that the whole of the Arctic island coveted by US President Donald Trump now has international connections.

The flight between Nuuk, the Greenlandic capital, and Qaqortoq, in the south of the Danish autonomous territory, lasted about 75 minutes and many residents gathered outside the airport to witness the landing, said an AFP reporter on the flight.

Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and Foreign Minister Mute Egede were both on the plane to the town, the main gateway to southern Greenland.

Previously accessible only by helicopter or boat, the town can now have year-round flights from Nuuk and summer connections from Iceland, the Visit-Greenland tourism board said in a statement.

The Arctic island of 57,000 people relies on its 14 airports, as well as helipads, as it has no roads connecting its towns.

The airport has a 1,500-meter (4,900-foot) runway. Its opening comes as the Narsarsuaq airport, located further north, closes.

According to local press, the United States is considering refurbishing Narsarsuaq, a former air base that was operated by the US military between 1942 and 1958.

The inauguration of Qaqortoq airport comes just over a year after the launch of the first direct air link between Copenhagen and Nuuk.

Another international airport is also due to open

this year in Ilulissat, in north-western Greenland.

The investment in air infrastructure, partly financed

by Denmark, is intended to spur the development of the local economy, especially tourism. □



Greenland's prime minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen stands on the tarmac after landing at the airport Qaqortoq, Greenland on April 16, 2026.

# Syria's Kurds register for citizenship after decades of marginalisation

## Qamishli, Syria

In a packed hall in Qamishli's sports stadium in north-east Syria, Firas Ahmad is one of dozens of Kurds waiting to apply for citizenship after many in the minority were barred from doing so for decades. Since last week, "unregistered" Kurds, who have been stateless since a controversial 1962 census, have been flocking to registration centres across Syria to apply for citizenship, based on the interior ministry's instructions.

"A person without citizenship is considered as good as dead," Ahmad, 49, told AFP.

"Imagine not being able to register my children or our homes in our names," he said, adding that "my grandfather never had citizenship, and we have been living without official documents ever since".

On the tables facing long queues of people, registration forms were scattered along with personal photos and old documents, while government employees were recording the data.

The new measure follows Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa's January de-

ree granting citizenship to Kurds residing in the country, including those who have been unregistered for decades.

It also enshrines the Kurds' cultural and language rights, and recognises Kurdish as a national language. The decree came during weeks of clashes between Kurdish fighters, who once controlled swathes of northeastern Syria, and government forces after which an agreement was reached to integrate the Kurdish administration into the central state.

The integration included government forces entering the previously Kurdish-controlled cities of Hasakeh and Qamishli in February, and the appointment in March of senior Kurdish military leader Sipan Hamo as assistant defence minister for the eastern region, among other steps.

### - 'We suffered greatly' -

The lack of citizenship affected many aspects of daily life, from the inability to register births and property ownership to difficulties in studying, moving around, travelling and working, leaving many without full legal recognition of their



Forms are filled as Syrian Kurds gather at a registration centre for foreign Kurds and unregistered residents in the city of al-Malikiyah Kadimah (Dêrik in Kurdish) northeastern Syria, on April 15, 2026, to submit their names for Syrian citizenship.

existence.

"We suffered greatly," says Galya Kalash, a mother of five, speaking in Kurdish.

"My five children could not complete their education, and we could not travel at all. Even now, our house is not registered in our name." Around 20 percent of Syria's Kurds were stripped of their Syrian nationality in a controversial 1962 census in the northeastern Hasakeh province.

Ali Mussa, a member of

Hasakeh's Network of Statelessness Victims, told AFP that there are around 150,000 unregistered people in Syria today.

There are around two million Kurds in Syria, most of them in the northeast.

Mussa called on authorities to show "flexibility in implementing the decision and to provide facilities for residents outside Syria" who may not be able to travel due to their refugee status in Europe or fear of flight

disruptions due to the Middle East war.

Authorities are expected to keep registration centres open for a month.

Abdallah al-Abdallah, a civil affairs official in the Syrian government, told AFP the period could be extended.

"The most important compensation for these people is gaining citizenship after being deprived of it for all these years," he said. □

## Global warming causes Colombian glacier to disappear

### Bogotá, Colombia

Where once there was ice, only rock remains.

One of the glaciers in a chain of snow-capped

mountains in the Colombian Andes has vanished due to high temperatures driven by climate change. Satellite images show how

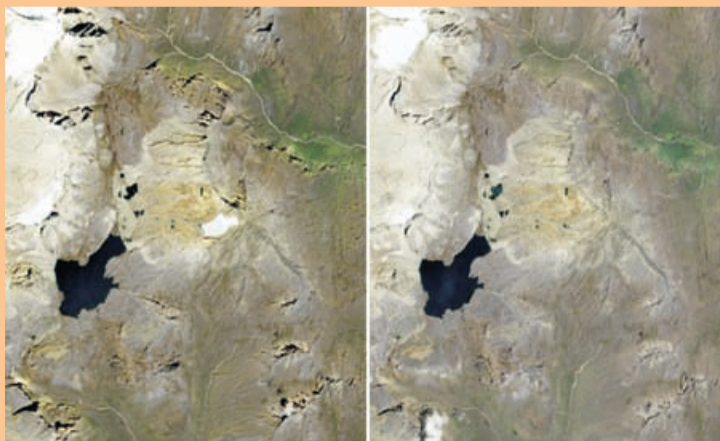
the ice sheet covering the mountain gradually shrank from 2015 until it disappeared completely in March 2026.

what is at stake is not only the landscape, but the very balance of these ecosystems," IDEAM said in a statement.

Glaciers feed the Andes' freshwater sources, sustain mountain ecosystems and play a crucial role in crop irrigation, fishing, and other human activities.

The last 11 years have been the hottest 11 on record, according to the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service and Berkeley Earth, a California-based non-profit research organization.

A study published in Science magazine in January 2023 predicted that half the planet's glaciers will have melted by 2100 even if the world meets its goal under the Paris Agreement of limiting warming to 1.5C. □



This combination of pictures created on April 16, 2026, shows satellite images obtained from Copernicus Sentinel Data 2026 showing the Cerros de la Plaza glacier (L) with some snow cover on December 28, 2015, and without snow cover in February 28, 2026 in the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy, northeastern Colombia.

Situated in the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy range, in the northeast of Colombia, the Cerros de la Plaza glacier was officially declared disappeared last week by the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM). Its surface area shrank from five square kilometers (1.93 square miles) in the 19th century to zero today, according to the agency.

"Climate change is a reality that is already transforming our territories. And

The Colombian Andes, like the country's other ecosystems, are incredibly biodiverse, home to condors and mammals such as the spectacled bear.

The Sierra Nevada del Cocuy, with peaks over 5,000 meters above sea level, is one of the last six remaining glacial systems in the country, where the area covered by ice has shrunk by 90 percent since the 19th century, according to the environment ministry.

## Up for a snorkeling adventure in Aruba? Top 3 shipwrecks to explore

(ORANJESTAD) – Aruba is not only the perfect vacation destination to sit back and relax on the sandy beaches but also has great snorkeling spots for passionate adventurers to explore. On the coast of the island, there are various shipwrecks that have become fan-favorites over the years. Here are the top 3 shipwrecks you should explore.

### SS Antilla

Dubbed “The Ghost Ship”, SS Antilla is the biggest and most visited shipwreck site off the coast of the island. Located in Malmok, this 400-foot ship's story is one of capture and sabotage during WWII.

After Germany invaded The Netherlands, Dutch authorities ordered the confinement of the ship's German crew, who were ported in Aruba because it needed to find a neutral port. The Dutch ordered the ship to be confiscated, but the German crew had other plans. Taking advantage of a delay caused by an anticipated armed resistance, the Germans started scuttling the ship, opening her seacock and setting her ablaze.



Eventually, the crew was arrested, but SS Antilla could not be saved by the Dutch forces. The Dutch fired two rounds of their 35mm gun aboard the ‘Aruba’ at SS Antilla and left her to sink.

The shipwreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you'll be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the shipwreck alone is already impressive enough.

### SS Pedernales

Like the Antilla, the story of SS Pedernales dates to WWII. Pedernales was used as a lake tanker between Venezuela and Aruba, and

sailed under British Flag. At this time, The US and Britain were using Aruba and Curacao as fuel stations for the war ships.

Under operation Neuland (disruption of British and American oil sources), Germany fleets bombed Pedernales. The ship was later cut into three sections, two of which were taken to the US for reconstruction. The remaining part stayed in Aruba and was used as target practice. Eventually, the ship became a snorkeling site that has attracted many visitors throughout the years.

Pedernales lies on the north-west coast of Aruba,

and is no more than 10 feet under water, making it an ideal site for snorkelers and divers of all levels.

### Jane Sea Wreck

The Jane Sea Wreck lies near Palm Island at 100 feet underwater. Jane's story is heavily speculated, making her origin a tale of legends.

Launched in 1959, the 190-foot ship was initially called “Blackthorn”. Her last owner, S&D Shipping Ltd. named her Jane Sea. Jane was a cement freighter between Venezuela and Aruba.

The story goes that the Jane Sea arrived one day

at the Barcadera Harbor, where Aruban customs discovered several tons of cocaine. The ship was confiscated and petitioned went out for her owner to claim her. However, several years went by and no one came forward to claim the ship, so dive operators decided to sink her as an artificial reef. This happened in 1988. Jane Sea earned the nickname Jane C, because of the illicit white powder discovered on board.

Jane is now beautifully overgrown with coral and is home to a diverse set of marine life, like turtles, octopus, crabs and sometimes even nurse sharks.

The stories behind these shipwrecks enriches their exploration and offers snorkelers and divers a glance into the past, as well as the beautiful marine life that have molded these wrecks into their home. So, grab your equipment and discover another side of what Aruba has to offer!

We highly recommend you embark on your adventure with the guide of a professional and be sure to take of yourself and Aruba's precious nature. □

## Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use

(Oranjestad)— Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that is passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

### Sweet potato

According to our elders, sweet potato is mostly useful for low blood pressure. People who suffer from low blood pressure were advised to eat sweet potato 2 to 3 times a week. However, if you have high blood pressure, it is best not to eat too much sweet potato, as this raises blood pressure.

Sweet potatoes are also great for people who work hard labor jobs, and it's been said to be aid blood circulation in the body, as well as help those with hemorrhoids or diarrhea.

Many of our elders opted to plant sweet potatoes themselves, mostly because of how easy it was to do so. Cut the end of a sweet potato let it sit in shallow water until it starts to sprout. Then you may plant it in the ground. Sweet potatoes need plenty of water to grow, especially in the first week in the ground. It was said that once you start to notice the ground crack underneath the flowers, it is time to harvest. This should happen around month 3.

### Pomegranate

Pomegranates are also one of the easier fruits to plant and harvest. Originated from Persia, this plant can grow almost everywhere. In Aruba, there are many homes that have a tiny or big pomegranate tree. You may be wondering what the difference is between a small and big pomegranate tree, for which the answer is based on harvest time. Tiny trees produce tinier pomegranates that can be harvested early on. Contrarily, big trees produce bigger pomegranates, but they need enough time to fully ripen before harvesting, otherwise you might end up with bitter seeds. Pomegranate trees are also very easy to plant. In essence, if you just throw the seeds on the ground, they could

grow into a tree.

In terms of medicinal use, pomegranate skins are said to have a few benefits for our health. According to customs, pomegranate skin tea can help those that suffer from diarrhea. Dried pomegranate skin tea is also good for people who have worms. Pomegranate

flowers can be boiled to make a drink and this can be used for irritated gums; just take a swig and let the tea sit in your mouth for a couple minutes. □

**Source: Remedi i Kustumber di nos Bieunan (Medicine and Customs of our Elderly) by Dinah Veeris**



# CasaPlaya With its Grand Opening this Summer!

There are places you visit... and then there are places that quietly change you.

Aruba has always been known for its beauty—the soft white sands, the endless turquoise horizon, the perfect climate. But beyond the postcards and resort strips, there's another side of the island. A deeper, more soulful Aruba. One filled with color, rhythm, flavor, and authenticity.

It is here, in the heart of Oranjestad, that CasaPlaya is rising. And we couldn't be more proud.

**A New Chapter Begins – June 2026**  
Next Summer, CasaPlaya will open its doors—an intimate collection of just 64 luxury residences overlooking the breathtaking Paardenbaai and the Caribbean Sea.

Only 64.  
That number matters.  
It's a rare, boutique condominium, carefully crafted opportunity to belong to something exclusive, something personal—something that still feels undiscovered.  
From your private space, you'll watch the sun melt into the sea, boats drifting across the bay, the quiet rhythm of a city that lives and breathes just below you. Every view is a reminder: you made the right decision.



## A Smart Investment... and So Much More

For buyers from the United States and Canada, CasaPlaya represents something increasingly difficult to find: true value with real upside.

Prices today remain significantly below comparable ocean-view properties in Eagle Beach and Palm Beach. But the story doesn't end there.

Downtown Oranjestad is transforming—evolving into a vibrant culinary and cultural destination. With that growth comes opportunity. Early buyers are not just purchasing a home; they are positioning themselves at the beginning of a rising curve.

This is where appreciation lives. This is where timing matters.

## Freedom That Few Properties Offer

Many properties on the island come with limitations—restrictions that quietly chip away at your flexibility and returns.

## CasaPlaya is different.

Here, you have the freedom to rent short-term without the typical 90-day restrictions imposed elsewhere. Whether you choose to enjoy your residence year-round, share it with guests, or generate income when you're away—the choice is entirely yours.

It's your property. Your lifestyle. Your investment.

## Live the Aruba Most People Never See

Step outside CasaPlaya, and you step into something real.

This isn't the Aruba of chain restaurants and predictable tourism. This is the Aruba where locals gather, where flavors are bold and authentic, where music spills into the streets and every evening feels alive.

## Walk to everything:

- Restaurants that are redefining the island's culinary scene
- Boutiques and local markets full of character
- Cinemas, casinos, bars, and hidden gems waiting to be discovered
- Waterfront strolls that become part of your daily ritual



And when you crave the world-famous beaches? They're just a 5-minute drive away.

CasaPlaya is not about excess. It's about connection. Connection to the sea. Connection to culture. Connection to a slower, richer way of living.

It's owning a place that feels like it was waiting for you all along.

## A Rare Opportunity

Projects like this don't come often—especially not in locations like this, with this level of exclusivity, freedom, and growth potential.

And once people discover it... they don't wait.

CasaPlaya is more than a development

A chance to be part of something meaningful.

A chance to experience the real Aruba—every single day.

**For more information** please contact us at **(297) 594 6395** or via e-mail: **info@casaplayaruba.com**.

GRAND OPENING THIS SUMMER



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- Security & Valet Parking
- Roof top pool overlooking the Caribbean
- Fitness Center



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timeless  
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[info@casaplayaruba.com](mailto:info@casaplayaruba.com) [info@bluearubarealty.com](mailto:info@bluearubarealty.com)

## Feeling parched? Grab refreshment by the side of the road!



(Oranjestad)—Touring the island in the blistering heat can leave one feeling rather thirsty and looking to cool off. Luckily there are a few stands along the roads of Aruba that can offer you just what you need: a nice, refreshing beverage!

These “coconut stands” can be found at several locations on the island, where you can cool off with delicious smoothies, drinks, snacks, and of course, fresh coconuts! Perfect during family outings around the island, these stands can be found in the following locations:

- Near the red Anchor in San Nicolas
- On the Linear Park in Oranjestad (in front of airport runway)
- At the California Light House hill
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin
- Bushiribana Beach

## Iberostar Celebrates One Year of Positive Impact in Aruba

Eagle Beach, Aruba — April 16, 2026 — Iberostar Hotels & Resorts proudly celebrates the first anniversary of JOIA Aruba by Iberostar. Over the past year, the company has solidified its presence on the island through a model of responsible tourism, focusing on high-impact environmental initiatives, social development, and strong local partnerships.

### Iberostar Hotels & Resorts: 70 Years of Tourism with Purpose

With 100 properties across 14 countries and seven decades of industry experience, Iberostar continues to champion positive change through positive tourism. As a 100% family-owned business, the company is guided by a robust long-term vision focused on delivering a consistently high-quality value proposition and transforming the tourism sector into a regenerative force that nurtures ecosystems—especially the oceans—and contributes to the well-being of the communities where it operates.

Iberostar is advancing its responsible tourism strategy through its movement Iberostar Wave of Change, structured around seven focus areas: caring for people, commitment to local communities, protecting nature, promoting responsible consumption of fish and seafood, climate action, moving towards a more circular experience, and responsible growth. With over 460 professionals on the island and a commitment to building long-term partnerships, the company implements its responsible tourism model in Aruba through JOIA Iberostar by Iberostar and the Tierra del Sol Golf Course.

We designed JOIA Aruba to be a gathering place for the people on the island, and we are proud to open our doors and unique experiences to the community. We deeply value our collaboration with the Aruban community and are proud to introduce Iberostar's responsible tourism model as a force for good. This milestone reinforces our commitment to building local partnerships while safeguarding the environment that surrounds us", stated Arnaud Le Lanchon, General Manager of Iberostar in Aruba.

### JOIA Aruba: Strengthening Community and Local Talent

Since its opening, JOIA Aruba by Iberostar has prioritized a people-first culture. The resort has become a key driver for local workforce development through internship partnerships with EPI, EPB, and the University of Aruba, providing over 40 students with hands-on hospitality experience.

A cornerstone of its community engagement is the Aula di Lama program, an open-access



ocean education space. In its first year\*, the program hosted 145 sessions reaching approximately 1,290 direct beneficiaries, inspiring a new generation of ocean stewards through collaboration with more than 15 local NGOs. These partnerships are essential, as they ensure the content remains relevant, science-based, and connected to current environmental priorities.

Beyond education, Iberostar has built meaningful relationships with several local partners, including Metabolic Foundation, Fundacion Savaneta, Alto Vista Winery, and Cunucu Libiee, supporting local culture, community development, and authentic Aruban experiences that connect visitors with the island's traditions.

Through its partnership with Alto Vista Winery, Iberostar together with several other hotels supports a circular approach to waste management. Food and organic waste from the hospitality sector is responsibly processed and transformed into nutrient-rich compost, which helps nourish local agriculture and contributes to more sustainable farming practices on the island.

Additionally, the company launched the Shoco Boulevard at JOIA Aruba by Iberostar, an educational pathway on property dedicated to raising awareness about the species and Aruba's unique biodiversity. Furthermore, more than 1000 participants—including JOIA Aruba by Iberostar team members, community stakeholders, students from the University of Aruba, staff from neighboring hotels, and local media—completed the Shoco Ambassador Training, strengthening conservation awareness and knowledge about Aruba's native burrowing owl. JOIA Aruba has also been selected to host the World Owl Conference in 2026, further affirming its pioneering role in environmental education and wildlife preservation.

Jareth Vermeulen, Destination Alliances Manager for Aruba, explains: "We deeply value our collaboration with the community of Aruba and are proud to introduce Iberostar's responsible tourism model to the island as an active driver of positive change. This milestone reinforces our commitment to fostering strong local partnerships

towards our goals of safeguarding the natural environment that surrounds our properties."

### Tierra del Sol Golf Course by Iberostar: Delivering a Vibrant Experience for Generations

The renovation of Tierra del Sol Golf Course by Iberostar was designed to elevate the golfing experience, contributing to offering added value to the surrounding properties and reinforcing the area's prestige. Under a management model rooted in environmental stewardship, the facility underwent a comprehensive transformation. All greens and tees were completely refurbished and re-grassed to ensure optimal playing conditions, supported by a fully modernized and efficient irrigation system.

The final phase saw the fairways and driving range fully grassed and fine-tuned for the grand reopening of the 18-hole course. This evolution extends beyond the turf, with upgraded practice facilities—including new mats and ball trays—and a refreshed guest experience featuring new signage and fully refurbished facilities at holes 6 and 15.

"The reopening of Tierra del Sol Golf Course by Iberostar in 2025 has delivered a fully renovated course under a management model focused on generating value for property owners, supporting the local community, and preserving native wildlife. A cornerstone of this commitment is the creation of Aruba's first Shoco Sanctuary, which protects 20% of the population of this endemic species," explained Ashiko Martinus, Director of Tierra del Sol Golf Course by Iberostar.

### A Long-Term Vision for Aruba

The company reaffirms its long-term commitment to Aruba by championing a responsible tourism model aligned with the approach promoted by the country's institutions. The company seeks to play an active role in Aruba's evolution through continuous collaboration with local entities, associations, and the community, driving a positive shift in tourism that ensures the protection of the environment, its people and the island's unique character.

The company remains dedicated to being an active partner in Aruba's future, ensuring the protection of the island's unique character for generations to come.

As part of this milestone, Iberostar invited members of the local media and Aruban community for a special presentation highlighting the positive impact achieved during its first year of operations. During this gathering, the company shared key initiatives and partnerships that demonstrate how tourism can contribute positively to Aruba's community, economy, and environment. □



# The stories of “Compa Nanzi”



**(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.**

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curaçao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a me-

dium for relief during the harsh treatment to which they were subjected to.

It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king  
One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked back for a moment then walk right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging

on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold.

“Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by? “Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed, there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder.

The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said. “Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick second.” The herder

opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi.

Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again. “Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”

“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what;

there are so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king.

“What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!”

The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's thrown and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belongings, and lived the rest of his life as king. □

**Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.**



# Origin of Papiamentu- Aruba's native language

ORANJESTAD — Papiamentu, Creole language of ABC (Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao) is from the Cape Verdean Creole family (Cape Verdean language) and was taken to the Caribbean in the 9th century by the Cape Verdeans of that time (linings and slaves), experts in cane culture and sugar production, and who were hired by Jewish entrepreneurs who went to invest in this business in the Caribbean. Cape Verdeans taught this pre-industrial revolution technology (planting cane and producing sugar, which they had learned from Madeirans) to slaves from other African regions, and did so in their language, Cape Verde Creole (Cape Verdean language), hence the language implanted in Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao.



stories, wanting to link Papiamentu directly to Portuguese, Galician or Castilian (see Papiamentu, on Wikipedia – Portuguese version and Spanish version, where the Portuguese and Spanish, each claim the direct origin of Papiamentu), in fact, this is not true. Papiamentu is not direct from Portuguese, Galician or Castilian, it is from the Cape Verde Creole family (Cape Verdean language). You can see this best when it's

saying obscene words and offending someone, precisely as they say today in both ABC and Cape Verde islands. The obscene words kept the original, had no lexical influence either from Castilian or Dutch. Also the Papi Cristang of Malacca, the Patuá of Macau, and several creoles from the east (from Daman, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia) and Africa (Casamança, Guinea Bisau, Sierra Leone and Nige-

ria, these last two releases to the English), all originated in the Creole of Cabo Verde (Cape Verdean language), which was the French language spoken in Portuguese feitorias on the coast of Africa (from Senegal to Sierra Leone), and which was taken east by the thousands of cable – Verdeans (linings and slaves, already Christianized and speaking Creole) who served as sailors and “slaves of arms” in Portuguese caravels, demanding the east. I don't know why the official history of Portugal usually omits this fact, which is in the chronicles of the quinrentist chroniclers, but which we never saw in the history of Portugal that we study from primary education to higher education. However, it has always been tried to deceive us, in colonial time, that we were descendants of Viriato (Iberian hero in the fight against the Romans) and the pastors of

the Hermeni Mountains, but not much speaking of our black-African ancestry.

We Cape Verdeans understand each other very well with these Antillans and Easterns, whose language is from the same Creole family of Cape Verde (Cape Verdean language), speaking their Creole and we ours. Therefore, Papiamentu, Papi Cristang, Patuá Macaense and the creoles, said of Portuguese origin, Daman, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, some locations in the Philippines and some places in Indonesia, are creoles of the language family Cape Verde Creole (Cape Verdean language) and indirectly the Galaico-Duriense or Galaico-Portuguese, a language that the people spoke in Portugal in the 6th and 7th century.

Source: Dushi Aruba

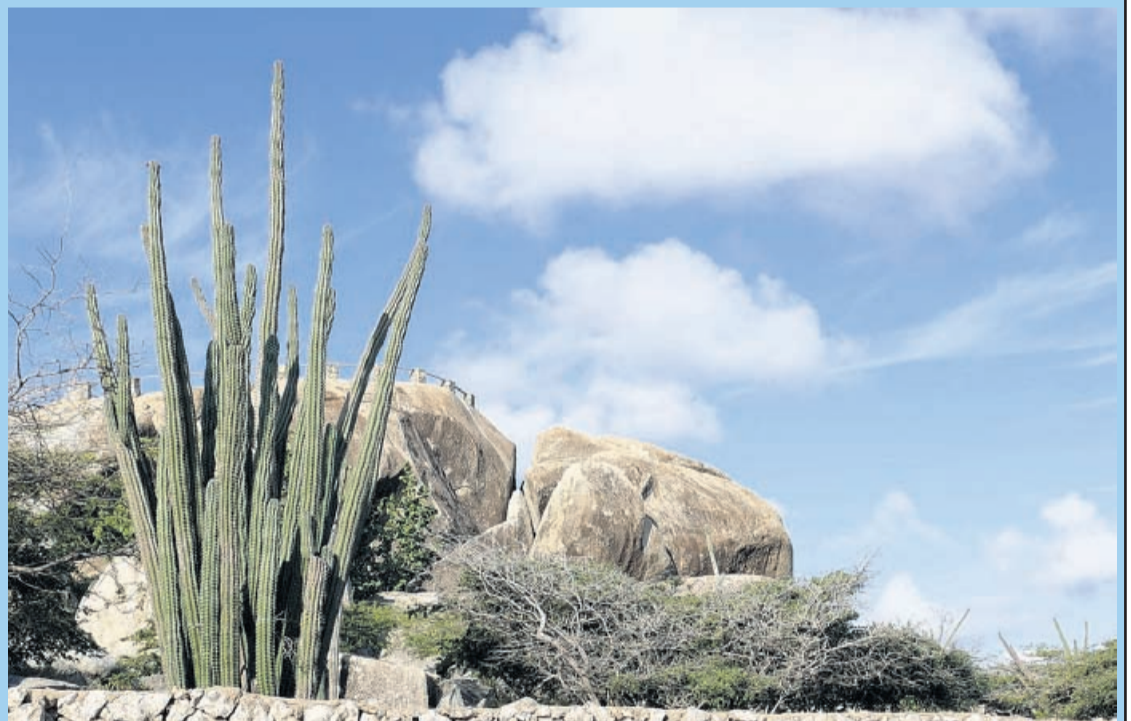
Unlike many interesting

## Ayo & Casibari: Aruba's famous rock formations

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

**Ayo**  
The Ayo Rock Formation is located in the northern part of the island, right on the road that leads you to the Black Stone Beach, and close to the Natural Bridge. The Ayo is a fenced terrain that consists of sev-

eral giant boulders, resting neatly on top of or side by side each other, adding gorgeous natural architecture to the surrounding “mondi”\*. This is also one of the few sites to contain prehistoric markings of our indigenous ancestors. The Ayo Rock formation contains stairs that lead you to the top of the highest boulder, offering a breathtaking view of the Aruban backyard. The Ayo is usually quiet, as it is situated farther away from the busier parts of the island. However, this is just another charm of the site: the quiet area and the refreshing breeze



offer a sense of comfort and peace.

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

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

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

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

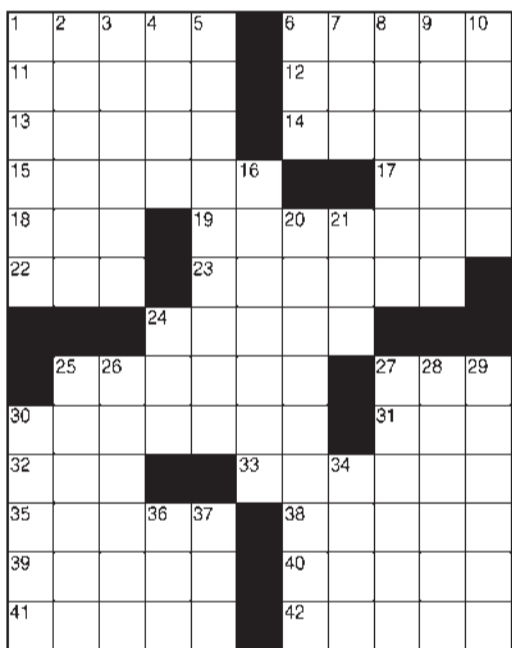
**\*Mondi: what we call our Aruban wilderness. We don't have forests, or deserts, but we do have mondi!**



**CROSSWORD**

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 40 Flower
  - 1 Coffee girl, often additive
  - 6 Banquet
  - 11 Reddish dye
  - 12 Un-occupied
  - 13 Use, as advice
  - 14 Car count
  - 15 Eye part
  - 17 Summer sign
  - 18 Leave quickly
  - 19 Signing, for short
  - 22 Pub staple
  - 23 Small drum
  - 24 Like some online videos
  - 25 Draw closer to
  - 27 Hotel feature
  - 30 Central American capital
  - 31 Clumsy one
  - 32 Tick off
  - 33 Soviet tyrant
  - 35 Border
  - 38 Key
  - 39 Wild
- DOWN**
- 1 Rhythmic dance
  - 2 React with horror
  - 3 Main dish
  - 4 Erelong
  - 5 Like ogres, in folklore
  - 6 Nourished
  - 7 Moody music
  - 8 Twin of Artemis
  - 9 Flow
  - 10 Holyfield rival
  - 16 Ready for romance
  - 20 Issuing from a source
  - 21 Cardinal cap letters
  - 24 Through
  - 25 Top story
  - 26 Turkey's capital
  - 27 Pavlova's field
  - 28 For each
  - 29 Leased
  - 30 Ticks off
  - 34 Nepal setting
  - 36 Ruin
  - 37 Moose's kin



4-29

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.

**4-29 CRYPTOQUOTE**

WIR BMK MOVWVG QUDC M EMU

LMFQ. WIR BMK'C QUDC M

E O M K Z L M F Q. — H I U D

L D B I R O C

**Cryptoquote:** YOU CAN NEVER GET A CUP OF TEA LARGE ENOUGH OR A BOOK LONG ENOUGH TO SUIT ME. — C.S. LEWIS

**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.

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.

**Safety**

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the



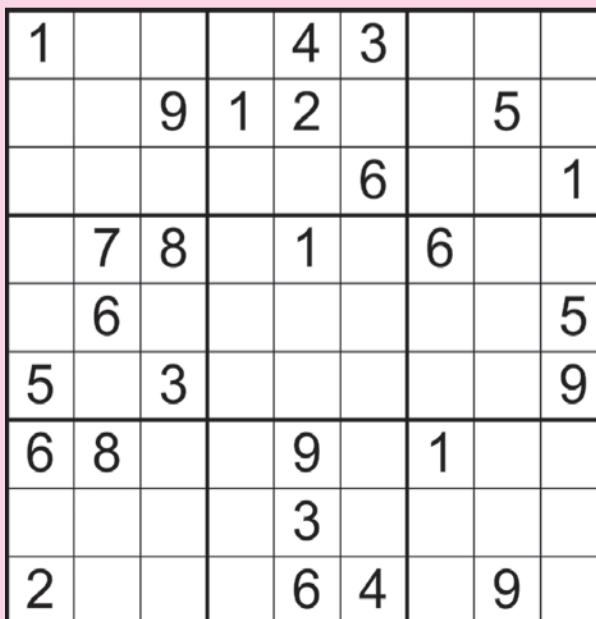
**CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE**

<b>14 TUE</b>	<b>CARNIVAL HORIZON</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 22:00   Berth: C
	<b>NORWEGIAN EPIC</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 17:00   Berth: I
<b>15 WED</b>	<b>BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: B
	<b>SERENADE OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: C
	<b>FREEWINDS</b> Arrival: 6:00   Departure: ****   Berth: E
<b>16 THU</b>	<b>QUEEN ANNE</b> Arrival: 7:00   Departure: 17:00   Berth: c
	<b>STAR PRINCESS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 18:00   Berth: I
<b>17 FRI</b>	<b>FREEWINDS [Departure]</b> Arrival: ****   Departure: 22:30   Berth: E
<b>19 SUN</b>	<b>GRAND PRINCESS</b> Arrival: 9:00   Departure: 17:00   Berth: B
	<b>SCENIC ECLIPSE</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 22:00   Berth: C

**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**



Difficulty: ★★★★★

4/17

**Answer to previous puzzle**



Difficulty: ★★★

4/16

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# Much-hyped Alzheimer's drugs do not help patients, review finds

Paris, France

Drugs once hailed as a breakthrough in the fight against Alzheimer's disease do not meaningfully help patients, a major review found Thursday, however some experts criticised the research.

The review by the Cochrane organisation which is considered the gold standard for analysing existing evidence looked at drugs that target a plaque called amyloids which builds up in the brains of Alzheimer's patients.

Researchers have long sought a way to eliminate this plaque, believing it could be the cause of the most common form of dementia which affects millions of elderly people every year.

After decades of costly yet unsuccessful research, two anti-amyloid drugs called lecanemab and donanemab were initially hailed as gamechangers that finally offered a way to slow the progress of the debilitating disease.

Both drugs were approved by the United States and European Union over the last few years.

However concerns about their effectiveness, cost and side effects including an increased risk of brain swelling and bleeding have since prompted caution. State-run health services in the UK and France have refused to cover the drugs.

The new Cochrane review combined data from 17 clinical trials that included a total of more than 20,000 people with mild cognitive impairment or early dementia.

The trials, which took place over roughly 18 months, studied seven different anti-amyloid drugs.

Only one of the trials examined donanemab sold under the name Kisunla by US pharma giant Eli Lilly while one studied lecanemab, sold as Leqembi by Biogen and Eisai.

While early trials suggested these drugs made a statistically significant differ-



A picture taken on October 24, 2016 shows a package of Aricept, a drug used for the treatment of dementia of the Alzheimer's type, in Paris.

ence, this did not translate into "something clinically meaningful for patients," lead study author Francesco Nonino of Italy's IRCCS institute told a press conference.

Brain scans showed that the drugs successfully removed amyloids, the researchers emphasised.

This means "the idea that removing amyloids will benefit patients was refuted by our results," said study co-author Edo Richard of Radboud University Medical Centre in the Netherlands.

- 'Not delivering on promise' -

Richard, who has previ-

ously expressed scepticism about anti-amyloid drugs, said he hopes efforts targeting other mechanisms that potentially cause Alzheimer's lead to more effective drugs in the future.

British biologist John Hardy, who first developed the amyloid hypothesis in the 1990s, criticised the review for lumping together data about lecanemab and donanemab along with drugs that are known to be ineffective, therefore dragging down the overall average.

"This is a silly paper which should not have been published," Hardy told AFP, disclosing that he has consulted for Eli Lilly, Biogen

and Eisai.

In response to such questions, Richard said that while the drugs included in the study may work in different ways, they all have the same target: amyloid beta proteins. □



**Editor**

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**Editors**

Pilar Flores  
Richard Brooks  
Angenette Figuereo  
Oriana Geerman

**Sales**

Mark Gomes  
Sulaika Croes

**Classifieds**

classified@cspnv.com

**Distribution and Collection**

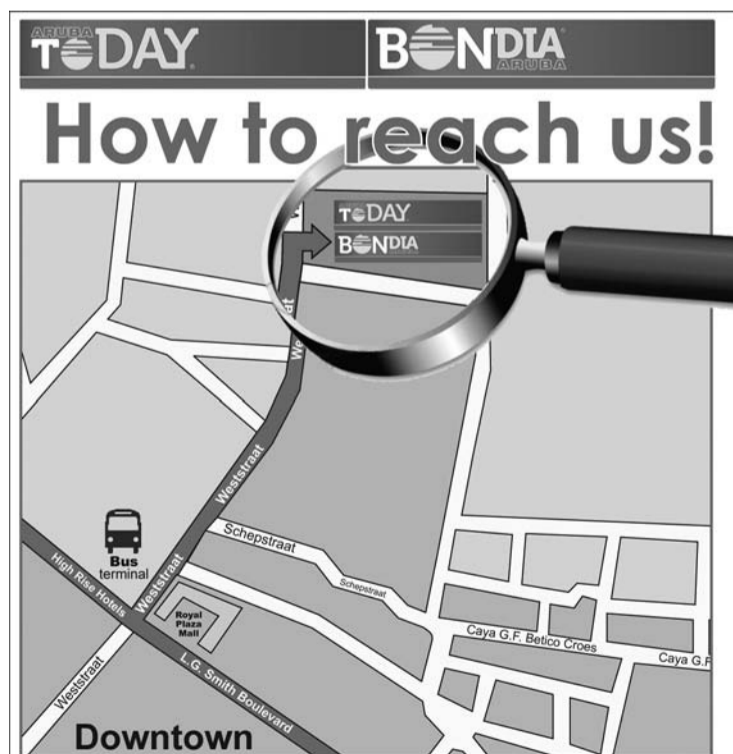
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**Social / Website**

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22  
T: 582-7800

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS



This photograph taken on April 11, 2026 shows Khushwant Singh, author of *Maharaja in Denims* and co-founder of AI-driven production house Intelliflicks Studios, which is set to release an artificial intelligence-generated adaptation of the book envisioned as the world's first full-length AI realism film, working at his residence in Chandigarh.

## India's 'Maharaja in Denims' stakes claim in AI film race

### Mumbai, India

Many filmmakers fear the existential threat of artificial intelligence, but in India the race is on to produce the first hit Bollywood feature generated by the technology. One contender is "Maharaja in Denims", based on a popular 2014 novel by Khushwant Singh and set for cinematic release this summer.

"There is no actor fee, there is no fuss over them coming late or causing delays. There are no sets," Singh told AFP.

"It is sheer creativity of mind and the machine," said the author, who co-founded the startup Intelliflicks Studios with a former Microsoft executive to realise the project.

Indian studios, which churn out more than 2,000 movies a year, have embraced AI unlike in

Hollywood, where it has sparked huge strikes and strict union conditions around its use.

Separate projects in the country, such as the mythological "Chiranjeevi Hanuman: The Eternal" and the Kannada-language "Love You", have also been marketed as pioneering AI productions.

Another challenger, "Naisha", had to postpone its May 2025 release date over unspecified technical issues, according to a social media post from its production studio.

Lightspeed advances in AI image generation capabilities also kept delaying the final cut of "Maharaja in Denims", the story of a privileged teenager who is a victim of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in Punjab.

"You are tempted to use the latest technology, so what was made before didn't look as appealing," Singh said.

"But then it also burns cash, because you are spending again for the software."

### - 'Toughest' path -

In 2024, Singh and Intelliflicks co-founder Gurdeep Singh Pall, once head of business AI and product incubations at Microsoft, hired a team of six people, including a director and cinematographer, to make "Maharaja in Denims".

Pall "wanted to experiment with my book", explained Singh, who is based in the northern city of Chandigarh.

The film's protagonist believes he is the reincarnation of the 19th century Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh -- and traditionally, the movie's layered timelines and historical settings would demand a massive budget. But Singh said AI had slashed costs to roughly a tenth.

While the startup has "cracked" the process of AI filmmaking, mythological and science-fiction films, where characters' faces are less defined, are far easier to generate than realistic cinema, he argued.

"We chose the toughest... path of realism," Singh said.

AI models were poorly trained for Indian faces and Sikh historical figures, forcing the team to repeatedly troubleshoot.

A Western movie would be "much easier to generate, because the models are trained for that", he said.

"Had we known the challenges, we would have picked a different script."

### - Human music -

ChatGPT maker OpenAI has backed the production of a feature-length animation called "Crittterz", created largely with AI tools. It is aiming for a premiere at this year's Cannes Film Festival in May ahead of a global release. □



This artificial intelligence-generated handout image courtesy of First Line Films shows an AI-generated likeness of actor Val Kilmer for his posthumous role as Father Fintan in the upcoming movie "As Deep As The Grave".

## Val Kilmer returns via AI as filmmakers test Hollywood's red line

### Las Vegas, United States

The first images of late American film star Val Kilmer returning to the big screen courtesy of artificial intelligence were unveiled Wednesday in Las Vegas, in what will likely stir debate over the technology's role in Hollywood.

A youthful, digital version of Kilmer appears in the trailer for "As Deep as the Grave", telling another character: "Don't fear the dead and don't fear me."

The footage premiered at CinemaCon, the annual conference where studios present upcoming releases to movie theater owners.

Brothers Coerte and John Voorhees, director and producer of the film, said they hope to release the historical drama by the end of the year.

Kilmer, best known for his roles in "Top Gun," "Batman Forever" and "The Doors," died of pneumonia in April 2025 at the age of 65.

The project drew headlines last month when the filmmakers revealed they had recreated the actor using AI with the consent of his family.

The use of artificial intelligence remains one of the most sensitive issues in the entertainment industry and was central to the 2023 strikes that shut down Hollywood, as actors and writers warned that unchecked technology threatened their livelihoods.

"As Deep as the Grave" follows pioneering archaeologists Ann and Earl Morris the latter credited by some with helping inspire the fictional Indiana Jones and originally cast Kilmer before the coronavirus pandemic to play a Catholic priest.

Health problems forced Kilmer, who was battling cancer, to step away from the role. But after pandemic delays, the Voorheeses revisited the project as AI technology advanced.

They recast Kilmer digitally as Father Fintan, an early Catholic missionary suffering from tuberculosis who, like many at the time, traveled to the US southwest for the dry climate and opened missions in the Four Corners region. "It was a very dark time," Coerte said, adding that the character was central to the story.

The filmmakers said they approached Kilmer's children, Mercedes and Jack, after concluding the role could still be realized.

The family gave its approval and granted access to Kilmer's video archives, which were used to recreate the actor at multiple stages of his life.

Val Kilmer had spoken to his children before his death about his legacy and what he wished he could still accomplish as an actor, the brothers said. □

## Curacao, tiny island with big dreams of World Cup glory

**Willemstad, Curaçao,** "Small island, big dreams" reads a poster for the football team of the Caribbean island of Curacao the smallest country ever, by population, to qualify for football's World Cup.

Since Curacao clinched qualification with a hard-fought 0-0 draw against Jamaica in November, the 160,000 inhabitants of the Dutch island famed for its eponymous sapphire liqueur are riding the crest of the Blue Wave, as the national side is dubbed.

The qualification is expected to give tourism on the paradisaical island of white sand beaches, which received 1.5 million visitors last year, a boost.

Visitor numbers were already up 13 percent in the first three months of the year.

"Football is putting us on the global map," Prime Minister Gilmar Pisas, himself a former footballer, told AFP in an interview, predicting a visitor influx.

Far from the luxury sea-front hotels and Caribbean cruise ships that dock in the port of the capital Willemstad, a group of teenagers kick a ball around a dirt pitch in the low-income neighborhood of Fuik.

The players are from a foundation for young peo-



**A woman shops at the Curacao national football team official fan store in Willemstad, Curacao, in the Dutch Caribbean, on April 8, 2026.**

ple from underprivileged backgrounds set up by former Dutch-Curacaoan manager Remko Bicentini, who played professional football in the Netherlands and later coached Curacao.

On the gate, a motivational slogan in Papiamentu, the creole spoken in the Dutch Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, advises young people to take destiny in their hands.

"You are responsible for your future," it reads.

### - Diaspora's starring role -

"If you come on holidays to

Curacao, you see beaches and everything looks perfect," Bicentini said. "But there are also areas where poor people live."

"Many families have three, four, five children but no money. We help them when they don't have enough to eat," he said.

Neveron Alberto, one of his young disciples, dreams of being called up for the national team, but the road to selection is littered with obstacles for local players. The island owes its World Cup berth entirely to its Dutch-based diaspora, the president of Curacao's

football federation, Gilbert Martina, admitted.

"All the players on the national team play in foreign leagues," he said.

The only team member born on in Curacao, Tahith Chong, moved to the Netherlands at the age of 13.

But football is increasingly in vogue on what has traditionally been a baseball-mad island.

Federation president Martina hopes the World Cup will swell the ranks of the 3,500 to 4,000 islanders officially registered in clubs to date.

The most famous Curacaoan is perhaps former Ajax and Barcelona star Patrick Kluivert, who was born to a Surinamese father who played for the South American country and a mother from Curacao.

The former striker told AFP he was "very happy" about Curacao's qualification.

"It's fantastic that the island is in the World Cup," he said.

"In my day, (football) was not that big on the island but the players have given Curacao visibility. It's important for the future, for the next generation," added Kluivert, who coached the Curacaoan side between 2015 and 2016.

### - Tremble, Germany! -

Curacao has been drawn alongside Ecuador, Ivory Coast and four-time World Cup winner Germany in Group E, one of the toughest of the tournament.

Former Argentine star Claudio Caniggia, who travelled to Curacao for a retired legends tournament together with Ronaldinho, Kluivert, the Netherlands' Wesley Sneijder and Italy's Marco Materazzi predicted the World Cup would motivate the island's youth and lead to the emergence of new talent. □

## Doncic, Cunningham eligible for MVP race: NBA

### Los Angeles, United States

Luka Doncic and Cade Cunningham have been ruled eligible for the NBA's Most Valuable Player race despite not meeting the 65-game minimum to enter the running for the honor, the league said Thursday. Los Angeles Lakers star Doncic and Detroit Pistons ace Cunningham both fell just short of playing in the required number of games to be eligible for the NBA's end-of-season awards, with Cunningham playing in 63 games and Doncic in 64.

But the duo will be part of the NBA's tightly-contested MVP race after the league and National Basketball

Players Association (NBPA) ruled there were "extraordinary circumstances" surrounding each player.

Cunningham's regular season games tally was abbreviated after he suffered a collapsed lung in March which led to him missing 12 games.

Doncic, who was sidelined for several games following a hamstring injury earlier this month after inspiring a Lakers late-season resurgence, also missed two games to attend the birth of his daughter in Slovenia. "The NBA and NBPA agreed that, taking into account the totality of the circumstances for Cunningham and Doncic, each player

qualified for awards under the extraordinary circumstances provision in the CBA (collective bargaining agreement)," the NBA said in a statement.

However the league turned down a request from Minnesota Timberwolves star Anthony Edwards to be included in the awards picture.

Edwards played in 60 games and filed a bid for inclusion under the same "extraordinary circumstances" rules.

"Edwards' challenge was denied and, as a result, he is not eligible for annual awards for the 2025-26 NBA regular season," the NBA said.

This season's MVP race is regarded as one of the closest for years, with Doncic and Cunningham now amongst a pool of contenders led by Oklahoma

City Thunder's reigning MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, San Antonio star Victor Wembanyama and the Denver Nuggets' Nikola Jokic. □



**Luka Doncic #77 of the Los Angeles Lakers dribbles the ball against the Indiana Pacers at Gainbridge Fieldhouse on March 25, 2026 in Indianapolis, Indiana.**



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## Warriors rally to eliminate Clippers, 76ers reach NBA playoffs

**Los Angeles, United States**  
Golden State star Stephen Curry scored the go-ahead three-pointer with 50 seconds left as the Warriors rallied to beat the Los Angeles Clippers 126-121 and stay alive in the NBA play-in on Wednesday. Curry, a four-time NBA champion who missed 27 games from February to early April with a nagging knee injury, shook off a slow first half to finish with 35 points. He connected on seven of 12 three-point attempts to help the Warriors, who trailed most of the way, battle back from a 13-point fourth-quarter deficit. His last three-pointer put the Warriors up 120-117, and they held on to knock Kawhi Leonard and the Clippers out of the post-season. The Warriors, who finished the regular season 10th in the Western Conference, will have to win one more



**Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors reacts during play against the LA Clippers in the first half of an NBA play-in tournament game at Intuit Dome on April 15, 2026 in Inglewood, California.**

game to reach the playoffs proper when they face the Phoenix Suns on Friday. The winner of that game will secure the Western Conference eighth seed and a first-round series

against the top-seeded reigning champion Oklahoma City Thunder. Curry said the key in Phoenix will once again be "resiliency." "These win or go home scenarios, we think we

know the team but you've got to be able to withstand the runs and stay in it emotionally. "It was back and forth the whole game, and then we got over the hump the last three minutes."

Gui Santos and Kristaps Porzingis scored 20 points apiece for the Warriors and Al Horford made four three-pointers in the fourth quarter. Benedict Mathurin scored 23 points to lead the Clippers. Leonard and Darius Garland scored 21 points each, but Leonard was held to just two points in the final period.

**- Sixers reach playoffs -**  
The Philadelphia 76ers, fueled by 31 points from Tyrese Maxey, held off the Orlando Magic 109-97 to punch their playoff ticket, booking a first-round meeting with the Boston Celtics. Maxey scored 31 points and five Philadelphia players scored in double figures as the Sixers overcame the absence of star big man Joel Embiid who made a surprise appearance watching from the bench as he recovers from an appendectomy. □