

National Park Arikok:
Aruba's biggest nature
conservation



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Aruba's ONLY English Vacation Newspaper

King's Day: Aruba celebrates King Willem-Alexander's birthday!



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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY


SUNDAY:	MONDAY:	TUESDAY:	WEDNESDAY:	THURSDAY:	FRIDAY:	SATURDAY:
MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	ANDERSON BAHAMON SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.	MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.	RICKY THOMAS GUITAR 6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.







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EU, US sign critical minerals plan to counter China reliance

(AFP) – The European Union and United States signed an agreement Friday to coordinate on the supply of critical minerals needed for key industries including defense, as China's dominance becomes a growing concern.

The pact marks a rare embrace by President Donald Trump's administration of the role of the EU, which it often berates as it instead champions right-wing populists within Europe.

Flexing its muscle at times of tension, Beijing has restricted exports of critical minerals needed for products including semiconductors, electric vehicle batteries and weapons systems.

"The overconcentration of these resources, the fact that they're dominated by one or two places, is an unacceptable risk," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said as he signed a memorandum of understanding with EU trade chief Maros Sefcovic.



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and European Union Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic speak before signing a memorandum of understanding for a strategic partnership on critical minerals at the State Department in Washington, DC, on April 24, 2026. (Photo by Annabelle GORDON / AFP)

Sefcovic told a separate press briefing that the agreement "formalizes our partnership across the entire value chain, from exploration and extraction to processing, refining, recycling and recovery."

Cost of dependency

On concerns that China could retaliate against a potential critical minerals deal involving multiple parties, Sefcovic said: "For us, it's really a matter of economic security. It's a matter

of overcoming dependencies." From recent experience, "we know how dependencies could be expensive, and we have a huge price tag for being dependent on the sources of our fossil fuels," he added.

"We simply want to learn from that experience and have a much more diversified portfolio of suppliers," Sefcovic said.

Rubio noted that the United States and the EU com-

bined are "the largest customers and users" of critical minerals.

"We have to make sure that these supplies and these minerals are available for our futures and in ways that are not monopolized in one place or concentrated heavily in one place," Rubio added.

An action plan said that the EU and United States would explore setting minimum prices on critical minerals -- effectively preventing China or other outside

powers from flooding the market with inexpensive exports.

They will also look at coordinating any subsidies and stockpiles of critical minerals, and could coordinate joint standards to ease trade across the Western world, and together invest in research.

The US Trade Representative's office said this plan will be the main mechanism to "coordinate trade policies and measures on critical minerals supply chains with a view to concluding a binding plurilateral agreement on trade."

The Trump administration has previously called for a preferential trade zone among allies on critical minerals.

Washington has also unveiled critical minerals action plans with Mexico and Japan, alongside a supply framework with Australia and others. □

Justice Dept ends criminal probe into US Fed chair Powell

(AFP) – The US Justice Department said Friday it is dropping a criminal probe on Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, paving the way for his replacement's Senate confirmation, amid concerns over President Donald Trump's attacks on the independent central bank.

"I have directed my office to close our investigation," US Attorney Jeanine Pirro announced on X.

Pirro said the inspector general for the Fed would instead look into renovation cost overruns at its headquarters, which the Justice Department had been probing -- under heavy pressure from Trump.

However she added that she would "not hesitate to restart a criminal investigation should the facts warrant doing so."

Trump has upended Washington norms by routinely criticizing the Fed for not



US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell speaks during a press conference following the Federal Open Market Committee meeting at the Federal Reserve Board Building in Washington, DC, on March 18, 2026.

following his calls to cut interest rates more rapidly, while making personal attacks on Powell in particular.

The probe into Powell, whose term helming the Fed expires May 15, looked likely to hold up the Senate's confirmation of Trump's pick for a new chairman, Kevin Warsh.

Now, Pirro's announcement is set to ease that

path.

The investigation had been criticized by former Fed chiefs and lawmakers as an attempt to undermine the central bank's independence from politics.

At Warsh's confirmation hearing this week before the Senate Banking Committee, Republican senator Thom Tillis reiterated that he would continue blocking

new appointments to the Fed if the Powell investigation were not resolved.

Tillis's vote against the appointment would have been enough to set up an impasse on the panel, which Warsh needs to clear to become the next Fed chief.

"Senator Tillis should do the right thing and move to confirm Kevin Warsh as speedily as possible," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt urged Friday.

"He is a phenomenal candidate to lead the Fed, and we shouldn't be holding our nation's economy hostage because of a disagreement with the Department of Justice," Leavitt told reporters.

'Bogus' investigation

But the top Democrat on the Banking Committee,

Senator Elizabeth Warren, warned that the closure of the investigation does not end political pressure on the Fed.

"Let's be clear what the Justice Department announced today: they threatened to restart the bogus criminal investigation into Fed Chair Powell at any time while failing to drop their ridiculous criminal probe against Governor Lisa Cook," she said.

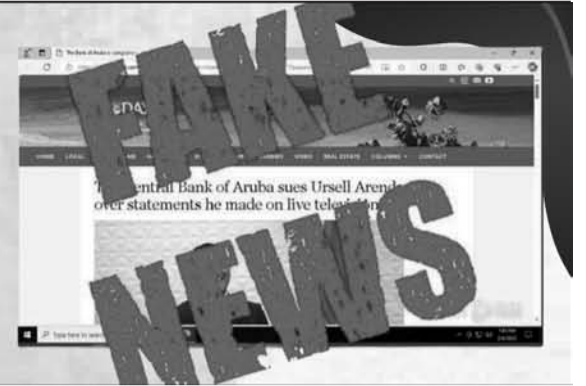
Warren was referring to a separate attempt by Trump to fire Cook over allegations of mortgage fraud. The case is currently before the Supreme Court, which is expected to rule on whether he can oust her.

Powell first took the helm of the Fed during Trump's first presidency in 2018 and was subsequently reappointed to the position under Democratic president Joe Biden. □

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Envoys from Iran, US expected in Pakistan for new talks

(AFP) – Iran's foreign minister and envoys of US President Donald Trump were heading to Pakistan, their respective governments said Friday, in the first concrete sign of movement on renewed peace negotiations in nearly two weeks.

The announcement that Trump emissaries Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner were leaving for Islamabad came after the US leader announced a truce in Lebanon had been prolonged following a meeting with Israeli and Lebanese envoys in Washington.

While Trump expressed confidence at the prospect of a lasting peace in Lebanon, sealing a deal to end the wider Middle East war is a thornier proposition, even as urgency mounts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was expected to arrive in Islamabad on Friday night, an official source in Pakistan said.

A spokesman for his ministry said the trip would also include visits to Oman and Russia after the Pakistan stop, adding that Araghchi would meet "senior officials" and discuss "the latest status of efforts to end" the war.

But he made no mention of new talks with US representatives.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, however, said Witkoff and Kushner would head to Pakistan on Saturday "to engage in talks... with representatives from the Iranian delega-



HANDOUT / PAKISTAN'S PRESS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT (PID) / AFP
PHOTO BY HANDOUT / PAKISTAN'S PRESS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT (PID) / AFP
 This handout photograph taken and released by Pakistan's Press Information Department (PID) on April 25, 2026 shows Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar (C-R) and Army Chief Syed Asim Munir (2ndL) walking with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C) upon his arrival at Nur Khan air base in Rawalpindi, near Islamabad. Abbas Araghchi arrived in Islamabad on April 24, Pakistan's foreign ministry said, ahead of planned Iran-US peace negotiations.

tion". "The Iranians reached out, as the president called on them to do, and asked for this in-person conversation," she said, adding that the conversations would "hopefully move the ball forward towards a deal".

- Iran impasse -

Leavitt said US Vice President JD Vance, who led a first round of talks in Islamabad that concluded without a deal, would not be joining the others for the time being, but was on "standby to fly to Pakistan if necessary".

Since the last round of talks, efforts to bring the two sides back to the table have hit an impasse, with Iran refusing to participate as long as a US blockade on its ports remained in place.

Iran has imposed a de facto blockade of its own on the Strait of Hormuz, allowing only a trickle of ships to pass through the waterway, throwing global energy markets into turmoil. Oil prices slid on Friday amid hopes that any fresh peace talks would see an end to Tehran's disruption of trade through the strait.

European Council President Antonio Costa said Friday that the strait "must immediately reopen without restrictions and without tolling". "This is vital for the entire world," he added.

Trump had previously indicated he was in no rush to end the war with Iran, saying he had "all the time in the World, but Iran doesn't".

The USS George H.W. Bush aircraft carrier recently arrived in the Middle East, the US military said, bringing the number of the massive warships operating in the region to three.

- Lebanon strikes -

In Lebanon, despite Trump's announcement of a ceasefire extension, state media reported two people killed in an Israeli strike near Touloun on Friday.

And in Bint Jbeil, the Israeli military said its forces killed six Hezbollah fighters on Friday in a firefight and subsequent strike on a building.

Israel also confirmed a claim by Hezbollah that it had shot down an Israeli drone with a surface to air missile.

Mohammed Raad, the head of the Iran-backed group's parliamentary bloc, urged the Lebanese government to withdraw from direct talks with Israel and warned that a lasting peace deal of the kind sought by Trump "will in no way enjoy Lebanese national consensus".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to destroy the Iran-backed movement, said: "We have started a process to reach a historic peace between Israel and Lebanon, and it's clear to us that Hezbollah is trying to sabotage this."

In south Lebanon's Tyre, Mohamad Ali Hijazi was searching a mountain of rubble for mementos of family members killed in an Israeli airstrike minutes before the ceasefire took hold.

"I'm trying to find my mother's hairbrush... and a bottle of perfume that she loves," said Hijazi, 48 -- some of the last things he sent her from France, where he has long lived with his wife and two daughters.

"My life has been destroyed. I haven't slept for five days," he told AFP, repeatedly fighting back tears.

In Washington, Trump spoke in glowing terms of peace prospects for Lebanon, voicing hope for a three-way meeting with the Lebanese and Israeli leaders. The two countries have been officially at war for decades and until last week had not met so directly since 1993. □

G7 says nature talks a success as climate sidelined for US

(AFP) – Environment ministers from G7 nations said progress was made at a two-day meeting in Paris despite climate change left off the agenda to avoid friction with the United States.

The Group of Seven skirted any direct mention of global warming to appease its largest and most powerful member, which has shunned global climate action under President Donald Trump.

France's ecology minister Monique Barbut said they chose to focus on areas that would attract consensus among all G7 members rather than provoke divisions.

"Climate change, as I said quite frankly, was not directly among these priorities," Barbut told reporters as the meeting closed in the French capital.

"That is why we chose not to address this fundamental issue, because if we had, we would have risked some partners leaving the negotiating table and thus achieving nothing at all."



France's Environment Minister Monique Barbut looks on as she addresses the audience during a press conference as part of a G7 Environment Ministers' meeting in Paris on April 24, 2026. (Photo by Dimitar DILKOFF / AFP)

She said this "pragmatic" approach had resulted in the adoption of seven declarations by member states France, Italy, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States.

"This is significant given the current challenges to environmental multilateralism. We consider these results exceptional," Barbut said.

In his second term as president, Donald Trump -- a sceptic of climate change -- has pulled the United

States from the Paris Agreement and the bedrock treaty underpinning global climate action.

The decision to avoid the topic in Paris was criticised by climate activists, who accused the group of wealthy industrialised economies of bowing to pressure.

But Japan's Environment Minister Hiroataka Ishihara said the agenda focused on common challenges and Washington's representative "engaged with

our discussions together". "We didn't feel that pressure whatsoever," he told reporters.

'Important' talks

The United States dispatched Usha-Maria Turner, an assistant administrator at the US Environmental Protection Agency, to the talks.

The other G7 nations were represented at the ministerial level, and Armenia, Kenya, South Korea and Mongolia also sent high-level

representatives. When approached by AFP on Thursday during a ministerial visit to the Fontainebleau forest south of the French capital, the US representative declined to comment.

Canada's Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Julie Dabrusin, said protecting nature and the climate "went hand in hand" and the Paris meetings canvassed both themes.

"The conversation is deeply intertwined. And I think that they were important conversations for us to have," she told AFP on Friday on the sidelines of the closed-door talks.

Barbut said seven declarations were agreed on subjects ranging from ocean conservation to security and the environment, natural disasters, and the health of water resources.

Italy's Minister for Ecological Transition, Gilberto Pichetto Fratin, said there was "total convergence" from all G7 nations on the presence of so-called "forever chemicals" in water. □

Russia, Ukraine swap 193 POWs

(AFP) – Russia and Ukraine on Friday swapped 193 captured soldiers each, the second exchange this month in one of the few areas of cooperation between Moscow and Kyiv.

The two countries have exchanged thousands of POWs throughout the four-year war -- with the swaps often the only result of otherwise stalled talks on ending the conflict.

"193 Ukrainian warriors are returning home as part of a prisoner exchange," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media.

"We remember each and every one and continue working every day to bring our people home from Russian captivity."



Children hold flags along a road as they wait to greet released Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) following a prisoner exchange, in the Chernihiv region on April 24, 2026, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

AFP journalists at the scene of the swap in northern Ukraine saw dozens of exchanged Ukrainians pour off buses looking pale but relieved after long stints in Russian detention.

They wrapped themselves in blue and yellow flags, embraced each other,

or cried on the phone to loved ones.

One of the servicemen, who identified himself to AFP only as Vadym, said that after three-and-a-half years in Russian detention he had one immediate wish.

"I want to see my son, who was born while I was in captivity," he said.

Another released serviceman, Ruslan Osauliyak, said he hoped his parents were still alive after more than three years he was in captivity.

"What do I wish for? A peaceful sky over us, and to drive all of them out of here as soon as possible. Every man must defend his homeland, and his family," he told AFP.

A representative of Kyiv's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War told AFP that most of the released military personnel had been held in the southern Russian republic of Chechnya, and that many months of negotiations were needed to se-

cure their release.

The official, Petro Yatsenko, said that two of the exchanged Ukrainian prisoners were celebrating their birthdays on Friday.

The youngest in the group of freed Ukrainians was 24 and the eldest was 60, he added.

The Russian defence ministry also confirmed the swap had taken place, adding that its troops were undergoing medical checks in Belarus, a Moscow-allied country bordering Ukraine.

"The United Arab Emirates and the United States provided humanitarian mediation efforts to facilitate the return of the Russian servicemen from captivity," Russia said. □

Francis Kere: Africa's sustainable architect conquering new continents

(AFP) – The bricks are local, the open-air ventilation is abundant, and a single towering baobab unites it all: architect Francis Kere's new building in Dakar is simultaneously sustainable and distinctly African.

A dual national of Burkina Faso and Germany, Kere is the only African to have won the Pritzker Prize (2022), architecture's most prestigious award.

His Berlin-based firm's latest building, the Goethe-Institut German cultural centre in Senegal's capital, embodies his trademarks: simple, local materials, a commitment to Africa, and design principles that are simultaneously aesthetic and comfortable.

While Kere's work began in Africa using bioclimatic principles that take into account climate conditions and available local resources, he has subsequently expanded to Europe and the Americas.



SEYLOU / AFPPhoto by SEYLOU / AFP

Architect Francis Kere, who designed the Goethe-Institut building, speaks during a press conference at the Goethe-Institut German cultural centre in Dakar on April 16, 2026.

With major new projects now as far afield as Las Vegas and Rio de Janeiro, how does Kere plan to remain true to his roots in traditional materials?

"If you give me sand, mud and bamboo, I can guarantee you I will create a project for you", he told AFP during the Goethe building inauguration in mid-April. "If you add steel, OK, I will go further".

Central baobab

Originally from the small Burkina village of Gando, Kere travelled to Germany on a carpentry scholarship before staying to study architecture.

His first building -- with input and labour from those in the village -- was the Gando Primary School, an award-winning schoolhouse completed in 2001

to help remedy his community's lack of educational facilities.

He used local red clay and cement to make bricks that provide thermal protection in the hot climate and shielded the structure from rain with a large overhanging roof that towers above the building, rather than sitting atop it trapping heat.

Fast forward several de-

acades and many of the same principles apply at the Goethe-Institut, a \$4 million state-of-the-art building where some classrooms have air conditioning, but much of the facility is cooled using passive ventilation.

The bricks use west African red clay and are arranged in a perforated wall system that is not only attractive but allows for cross ventilation.

In a courtyard stands a large baobab, a symbol of Senegal and west Africa. Known for its massive trunk and dangling fruit, the baobab is considered a palaver tree where communities traditionally gather for dialogue.

"I told myself, the baobab should be the centre, it is where everyone will meet", Kere said.

"Every function in the building will pivot around this baobab". □

Greece expands sunbed-free beach list for 2026

(AFP) – Greece on Friday named over 250 beaches in environmentally important areas that must be left in their natural state, amid ongoing efforts to limit the impact of overtourism in its multi-billion-euro travel industry.

The initiative bans the use of umbrellas and sunbeds for hire in areas both on the mainland and islands, including many protected marine Natura 2000 sites, some of whom are vital grounds for endangered species such as loggerhead turtles and monk seals.

The initiative "seeks to ensure the effective protection of beaches that have particular aesthetic, geomorphological, or ecological value, as well as the preservation of the habitat types and the plant and animal species found on



A photo shows a view of the fishing village of Naoussa at sunset at the Cycladic island of Paros on April 5, 2023. Tourist season has opened in Greece with the first visitors arriving on the picturesque island of Paros. The country is set to break records, but concerns remain about overtourism and overbuilding. (Photo by Louisa GOULIAMAKI / AFP)

these specific beaches," the government said in a ministerial decision. The updated list for 2026 includes 251 beaches compared to 238 last year, and 198 in 2024.

Amid growing concerns over the impact of overtourism on Greece's natural environment, authorities in recent years have dismantled illegal construction on coasts.

On Thursday, crews accompanied by riot police tore down beachfront shacks on the small island of Gavdos south of Crete that the local municipality had deemed a fire risk.

There was also controversy last year on the island of Milos over hotel construction near one of Greece's most famous beaches, the volcanic rock site of Sarakiniko.

In December, several mayors from the Cyclades and Dodecanese warned that overtourism was threatening the "very existence" of the islands.

Greece in 2025 set new records for tourist arrivals and revenue, the country's central bank said in February, with nearly 38 million travellers not counting cruise ship traffic.

The conservative government has also announced the creation and expansion of national marine parks, but has also come under criticism over deals for gas drilling in the Ionian Sea and south of Crete. □

Havana property market stirs as investors bet on political change

(AFP) – Havana's real estate market is showing glimmers of revival as investors bet that a political and economic revolution is coming to the Communist-governed island.

Prices are ticking up, and brokers are getting busier as something stirs Cuba's real estate market, long battered by sanctions, recession and mass emigration.

That something is acute US political pressure coupled with an oil blockade, and a belief among some Cuban-Americans that the Communist Party could reform or be toppled after six decades in power.

"The market is moving on expectations" not supply and demand, said Luis Mi-jail Lopez, owner of a private construction firm in Havana.

He said there is suddenly "a great deal of interest" from clients, including emigres and foreign residents, willing to invest.



A man walks past a house in the Playa neighborhood in Havana on April 23, 2026. Price hikes in some neighborhoods, intermediaries activity in social media, and growing interest from Cuban-American emigres: Havana's real estate market shows signs of revival in anticipation of possible economic or political changes on the communist island.

In the words of one 48-year-old Cuban living in Miami who asked a family member to look for an apartment, "changes are coming."

- Recovery in flow -

Cuba's housing market emerged only in 2011, when the government legalized home sales.

For decades before that residents were limited to swapping properties.

In theory, foreigners are still barred from buying homes unless they hold permanent residency or use proxies.

No private real estate agencies operate, although self-employed brokers exist.

Broker Yovanni Cantillo said the market has regained momentum in recent months, particularly Havana's most desirable neighborhoods.

Prices have increased in places like Miramar, Nuevo Vedado and Vedado -- neighborhoods with neo-classical mansions, embassies and art deco jewels.

It is "a recovery in its flow, in its dynamics" said Cantillo, while acknowledging that values remain 40 to 50 percent below levels seen during the diplomatic thaw between Havana and Washington under former US president Barack Obama.

Obama's rapprochement triggered a tourism-linked property boom after Airbnb began operating in Cuba.

Tougher US sanctions followed under his successor Donald Trump, and the Covid-19 pandemic halted the surge. □

Colombia's Petro becomes first foreign leader to visit post-Maduro Venezuela



Venezuela's interim President, Delcy Rodriguez, and Colombia's President Gustavo Petro, shake hands during a bilateral meeting at the Miraflores Presidential Palace in Caracas on April 24, 2026.

(AFP) – Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Friday became the first foreign leader to visit Venezuela since the ouster by US forces of longtime strongman Nicolas Maduro.

Petro was to meet with interim president Delcy Rodriguez, who took over

after the toppling of her former boss Maduro in January.

A summit between Petro and Rodriguez had been scheduled for March in the Colombian border town of Cucuta, but was cancelled at the last minute.

The area around Cucuta is home to numerous drug-running, left-wing guerrilla groups, which Colombia has long accused Venezuela of funding and protecting.

Rodriguez assumed power in Venezuela after a lightning US military raid on Caracas on January 3 captured socialist president Maduro and brought him to New York to face drug trafficking charges.

President Donald Trump's administration backs Rodriguez's interim government, which has opened Venezuela's oil industry to US companies.

Petro fiercely criticized the US operation and has been vilified by Trump, who accuses the leftist leader of not doing enough to combat drug production. □

Bolivia, Chile move to restore ties severed 50 years ago

(AFP) - The foreign ministers of Chile and Bolivia met Thursday in a step toward restoring relations severed 50 years ago, the latter's foreign minister said.

These two countries severed ties in 1975 after failing to reach agreement on a long-standing beef for landlocked Bolivia: access to the Pacific Ocean.

Bolivia used to have a coast but lost it in a war with Chile in the late 19th century. Regaining this access has been a key goal of Bolivia for decades.

Every year Bolivia celebrates a holiday called Dia del Mar, or Day of the Sea, to remember the loss of its 250-mile (400-km) stretch of coastline to Chile in the conflict known as the War of the Pacific.

On Thursday foreign ministers Francisco Perez Mackenna of Chile and Fernando Aramayo of Bolivia met at a border crossing and traveled together to La Paz.

Aramayo told reporters the meeting was "a fundamental milestone" on the road to restoring relations.

Ties between the two former enemies are warming now that center-right President Rodrigo Paz governs in Bolivia and far right President Jose Kast recently took power in Chile.

A key focus for Chile is to crack down on illegal immigration across its northern border with Bolivia, one of the poorest countries in South America. Chile is one of the most developed. □

National Park Arikok: Aruba's biggest nature conservation

The National Park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are numerous animals to discover, for example the bright blue Cododo or mighty Warawara.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: A majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heading back to the ocean after laying her eggs during breeding season. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Nature Conservation

The protected area of National Park Arikok was officially established in 2000. Arikok National Park is a



34 square kilometers (7907 acres) of natural area, located at the north-eastern part of Aruba which contains examples of most of the island's flora and fauna against a backdrop of great geological complexity. We are proud to state that approximately 18% of the total land area of Aruba is assigned as a National Park, to protect and preserve the flora, fauna, geology and historical remains present within Arikok National Park.

The Landscape

There is a great geological variety within the park. The main aspects are the rough hills of the volcanic Aruba lava formation, the mysterious rocks of the batholithic quartz-diorite/tonalite, and

the limestone rocks from fossilized coral. The two tallest hills on the island are situated within the park. Jamanota hill 188 meters (617 ft) and Arikok hill 176 meters (577 ft), from which the name of the park is derived.

The line of the permanently wind-and-wave beaten North Coast is broken by several bays (boca's). Most of them are small yet impressive inlets at the mouth of dry riverbeds. Some of these bays (boca's) are spectacular sights, adorned with white, sandy beaches and sand dunes, as is the case at Boca Prins and Dos Playa.

Arikok is also home to Conchi, Aruba's most important natural attraction; also known as The Natural Pool. The journey to the Pool is and adventure by itself and only possible by foot, horse, or 4x4 vehicle. As of 2020, ATV's and UTVs are not allowed in the park due to its significant impact on nature.

Cultural and Historical components

There are a number of sites within the park that attest to the history of Aruba. The Caquetío Indians left rock paintings in Cunucu Arikok and Fontein Cave.

Old plantation (Cunucus) sites tell the story of an active yet challenging agricultural past.

These Cunucus were also residential areas for the few families that worked the land. These families found ways to survive in the difficult conditions, and were able to erect their homes with materials found in the area. Two of these adobe houses have been restored. Park rangers are learning many of the old building techniques in order to preserve this unique Aruban mud-house. At Cunucu Arikok and near Plantation Prins you can find these adobe houses.

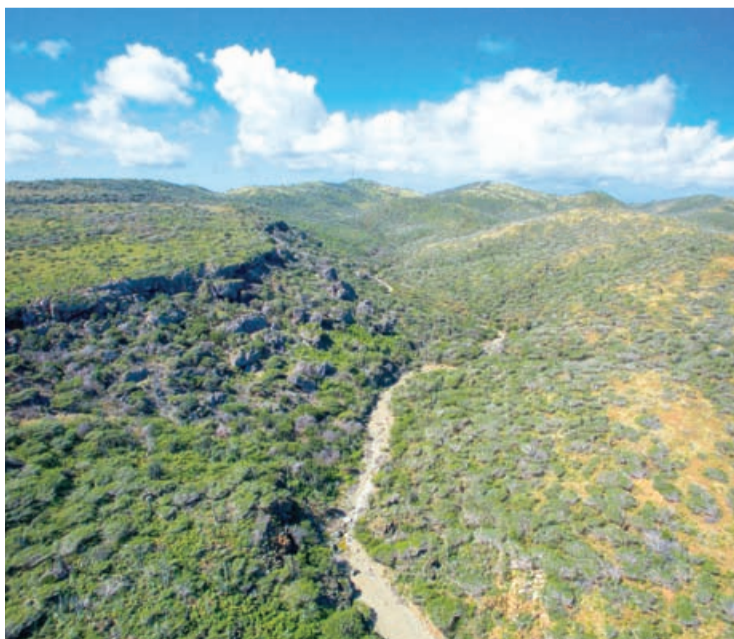
Park Management

The Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF), formerly known as Aruba National Park Foundation, manages

the national park. This foundation was established in July 2003. In February 2017, mangrove and wetland RAMSAR site #198 Spanish Lagoon was annexed to Arikok National Park due to its importance as a feeding and breeding area for water birds and as a nursery area for a variety of marine organisms. With this addition, the areas under management increased by 70 hectares while the amount of species of flora and fauna to be conserved to over 250. On December 21st, 2018 (AB 2018 no. 77) Parke Marino Aruba currently consisting of four marine protected areas (MPAs) was officially established and subsequently brought under management of ACF.

In 2019, preliminary management plan for marine were introduced for Parke Marino to conserve reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests and in 2020 ACF was given additional management areas such as the Saliñas (Druif, Malmok, Cerca, Palm Beach, Bubali etc.) and also additional areas such as Rooi Manonchi, Ser'I Teishi etc. Managed areas can be seen here: <https://acf.aw/>.

Visit the National Park Arikok to see the wonder of Aruba's nature. The visitor center in San Fuego and entrance in Vader Piet (San Nicolas) is open daily from 8:00 AM to 16:00 PM. Contact the ACF via e-mail, info@acf.aw or call +297 585 1234 for more information. □



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**A Lifetime of Impact Recognized:
 Ewald Biemans Awarded Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau**

EAGLE BEACH – From the widest, most protected shoreline of Eagle Beach to global recognition, Ewald Biemans has shaped a legacy defined by purpose, care and action. On Friday, April 24, 2026, the Kingdom of the Netherlands honored Ewald Biemans, the founder and owner of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, with the royal distinction of joining the Order of Orange-Nassau during the annual “Ribbon Rain,” a key highlight of the King’s Day ceremony celebrated across the Dutch Kingdom.

Conferred by His Majesty King Willem-Alexander, the honor of Knight in the Order

of Orange-Nassau recognizes individuals whose contributions create lasting impact across society. Over more than five decades, Biemans has shaped Aruba and the Caribbean tourism industry through executing a vision grounded in long-term responsibility, strengthening the island’s economy, community and environmental stewardship while helping define how sustainable hospitality is practiced worldwide.

Shaping Sustainable Travel Through Action

Biemans has always approached



his work as a lifelong student, driven by curiosity and a commitment to raising standards. That mindset has earned recognition at the highest international levels, grounded in measurable impact. Bucuti & Tara became the Caribbean’s first and Certified CarbonNeutral® hotel in 2018, the result of a comprehensive sustainability program developed over decades, defying what many believed was possible to achieve.

In 2020, the United Nations recognized that work with its Global UN Climate Action Award, mark-

ing the first and only time a hotel has received this distinction. Upon presenting the award, the UN affirmed Bucuti & Tara’s sustainability program as “highly replicable and scalable,” encouraging hotels worldwide to emulate its approach. Long committed to sharing these solutions across the industry, Biemans has been guided by his belief that every business can take meaningful steps toward carbon neutrality, advancing a model for more sustainable global hospitality.

A Commitment to Think Global, Act Local

Biemans’ commitment to conservation spans decades, from supporting sea turtle protection on Bucuti’s beach, where vulnerable Leatherback sea turtles continue to return to their natal shores as some of the island’s earliest visitors, to safeguarding Aruba’s coastal ecosystems. More than 40 years ago, he also founded the island’s first hotel-led cleanup initiative, uniting the tourism sector around environmental stewardship. Today, the resort’s monthly beach cleanups bring together staff, community members and guests, removing an average of 1,500 pounds of debris annually while fostering shared responsibility and connection.

Together with Yesenia Arends, he also founded Stimami Sterilisami, the resort’s nonprofit and the program’s largest funder, supporting spay and neuter procedures for more than 47,000 dogs and cats and significantly improving animal welfare across the island.

In 2022, marking the resort’s 35th anniversary, Biemans, together with his dear friend Grete Marie Case and Bucuti & Tara, donated 30 acres to establish The Bucuti Tara - GMC Nature Preserve in Noord. Today, the 32-acre/13-hectare protected area stands as a lasting give-back to Aruba’s future generations, being reforested with already more than 1,200 indigenous trees planted and enhanced with nature trails through year-round efforts by guests, staff and the community. The preserve restores biodiversity while creating a vital carbon sink that contributes to Aruba’s climate resilience and reflects a model for conservation beyond the island. Bucuti & Tara guests, who are often visiting as couples at the adults-only resort, are now invited to Plant a Tree of Love in the nature preserve where they can return on future visits to see how their “love” continues to grow. □



(Oranjestad)—When off-roading, you may encounter some houses that have rock hedges, aligned perfectly and held together by cement—or sometimes nothing at all.

Fun facts about the “transhi” hedges!

These hedges are called “transhi,” and have a historical and cultural meaning on the island. Used by cunukeros* around the island back when agriculture played a more dominant role in day-to-day life and survival, these stone hedges represent the resilience of our great-grand parents, who had to make do with what nature gave them.

These stone structures are traditionally placed carefully on top of each other. No cement or other binding mixture was used to hold the structure together. Though not commonly used for modern homes, the few structures that remain around the island stood the test of time, some completely intact even after decades of rain, wind and urbanization.

These stone hedges are a representation of the Aruba’s unique farming culture—which valued durability, sustainability and resilience.

*cunukero: Aruban farmers. □

Pictures extracted from the ‘Plantage Zorg en Hoop’ collection on Coleccion.aw

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Conchi: Aruba's hidden natural pool

(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there is an additional "hidden" natural pools that is situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary. This is Conchi.

Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island.

Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known "Cura di Turtuga (Turtle's Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you're up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as

proof of payment. Once you've completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal

blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It's also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

Fun fact: "Conchi" means

small bowl in Papiamentu. Once you get there, you may see why we call it that.



King's Day: Aruba celebrates King Willem-Alexander's birthday!

(Oranjestad)—This upcoming Monday, our island has the great honor of celebrating King Willem-Alexander's birthday. This special day is a national holiday for Aruba.

Willem-Alexander is the first King of the Netherlands since the death of his great-great-grandfather William III in 1890. On April 20, 2013, Willem-Alexander's inauguration took place at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam. Willem-Alexander ascended the throne immediately after the abdication of his mother, Queen Beatrix, on the same day.

Under the constitution, the king, along with the ministers, forms the government. The king represents the Kingdom of the Netherlands at home and abroad. In addition to his formal duties, King Willem-Alexander works in the interests of the Dutch people.

As head of state, it is the

king's duty to unify, represent, and encourage the people.

The ministers, not the monarch, are responsible for government actions, and the ministers are accountable to Parliament for what they do and say. The ministers, together forming the cabinet, are responsible for decision-making.

The king holds weekly meetings with the prime minister, regularly meets with ministers and state secretaries, signs all laws and royal decrees (KB), and ratifies international treaties as part of the government. At the State Opening of Parliament on the third Tuesday of September, he delivers his Throne Speech, in which the government announces its plans for the upcoming parliamentary year.

The constitution requires the monarch to appoint, dismiss, and swear in all ministers and state secretaries. In view of this consti-



tutional role, and upon the request of Parliament, the king may be kept informed of all developments in the formation process.

The monarch is officially the president of the Council of State, a historic role that is purely symbolic in nature. The Council of State provides the government and Parliament with independent advice on legislation and governance and also serves as the highest administrative court in the country. In addition to the

plenary meetings attended by the king, the Council of State consists of an Administrative Jurisdiction Division and an Advisory Division, whose meetings do not involve the king. Accordingly, the king is not involved in practice in the two main areas of activity of the Council. The vice-president is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council of State and presides over its meetings.

Positions held by King Willem-Alexander since April

30, 2013:

- President of the Council of State;
- Member of the Board of the Archives of the House of Orange-Nassau Foundation;
- Member of the Board of the Crown Property Trust;
- Member of the Board of the Royal Gifts Trust.

Editor's note: In celebration of the king's birthday, there will be no issue of Aruba Today published Monday.

King's Day events for the family:

EVENT	LOCATION	TIME	DATE
King's Night Street Fair y Music by Tsunami, Groove Masters	San Nicolas Mainstreet - Kiwanis Club	6:00 PM - 12:00 AM	April 24
Kite Flying with Lights	Centro di Bario Playa Pabao	7:30 PM	April 24
Kite Flying	Centro di Bario Playa Pabao	8:00 AM	April 25
Flee market, Dino Jump, Face Painting	Bingo Cafe Restaurant	10:00 AM - 4:00 PM	April 27
Flee market	Super Food Plaza	8:00 AM - 12:00 PM	April 27
King's Day - Live Music, Kidpreneur, Dino Jump y Soft Play	Cafe the Plaza	1:00 PM	April 27

Sun catchers: The different lizards in Aruba

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

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

Iguanas

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

The iguanas usually found in Aruba are the Iguana, known as the green iguana, or locally as Yuwana. The Yuwana are a mostly herbivorous species, and can grow up to 2 meters in size, including the tail, making them one of the largest in the iguana family. As you will see, despite their name, as they reach adulthood, the iguanas can take on a grey or blue tone instead of the bright green displayed by the young ones. In Aruba – as in the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the most usual color



varies from green to lavender, black and sometimes a reddish brown.

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

Turnip-tailed gecko

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

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

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

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

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



Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4-5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

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

Blue Cododo

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

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

by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

Striped anole

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

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

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

Images: Some images are from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.



PSA from the Aruba Conservation Foundation: How to behave when you see a “lora”

(Oranjestad)— The conservation of the Yellow-Shouldered Amazon, also known as the ‘Lora,’ relies on how we act as humans. We’ve seen many hikers who’ve encountered the ‘Lora’ in our protected nature areas and we can certainly imagine the pride and joy it brings to any Aruban. However, not everyone may know how to behave when encountering these clever and social birds. This guide is here to explain the behaviors that will most effectively help us in our efforts to conserve the ‘Lora.’ Please, don’t just read but also follow these guidelines so we can ensure the survival of these birds for future generations.



No interfering, please

Please refrain from interfering with the “Lora”. The Lora is a highly intelligent and social animal, perhaps slightly too friendly

because they have gotten used to the rangers as they prepared for their re-introduction. However, it is our collective responsibility to help them adapt to the wild once again. Please play your part by not inter-

fering (calling, provoking etc.) with the Lora. Simply enjoy their beauty from a safe distance.

Be respectful and keep cats and dogs away

Pets and strays such as

cats and dogs are prone to attacking other animals, especially birds, as part of their natural instincts. Please make sure your pets are kept inside of your yard or are kept on a leash when going out for a walk.

Do not feed them food or water

You may think that giving the any food or water is doing a good deed, but it actually does not contribute to them developing survival skills in the wild. By interfering with the survival instincts of wild animals, we are doing the opposite of helping. Therefore, please do not attempt to give the Loras food or water.

Capturing a Lora is against the law!

The biggest threat to the Lora before their extinction in 1947 was caused by human activities including poaching and killing of the Lora. Let’s work collectively to prevent this from happening again. So when you see the Lora, enjoy their beauty from a distance and admire them as they flourish in the wild. □

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



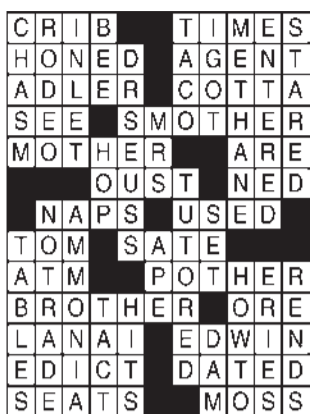
social culture of the town came to be. If you are interested in history and want to learn more about Aruba, then Fort Zoutman should definitely be included into your itinerary.

The museum is open Monday to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm. □

Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog.

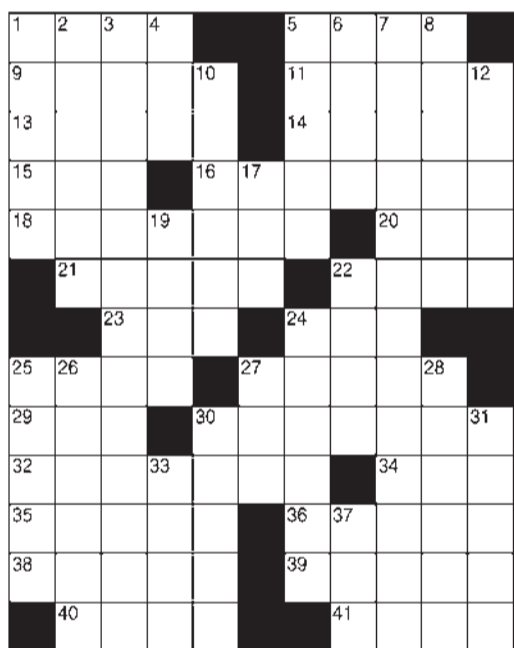
CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**



- ACROSS**
- 35 Sparkly crown
 - 1 Freeway exit
 - 5 May honorees
 - 9 Love affair
 - 11 Wed in haste
 - 13 Plateau's kin
 - 14 Meyers and Rogen
 - 15 Fire proof
 - 16 Walkers' straps
 - 18 Vacillates
 - 20 Geologic period
 - 21 Unmanned flier
 - 22 Deuce topper
 - 23 Unconscious
 - 24 Egg yung
 - 25 Grass clump
 - 27 Gang territories
 - 29 Band blaster
 - 30 Dickens boy
 - 32 Grabbed with a toothpick
 - 34 Med. coverage group

- DOWN**
- 8 Bubble shape
 - 1 Moroccan city
 - 2 Tickled
 - 3 Button material
 - 4 Deposit
 - 5 Plateaus' kin
 - 6 Bullfight cries
 - 7 Herb with an oregano-like scent
 - 10 Show mercy
 - 12 School paper
 - 17 Before, in poems
 - 19 Promote action
 - 22 Thatcher, for one
 - 24 Supplier of money
 - 25 Critical asset
 - 26 Strike caller
 - 27 Bind
 - 28 Smile coyly
 - 30 Market action
 - 31 Truck part
 - 33 Son of Hera
 - 37 Procured



5-12

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.

5-12

CRYPTOQUOTE

Q B K G E F B E W W U D R Y F I L

W C L G V B V U D O L H K V U B T R C

D M V L B B G F B P D D F I D D J .

— I K Y Y H B V V L Q W D G

Cryptoquote: IF YOU THINK YOU ARE TOO SMALL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, YOU HAVEN'T SPENT THE NIGHT WITH A MOSQUITO.

— AFRICAN PROVERB

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

- 20 MON** MARELLA DISCOVERY 2
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 20:00 | Berth: C
- 21 TUE** CARNIVAL VISTA
Arrival: 13:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: C
OASIS OF THE SEAS
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: I
- 22 WED** CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: B
SERENADE OF THE SEAS
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: C
- 28 TUE** CARNIVAL HORIZON
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

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

Difficulty: ★★★★★

4/25

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★★★

4/24

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Chinese EVs, flying cars take centre stage at world's biggest auto show

(AFP)—Beijing, China
Thousands squeezed into the world's biggest car show Friday, snapping selfies beside Chinese electric vehicles as automakers showcased AI, humanoid robots and flying-car ambitions in a cut-throat market.

Rows of influencers posed in front of gleaming models at the capital's cavernous international exhibition centre, darting to suitcases stuffed with outfit changes, while animated CEOs worked the crowds in front of massive LED screens. Legacy overseas brands such as Volkswagen, Toyota and BMW once dominated in China, but have lost market share in past years to domestic firms that beat them to the electric vehicle revolution and undercut them on price. Chinese manufacturers including BYD, Xiaomi and XPeng are now also at the forefront of integrating AI software and autonomous driving technology into their EVs.

The Auto China exhibition, hosted at two side-by-side venues, spans 380,000 square metres (four million square feet), according to organisers -- more than 50 football pitches. More than 1,400 vehicles from hundreds of Chinese and foreign companies are on display from Friday, when the show opened to industry professionals and the media, and later to the public from April 28 until May 3. While traditional leading brands like Germany's BMW and Mercedes held sweeping areas of the vast halls, most of the event's mega stages were dominated by Chinese brands including BYD and battery giant CATL.

Robots, flying cars

At the sprawling expo, crowds cheered as XPeng chief executive He Xiaopeng unveiled the company's new GX, a six-seat



People inspect the front trunk of BYD's Tang EV at the Beijing Auto Show in Beijing on April 24, 2026.

electric SUV. The imposing 5.2-metre vehicle incorporates AI technology and is aimed at breaking into the luxury market, He said. It would soon be followed by humanoid robots this year, He promised, and eventually by flying cars, which XPeng hopes to mass-produce. Foreign automakers are increasingly collaborating with Chinese firms to stay competitive. BMW has partnered with CATL, while Audi is using Huawei's driving assistance systems and Volkswagen is co-developing EVs with

Guangzhou-based XPeng. XPeng President Brian Gu said companies were "leveraging their respective strength to collaborate with China" a trend he said would continue. Gu has his eyes set on export markets including the Gulf and Europe, where he anticipates growth to accelerate. "In the last year, we started local production, and this year we are going to launch even more new products for the European market" which he said was responsible for half of XPeng's global sales in 2025.

Asked by AFP how Trump's tariffs were affecting XPeng, he said only that the US market remained an important one. □

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OTHER

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic 588 0539

EMERGENCY

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

TAXI SERVICES

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

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Against Domestic Violence(FCVR)
Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433
Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

'Clearly me': AI drama accused of stealing faces

(AFP)—Hong Kong, China

Christine Li is a model and influencer, but not an actor, so when she saw herself playing a cruel character in a Chinese microdrama she felt bewildered, then angry and afraid.

The 26-year-old is one of two people who told AFP their likenesses were cast without consent in the AI-generated show "The Peach Blossom Hairpin", which ran on Hongguo, a major microdrama app owned by Tiktok parent company ByteDance.

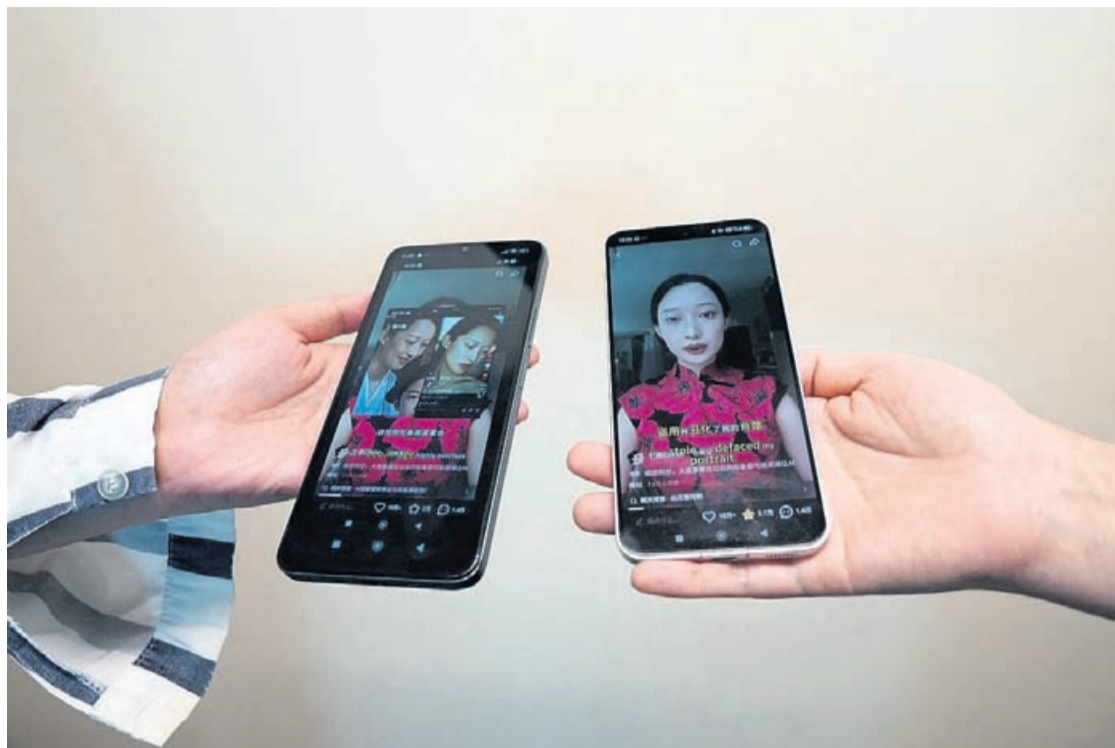
Li plans to sue the drama makers and the platform, highlighting new legal and regulatory grey areas created by artificial intelligence.

"I was genuinely shocked. It was clearly me," said Li, who lives in Hangzhou in eastern China.

"It was so obvious that they used a specific set of photos I took two years ago" and had posted on social media, she said.

Microdramas are ultra-short, online soap operas hugely popular in China and elsewhere.

When Li's fans alerted her to the series, she was horrified to find her digital twin shown slapping women and mistreating animals.



This photo illustration taken in Hong Kong on April 16, 2026 shows phones displaying screenshots of a video from Chinese model and influencer Christine Li accusing an AI microdrama of stealing her likeness without consent.

"I also felt a deep fear. I kept wondering what kind of person would do something like this," Li said.

Hongguo hosts thousands of free, bite-sized shows both live-action and AI-generated whose episodes are two or three minutes long.

As of October, the platform had around 245 million monthly active users, according to data cited by Wenwen Han, president of the Short Drama Alliance.

A Hongguo statement in early April said it had taken the series down because

the producers had violated platform rules and contractual obligations.

'Sleazy' antagonist

AI's ability to mimic real people has sparked global concern for actors' jobs, and over such deepfakes being used for scams and propaganda.

Li and a man who says he was portrayed as her AI husband in the series, which became a hit last month on Hongguo, spoke out online about their separate unwelcome discoveries.

But even as their stories

sparked a public outcry about AI ethics, AFP saw that "The Peach Blossom Hairpin" kept running for days before its removal, with the disputed characters quietly replaced.

The man, a stylist specialised in traditional Chinese clothing and make-up, had posted photos of himself in costume on the Instagram-like Xiaohongshu app.

Like Li, he was upset by the "ugly" portrayal of his likeness as a "sleazy" antagonist in the show.

"Will it have an impact on me, on my job, on my fu-

ture work opportunities?" said the man, who asked to use the pseudonym Baicai.

To keep audiences hooked, microdramas are often full of shocking, larger-than-life moments.

Li and Baicai both showed AFP their original photos and the characters in "The Peach Blossom Hairpin", which bore a strong resemblance.

Legal risk

For low-budget AI microdramas, Chinese regulations say platforms must be the primary checkpoint for potentially dodgy content.

If they do not carry out mandatory content reviews, the videos will be forcibly taken down, according to the National Radio and Television Administration.

If the platforms were aware of any infringement but failed to act on it, parties affected can alert China's cyberspace authorities which can impose administrative penalties, according to Zhao Zhanling, a partner at Beijing Javy Law Firm.

Hongguo said in a second statement this month it would continue to strengthen how it reviews content and how it authorises creators, among other steps. □

LVMH's Arnault says to talk of retirement in '7-8 years'

(AFP)—Paris, France

Bernard Arnault, chief executive of the world's biggest luxury conglomerate LVMH, brushed off speculation of his retirement on Thursday, telling shareholders that "we'll talk about all this again in seven to eight years".

The 77-year-old founder of the French group whose brands include Louis Vuitton and Tiffany's has set up a family dynasty where his five children all have key roles.

Since founding the group

in 1989, Arnault has spent billions acquiring fashion,



LVMH chairman and CEO Bernard Arnault looks at his watch as he delivers a speech during the annual general meeting of the world's leading luxury group LVMH at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris on April 23, 2026.

watch and jewellery houses, but he has not publicly identified a successor.

"Last year you renewed your confidence in me with 99 percent of the vote for the next 10 years," he told investors gathered for the company's annual shareholder meeting.

"So, if you don't mind, we'll talk about this again in seven or eight years," Arnault said, inviting all his five children to address the AGM for the first time.

"So, you have all seen my children. Do they seem

very ambitious?" Arnault jokingly told the gathering.

"I don't know. It's up to you to tell me," he said.

Arnault and his family recently increased their stakes in LVMH to 50.01 percent, with 65.94 percent of the voting rights, securing control over the company.

"I am very confident for our group's evolution over the next five years. That's why when the shares go down a bit, as has been the case recently, I buy them," he said. □

'Raw and honest': India climbers face obstacles in race to the top

(AFP)—Pune, India

Blink and you might miss Indian speed climber Deepu Mallesh scaling a wall five buses high in five seconds.

India, a country obsessed with cricket, has seen a surge in popularity in climbing but those who want to compete internationally have had to crowdfund and there is little government recognition or help.

Some have had to quit the sport they love.

"What I like most about climbing is how raw and honest it is," said 28-year-old Mallesh, who has climbed for his country and dreams of being the first Indian climber to qualify for the Olympics.

"It's just you, the wall and the clock."

Mallesh works part-time as a climbing instructor while pursuing his goal of reaching the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

"I have to somehow make some money. That is the only way for me to survive



This photograph taken on March 28, 2026 shows a climber scaling a rock wall during a rock climbing festival at a sandstone cliffs site in Karnataka's Badami town.

in this sport," he said.

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) estimates there are tens of thousands of people who sport-climb regularly, with more than a dozen climbing gyms opening in the last decade.

But the rise in those picking it up as a professional career is slow -- high costs and scarce sponsorship deals

hold back many.

There are about 3,500 climbers who compete across various levels in the country and among them, about 60 participate internationally annually.

Mallesh didn't win at the world championship in China this month, but at 5.39 seconds he set a national record in men's speed

climbing.

He also qualified for the Asian Games in Japan in September-October.

Shoes, chalk powder

Mallesh only manages to compete with support from the IMF.

Previously he raised the cash to compete via

crowdfunding. Two years ago he collected about one million rupees (\$10,500) to attend six international competitions.

"I have had to miss competitions because I could not gather the requisite amount," he said.

"If I get proper funding and proper support I might see my career through till the Olympics. Otherwise I will have to find something else to do."

Since 2002, India have won nearly 70 medals in international climbing competitions, including in the Asian youth championships.

Among them is Joga Purty, who won silver in 2024.

Purty, 19, said she was lucky because she was sponsored by the Tata conglomerate.

"If I didn't have this I also would be one of those who quit the sport," she said.

A decent pair of shoes and a harness cost about 10,000 rupees (\$106) each. □

Images of dead Maradona rock trial of medical team

(AFP)—San Isidro, Argentina

Shock images of Argentine football icon Diego Maradona lying dead in bed, his stomach grotesquely swollen, rocked the negligence trial of his medical team on Thursday.

Maradona, regarded as one of the greatest football players of all times, died in November 2020 at age 60, while recovering at home from surgery for a brain clot.

The larger-than-life footballer died of heart failure and acute pulmonary edema a condition where fluid accumulates in the lungs two weeks after going under the knife.

The emergency room doctor, Juan Carlos Pinto, who arrived by ambulance at

his home, on Thursday testified about the condition in which he found the star after his death.

"He had a lot of edema, his face was very swollen, there was edema on his limbs, and a globular abdomen, like a balloon."

The court was shown a 17-minute video shot by forensic police of Maradona on his deathbed, wearing a pair of football shorts and a black t-shirt pulled up to reveal a cavernous stomach.

Pinto said the swelling was caused by a large quantity of both fat and ascites, an abnormal buildup of fluid in the abdominal cavity often linked to cirrhosis of the liver.

Maradona's daughter Gianinna, who was in court

for the hearing, wept as Pinto spoke and buried her head in her hands as the video was shown.

Seven medical workers, including a neurosurgeon, a psychiatrist and a nurse, face prison terms of between eight and 25 years if convicted of homicide with possible intent -- pursuing a course of action despite knowing it could lead to death -- over the conditions of Maradona's care in his final days.

Both Pinto and a police officer testified about the lack of medical equipment in the rented residence where Maradona was recuperating.

"There was no defibrillator, no oxygen, nothing. In the room, there was nothing to suggest that the patient was in hospital at home,"

Pinto said.

The accused deny responsibility for Maradona's death, saying the star of the 1986 World Cup, who battled cocaine and alcohol addictions, succumbed to natural causes.

The first trial over his death was annulled last year fol-

lowing revelations that one of the judges took part in a clandestine documentary about the case.

A second trial, conducted by a new panel of judges, began last week.

It is expected to last at least three months. □



Boys sit in front of a mural depicting the late football star Diego Maradona in his hometown neighborhood Villa Fiorito, in Buenos Aires province, Argentina, on April 9, 2026.

Defending champion Alcaraz to miss French Open with wrist injury

(AFP) - Madrid, Spain

Reigning two-time French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz said on Friday he will not play at this year's tournament as he recovers from a wrist injury.

The Spaniard said the call to shut down his clay season was made after he received the results of tests on his right wrist, also ruling him out of the Italian Open.

"We have decided that the most prudent thing to do is to be cautious and not participate in Rome or Roland Garros," Alcaraz said on social media.

"This is a difficult time for me, but I'm sure we will come out of it stronger," Alcaraz added, saying that he and his team would monitor his recovery before deciding when and where he would return.

Alcaraz sustained the injury during the first round of the Barcelona Open last week, where he beat Otto Virtanen but subsequently pulled out of the tourna-



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz looks at his racket as he plays against Italy's Jannik Sinner during their men's singles final match on day 15 of the French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris on June 8, 2025.

ment.

The 22-year-old announced his withdrawal from the Madrid Masters on April 17, increasing concerns over whether he would be able to appear at the French Open.

Alcaraz became the youngest man to complete

the career Grand Slam in January with his triumph at the Australian Open. He holds a 22-3 record this season and also won a title in Doha.

Ranked second in the world, Alcaraz lost top spot following his defeat by Jannik Sinner in the Monte Carlo Masters final on April 12.

The seven-time Grand Slam winner triumphed at Roland Garros in 2024 and 2025. He saved three championship points against Sinner last year in the longest French Open final in history.

The Italian, who has never won the French Open, may be able to capitalise on Alcaraz's absence. This year's

tournament runs from May 24 to June 7.

"It's sad news for all of us, me being a competitor you want to play against the best players in the world and he's definitely the best player on this surface," said Sinner, after winning a second round match at the Madrid Open on Friday.

"Being that young like he is and like I am, we need to look at our bodies first before worse things (happen)."

- 'Great battles' -

Sinner said he hoped Alcaraz would be back playing by the time the year's third Grand Slam, at Wimbledon, arrives.

"It is very sad news, I was not expecting it but he and his team know very well (what they are doing)," continued the 24-year-old.

"Hopefully he can be back for Wimbledon and we all hope for great battles in the future." □

Polish sports bodies call for Olympic chief to quit in crypto scandal

(AFP) - Warsaw, Poland

A majority of Poland's sports federations called for the resignation of the head of the country's National Olympic Committee (PKOl) on Friday, citing his reported ties to a cryptocurrency platform at the centre of a national scandal.

Eight days ago, Polish authorities launched an in-

vestigation into Zondacrypto -- a major crypto firm the government claims has ties to the nationalist opposition, organised crime, and Russian intelligence services.

At a meeting called by the Polish sports minister, representatives of 51 national federations announced they had adopted a declaration calling on PKOl

president Radoslaw Piesiewicz to "resign without delay".

They say Piesiewicz is personally responsible for signing a sponsorship agreement with Zondacrypto on behalf of PKOl, under which Olympic medalists at the Milano-Cortina games were meant to be awarded prizes in cryptocurrency.

In their statement presented to the media by four-time Olympic race-walking champion Robert Korzeniowski sports federation representatives voiced their opposition to "the irresponsible and instrumental use of Polish Olympic medalists ... to promote a group from the cryptocurrency sector about which serious legal and reputational questions have been raised".

As the platform eventually

encountered financial difficulties, it is unclear whether payments of crypto-bonuses were made to the medalists.

The Polish government estimates that Zondacrypto's financial issues caused 350 million zlotys (about 83 million euros) in losses, with around 30,000 people falling victim to the company.

Zondacrypto is officially registered in Estonia, but was able to expand operations to Italy, Germany, Cyprus, and Monaco.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk emphasised the company's "sinister origins", citing its ties to "Russian money," financial backing "of the Russian mafia," and the "influence of the Russian (intelligence) services" over the company.

The company's founder,

Sylwester Suszek, mysteriously disappeared in 2022 and has not been heard from since. According to local media, the current CEO of Zondacrypto, Przemyslaw Kral, has fled to Israel, after denouncing "media manipulation" in Poland against his company.

The scandal has also reverberated across Polish politics, as conservative-nationalist President Karol Nawrocki has twice vetoed a bill proposed by the ruling coalition aimed at regulating the cryptocurrency market just as his supporters face accusations of ties to Zondacrypto.

Notably, the company was the main sponsor of the American right-wing CPAC conference held in Rzeszow, in southeastern Poland, during last year's presidential campaign. □



A man walks past the olympic rings ahead of Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Games in Milan on January 27, 2026.