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Hegseth's church brings its Christian nationalism to Washington

Washington, United States Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth invited Christian nationalist pastor Doug Wilson, who opposes a woman's right to vote, to preach at the Defense Department earlier this year.

Six months before, Hegseth attended the first service of a new church set up in Washington by Wilson's small Idaho-based denomination, called the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC).

The network of about 160 congregations around the world, of which Hegseth is a member, holds deeply conservative, patriarchal views about family, society and the role of religion in politics.

Among them: Women should submit to their husbands and America was founded as a Christian nation a concept most scholars reject.

The new congregation, Christ Church Washington, located close to Congress, started a few months after President Donald Trump's second inauguration.

"We knew that there would be people who would be interested in the kind of theological vision and cultural vision that we are putting forward," Joe Rigney, a CREC pastor who has preached there several times, told AFP.



Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth (L) conducts a prayer as US President Donald Trump (R) listens during a dinner with state governors in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on February 21, 2026.

"While our nation was founded as a Christian nation, one that acknowledged that God was over everything, we drifted from that.

"Our effort is to go to DC and to remind anybody who will listen from top to bottom from cabinet secretaries and senators down to baristas and housewives that Jesus is Lord," he said.

- 'Poster boy' -

Hegseth, a former Fox News host who sports a tattoo of the Crusader rallying cry

"Deus Vult" "God wills it" on his bicep, has given Wilson's network and the Christian nationalism it embraces greater visibility.

This ideology, which seeks to fuse American and Christian identities, has been around for decades, but it has gained ground during Trump's administrations.

Hegseth, who has shared videos featuring Wilson and wrote a book titled "American Crusade," has incorporated overtly religious language into his public statements.

"Let every round find its mark against the enemies of righteousness and our great nation," he prayed in a March service at the Pentagon soon after the war with Iran began.

"Pete Hegseth is kind of the poster boy for this militant Christianity and militant patriarchy," said Calvin University history professor Kristin du Mez.

Planting a church in Washington is key to Wilson's goal of converting the American capital from a "Babylon" a city often

used in the Bible to symbolize pride and idolatry into a "New Jerusalem," according to his blogpost.

Long considered a fringe figure even among evangelical Christians among Trump's staunchest backers Wilson has gradually been moving "into the mainstream," said du Mez.

- A Christian nation? -

Most scholars and historians reject the notion that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, pointing to a lack of references to Jesus or Christianity in the Constitution or other founding documents.

That belief is "very much a projection of their own interpretation of Christianity," said Sam Perry, a professor at Baylor University who has followed CREC closely.

Perry and other experts also say that the Constitution's First Amendment, which bars Congress from establishing any state religion and guarantees religious freedom, ensures the separation of church and state. Wilson regularly shares his opinion about politics and current events in his blog posts, debating whether the war in Iran is a "just war" and expressing opposition to the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote. □

Fewer U.S. anti-Semitic incidents in 2025, but violence rose: watchdog

New York, United States Anti-Semitic incidents in the United States were down in 2025 compared to a year earlier, but physical

assaults reached "record high levels," an annual report by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) said Wednesday.

In 2025, 6,274 assaults, acts of harassment, and vandalism were recorded an average of 17 per day compared with 9,354 in 2024 and 8,873 in 2023.

But the ADL, a New York-based anti-Semitism watchdog, voiced concern at a surge in violent incidents.

Last year, two Israeli embassy employees were shot dead in Washington, and a woman died after a firebombing attack at a protest for Israeli hostages in Colorado.

Those were the first deaths linked to anti-Semitic attacks in the United States since 2022, according to

the ADL.

The number of physical assaults rose from 196 to 203, "reaching record high levels," according to the ADL. Among these incidents, 32 involved a lethal weapon, compared with 23 in 2024.

"Our 2025 Audit, which shows it was one of the most violent years for American Jews on record, is a reminder of how dramatically the threat landscape has shifted," said Jonathan Greenblatt, the nonprofit's CEO and director.

The states with the highest number of incidents were New York (1,160), Califor-

nia (817), and New Jersey (687), all of which have sizeable Jewish populations.

The ADL reported a drop in anti-Semitic incidents at US colleges and universities, which it said was due to interventions by campus leaders.

In public schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, the number of incidents was relatively stable at 825, compared with 860 in 2024.

Rallies "featuring extreme anti-Israel rhetoric that crossed the line into anti-Semitism" were down 67 percent overall, the ADL said. □



Jonathan Greenblatt attends the 2026 Time100 Gala at Jazz at Lincoln Center on April 23, 2026 in New York City.

How Illinois is leading the midwest's composting revolution

CHICAGO, IL

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

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

Turning waste into wealth

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



processed and returned to the earth as nutrient-rich compost.

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

A statewide ripple effect

The momentum in Chicago isn't staying within city limits. A landmark piece of state legislation recently went into effect, requiring large-scale event facilities—such as stadiums, conven-

tion centers, and concert halls—to implement comprehensive composting services. This move positions Illinois as a regional leader in the fight against food waste, ensuring that the remnants of a sold-out ballgame or a massive trade show are recycled back into the ecosystem rather than contributing to methane emissions in landfills.

In Springfield and Peoria, local officials are watching Chicago's success closely. Several mid-sized cities in Central Illinois have already begun scouting locations for their own municipal drop-off sites, inspired by the high participation rates and the sheer volume of

waste diverted in the northeast.

The economic "green" seed

Beyond the environmental benefits, the composting boom is sowing seeds for a new sector of the local economy. From specialized hauling companies to industrial-scale composting facilities, "green-collar" jobs are on the rise. These businesses are finding innovative ways to turn a "waste product" into a marketable resource for local farmers and landscapers.

"We're closing the loop," explained Dr. Marcus Thorne, an environmental

scientist at the University of Illinois. "The food grown on Illinois farms comes to the city, the scraps are composted, and that compost goes back to the farms to grow the next harvest. It's the ultimate sustainable circle."

A greener future for the next generation

For many Illinois families, the program has become a teaching tool. At the North Side drop-off point, it's common to see parents explaining the process of decomposition to their children as they empty their weekly bin.

"My kids call it 'feeding the earth,'" said Sarah Jenkins, a mother of two. "It makes them feel like they are doing something real to help the planet. They aren't just reading about climate change in school; they're participating in the solution every Tuesday morning."

As Illinois continues to expand its facilities and outreach, the goal is clear: to make food scrap recovery as common and effortless as recycling a soda can. With over a million pounds already saved, the state is well on its way to a cleaner, greener, and more resilient future. □

KID smART opens state-of-the-art center for arts and education

NEW ORLEANS

The historic Tremé neighborhood, long considered the heartbeat of New Orleans' musical and cultural heritage, added a vibrant new chapter to its legacy today. Under a bright mid-day sun and to the rhythm of a celebratory brass band, the nonprofit organization KID smART officially cut the ribbon on its new Center for Arts and Education.

The 10,000-square-foot facility, located in a beautifully restored mid-century building, represents a \$5.5 million investment in the city's youth. For over 25 years, KID smART has operated as a "nomadic" organization, placing teaching artists in public schools across the city. Today, they



finally have a permanent North Star.

Bridging the gap through creativity

The mission of the new center is clear: to prove that the arts are not an "extra" in education, but a fundamental tool for learning. The facility features three multi-purpose classrooms, a digital media lab, a

community gallery, and a professional development suite for local educators.

"We aren't just teaching kids how to paint or dance," said Elise Gallinot Goldman, Executive Director of KID smART, during the opening ceremony. "We are teaching them how to use those tools to solve math problems, understand history, and pro-

cess their own emotions. This building is a laboratory for the imagination."

A resource for Tremé and beyond

While the center will serve as a hub for student workshops and after-school programming, it is also designed as a community asset. The ground-floor gallery will showcase the work of New Orleans youth alongside professional local artists, creating a literal "pathway to the profession" for aspiring creators. Local residents were invited to tour the facility today, many expressing relief that a neighborhood synonymous with jazz and civil rights history is receiving a modern space dedicated to the next generation of

culture-bearers.

"In New Orleans, our culture is our greatest resource," said Tremé resident and parent Marcus Washington. "To see a professional-grade center like this right in our backyard tells our kids that their creativity has real value. It's not just a hobby; it's a future."

Empowering the educators

One of the most innovative aspects of the new center is its focus on "Arts Integration" training. The facility will host year-round workshops for New Orleans public school teachers, coaching them on how to weave drawing, movement, and theater into standard Common Core subjects. □

'Stigmatized' or 'sustainable'? Vintage sales boost sees fur return

New York, United States

Laura Jacobs thought she'd never wear animal fur, having witnessed years of protests over its use in clothing -- until suddenly she started spotting it all over New York.

Jacobs fished out the long mink her grandmother left her years ago and took it to a Manhattan furrier to give it a second act.

Fur "was stigmatized for so long," Jacobs told AFP, posing before a full-length mirror and assessing a potential crop.

But the return of real fur "fits with everything that's going on with recycling and bringing back vintage," she said.

"I never would have bought a fur coat," Jacobs said, adding that the thought of "killing animals like that" gave her pause.

But "this felt like I was recycling it," she said.

New York is thawing out after a particularly cruel winter that's included debates over fur's revival as influencers push the look and retail sites report a jump in searches for vintage pieces.

Business owners like Larry Cowit -- who inherited and runs his family's Madison Avenue Furs -- are celebrating a sales spike.

"I have girls as young as



Larry Cowit, owner of Madison Avenue Furs shop, selects fur coats for a customer in his store in New York City, on March 10, 2026.

20 years old walking in, coming in from college, and putting on a fox jacket," Cowit told AFP. "We haven't seen that in quite a while."

Noelle Sciacca head of fashion at the high-end resale site The RealReal said "interest in fur has accelerated dramatically," with searches for vintage fur on their website nearly tripling in 2025 from 2024.

The trend is "booming across the board," she told AFP, "but real fur is clearly leading the surge."

Sciacca owes part of the interest to "sustainable,

accessible resale options," which she said "has made consumers feel comfortable embracing fur as both stylish and thoughtful."

- Muddled public opinion -

The global fashion industry's use of fur has been on the outs for decades.

Synthetic, cheaper alternatives have gained traction, and animal rights activists continue to push dropping the real thing.

Demonstrators recently urged Milan Fashion Week to go fully fur-free. New York's Fashion Week fur ban goes into effect in Sep-

tember 2026.

Many major designers have vowed to stop using it, including Prada, Michael Kors and Saint Laurent.

The European Commission meanwhile is reviewing a citizen's initiative that drew millions of signatures urging an EU-wide ban on fur farming. A spokesperson told AFP the commission would communicate in the coming weeks whether it would propose such a prohibition.

Yet the culture's court of public opinion has grown muddled, notably as con-

cerns about fast fashion and petroleum-based materials grow.

"I always imagine all of the faux-fur coats being produced right now melting into a puddle of plastic. The idea of reuse and recycling can include vintage fur," Vogue archivist Laird Borrelli-Persson said in comments recently published by the fashion magazine.

"The question for me is whether wearing vintage fur increases the appetite for lookalikes -- either faux or new fur."

Real fur coats demand consistent upkeep. The skins contain natural oils, and garments not kept in a temperature-controlled environment -- ideally off-season in cold vaults -- can dry out and disintegrate.

"It's biodegradable," said Cowit.

But Ashley Byrne of animal rights group PETA said buying vintage under the banner of sustainability is "well-meaning but misguided."

She told AFP that shoppers who didn't grow up exposed to footage from inside fur farms should "understand that wearing any fur that came from the back of an animal who was tortured and killed is endorsing things that we're sure they do not want to support." □

Anthropic taps SpaceX data center in bid to meet AI demand

Washington, United States AI startup Anthropic announced Wednesday it has agreed to a major computing partnership with Elon Musk's SpaceX, securing access to a vast data center as the Claude

maker scrambles to keep pace with surging demand for its AI services.

Under the deal, Anthropic will use all of the compute capacity at SpaceX's Colossus 1 data center in Memphis, Tennessee a fa-

cility originally built to power Musk's rival AI venture, xAI. The agreement gives Anthropic access to more than 300 megawatts of capacity, backed by over 220,000 Nvidia AI chips, by the end of May.

The company said the additional capacity would directly benefit subscribers to its Claude Pro and Claude Max plans.

Anthropic also announced it was immediately letting users do more with its technology.

The company said it was doubling the amount of Claude Code an AI-powered coding assistant that can write, edit, and debug software eliminating restrictions that had pre-

viously cut access during busy periods, and allowing developers to make more requests to its most powerful AI models.

The SpaceX deal marks a striking partnership between two companies whose leaders have been publicly at odds.

Musk wrote in February that Anthropic "hates Western Civilization" and questioned whether there was a "more hypocritical company than Anthropic." But on Wednesday Musk changed his tone, writing on X that he had spent time with senior Anthropic staff over the past week and was "impressed."

"Everyone I met was highly

competent and cared a great deal about doing the right thing," he wrote.

SpaceX merged with xAI earlier this year in a deal valuing the two companies at \$1.25 trillion. The company is widely expected to pursue an IPO this year that could be among the largest in history.

The Colossus facility has been a source of controversy. xAI installed dozens of natural gas-burning turbines to power the site, claiming no federal permit was required because they were only for temporary use a move that drew persistent protests from civil rights groups who said it worsened air pollution in the Memphis area. □



A view of a 49.5 megawatt three-level data center under construction on April 14, 2026 in Vernon, California.

100 years on Earth: Iconic naturalist Attenborough marks century

London, United Kingdom

David Attenborough, a leading voice on climate change and biodiversity loss whose landmark documentaries transformed popular understanding of the natural world for a global audience, marks his 100th birthday on Friday.

Attenborough's natural history series, such as "Life on Earth", in which he had a famous encounter with mountain gorillas in Rwanda, have brought the most remote corners of the planet into living rooms worldwide.

"He's taken us all to places that we would never otherwise go. That's a huge gift," botanist Sandra Knapp, director of research at London's Natural History Museum, told AFP.

The BBC is leading the celebration of the Briton's centenary with a full week of programming dedicated to his life.

Classic episodes of series including "Planet Earth II" and "Blue Planet II" are being reshown along with others such as "Life in the Freezer" and "Paradise Birds" available on the BBC's iPlayer service.

The centerpiece will be a 90-minute live show on his birthday from London's Royal Albert Hall.

Knapp said Attenborough's programs had "expanded people's horizons" and been an inspiration to



British broadcaster and biologist David Attenborough arrives on court to watch the Men's singles tennis matches on the first day of the 2024 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on July 1, 2024.

many.

Jean-Baptiste Gouyon, professor of science communication at University College London (UCL), said Attenborough had made natural history as popular as football.

Attenborough's programs succeeded in instilling in the public an unparalleled passion and wonder for the natural world, said Gouyon. Attenborough's lifelong passion for the natural world began as child, and he went on to study geology and zoology at university.

Prince William, heir to the UK throne, has described him

as a "national treasure". Attenborough was also a firm favorite of the late Queen Elizabeth II, who knighted him in 1985.

Showing Attenborough's cross-generational appeal, US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish has praised his "deep love and knowledge of our planet", adding: "The animal kingdom brings out the childlike curiosity within us all."

- **Mountain gorillas** -

Attenborough has often reflected on his "luck" in being able to "find and film rare creatures that few outsiders have seen in the

wild".

And he has said he has been able "to gaze on some of the most marvelous spectacles that the wild places of the world have to offer".

In 2006, he added his voice to those raising the alarm on climate change and biodiversity loss.

He declared himself "no longer skeptical" about the issue, having waited for conclusive proof that humanity was changing the climate.

Attenborough's broadcasting career spanning nearly eight decades has been closely associated with the

BBC, which he joined in the early 1950s.

"Life on Earth", released in 1979, has alone been watched by 500 million people worldwide, while dozens of documentaries and associated books have made him a household name.

Recalling the series' highlight, when he unexpectedly found himself up close with a group of mountain gorillas, Attenborough described the experience as "bliss" and "extraordinary". "I was simply transported," he said ahead of his centenary, reliving how the adult female twisted his head and looked straight into his eyes and her two youngsters sat on him as the cameras rolled.

- **'Modern colonialism'** -

Still making documentaries well into his nineties, he used his 2025 film "Ocean" to condemn the industrial fishing methods of wealthy nations, which he called "modern colonialism at sea".

Despite his fame, the broadcaster whose brother was the late actor and film director Richard Attenborough has always refused to be seen as a celebrity.

Gouyon said Attenborough always made sure to direct the viewer's gaze back to the subject matter. □

Italian PM slams AI-generated images of herself

Rome, Italy

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has slammed fake images of herself generated by artificial intelligence, calling deepfakes a "dangerous tool" that can target and harm anyone.

The far-right leader posted on her social media accounts Tuesday one of the fake AI-generated photos she said had been circulating in recent days, showing the premier in scanty bedclothes.

"I have to admit that whoever created them, at least in the case attached, has actually made me look a

lot better," wrote Meloni in her post.

"Deepfakes are a dangerous tool, because they can deceive, manipulate and target anyone. I can defend myself. Many others cannot," she said.

"Check before you believe, and believe before you share. Because today it's happening to me; tomorrow it could happen to anyone."

In her post, Meloni included a reply from a social media user who appeared to have been taken in by the photo, who wrote that the prime minister's ap-

pearance in such attire was "shameful and unworthy of the institutional role she holds."

Doctored sexualised images of the prime minister have surfaced before, particularly last year on a pornographic website that included altered images of high-profile women.

In response, the government passed a law that criminalised deepfakes that caused "unjust harm" to the person depicted.

In 2024, Meloni sued two men for 100,000 euros who produced fake videos of the premier which they then posted on a US por-

nographic website.

Female politicians around the world have increasingly become victims of such

AI-generated deepfake pornography or sexualised images. □



Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni arrives to attend the 8th European Political Community (EPC) summit in Yerevan on May 4, 2026.

Sherlock Holmes fans recreate fateful duel at Swiss falls

Meiringen, Switzerland

Immaculately dressed in Victorian costume, Sherlock Holmes devotees gathered at the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland to recreate the intrepid detective's fateful duel with his nemesis Professor Moriarty, 135 years on.

Captivated by British writer Arthur Conan Doyle's evocative world of villains, sleuths, fog, gas lamps and tweed, around 60 members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London made the pilgrimage to the hallowed destination.

The spectacular scene is where Holmes and Moriarty clashed on a precarious high ledge, apparently falling to their deaths on May 4, 1891.

The group's three-day journey through Holmes-related sites in Switzerland wound up at Meiringen in the Bernese Oberland, for a funicular ride on Sunday up to the thundering Reichenbach Falls, which tumble 120 metres (400 feet) into a pool below.

Hats of all varieties, twirled moustaches, lavish dresses and walking canes abounded, as each came dressed as an individual character from the stories, including the missing rugby player, the king of Bohemia, and Mrs Hudson, Holmes's landlady at 221B Baker Street, London.

"It does transform you, just wearing the clothes, and



British lawyer Peter Horrocks (R) dressed as crime lord Professor Moriarty and British motoring author Philip Porter dressed as Sherlock Holmes, reenact their famous duel during a visit by members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London to the Reichenbach Falls near Meiringen on May 3, 2026.

hunching a bit," said British lawyer Peter Horrocks, top-hatted and clad in black as the sinister crime lord Moriarty.

"This is so atmospheric," he said amid the roar and spray, insisting it "absolutely" brings Sherlockians closer to the story.

Doyle killed off his beloved detective at this spot in his 1893 short story "The Adventure of the Final Problem".

But such was the public outcry, Doyle was forced to resurrect him and the affection for Holmes endures to this day.

- 'Tears in my eyes' -

With a magnifying glass in one hand and a pipe in the other, motoring author Philip Porter played Holmes. He hailed the "unique appeal" of Doyle's stories, "full of Victorian atmosphere, the triumph of good over evil, and some wonderful characters" to draw in devotees.

"We have very little in common in real life, but we are brought together by the Sherlock Holmes canon," he told AFP.

Recreating the duel, Holmes and Moriarty grappled, finally holding the stance depicted in Sidney Paget's

1893 illustration as the pair seemingly tumbled.

Doctor Watson then walked by, his shouts of "Holmes!" echoing off the rocks, before discovering the letter the detective left for him to find and realising his dear friend had plummeted to his doom.

"When Watson found the note, frankly I had tears in my eyes. I found that really moving," said Helene Vrot, from near Paris, who dressed in the 1895 "very short-lived fashion for huge sleeves".

"It's an opportunity to make memories with peo-

ple who have the same kind of mind," she told AFP of the trip.

For JeanMarie Zubia, from the US state of Washington, "it's a total immersion" into the Victorian era.

Her character was Laura Lyons from "The Hound of the Baskervilles", and she revelled in the collective for the detective.

"It's amazing to be surrounded by all the other Sherlockians here, because they get to talk non-stop about what I'm so passionate about... the minutiae that goes into every single story," she said.

- 'My dream place' -

One sweat-soaked trail runner did a double-take as he dashed straight into the costumed throng, while Chinese first-time visitor Kitty making her own solo anniversary pilgrimage could not believe her eyes.

Wearing a Holmes-style deerstalker hat, the 24-year-old Sherlock fanatic suddenly walked right into beloved characters come to life.

"Wow! It's very lucky of me to meet Mr Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson and Professor Moriarty and Colonel Moran!" the enthralled Manchester University robotics student said.

"This is my dream place. It's beautiful just like Watson wrote in his diary." □

Biogas helps cut bills, deforestation in east DR Congo



Victoire Materanya (L), co-founder of Umoja, watches as a worker mixes waste from a duck enclosure to put in the digester in order to produce clean energy in Goma on April 20, 2026.

Goma, DR Congo

Julienne Mukelenge no longer worries about toxic fumes or power cuts when cooking at her home in Goma, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, after switching to biogas, a renewable energy source that is cheaper and locally produced.

"Electricity is expensive, but with biogas it's very economical," she said, standing in her kitchen, where blue flames licked the sides of a bubbling pot of that night's supper.

Most of the city's nearly one million people cannot afford to use electricity and mostly depend on charcoal, called makala, for cooking and heating.

But the cost of a bag of charcoal has shot up after Goma, a strategic regional capital in the east, fell to the M23 armed group in January last year after fierce fighting

with government forces.

The Rwanda-backed M23 was long dormant, but took up arms again in late 2021, capturing swathes of eastern DRC and sparking a mass displacement of people. After seizing control of Goma, the M23 banned logging in Virunga National Park near the city on the grounds it helped fund pro-Kinshasa militias, leading to the rise in the price of charcoal.

"Before, I used to buy one bag of charcoal for a month," said mother of two Romaine Kanyere.

But with "the rise in the price of a sack of charcoal, gas is less expensive here", she added. A six-kilogram (13-pound) cylinder of biogas, costing \$8, covers the needs of a household of three to five people for nearly two weeks, compared to \$30 a month for charcoal. □

Beautiful areas around Aruba

(Oranjestad)—In Aruba, there are tons of activities that to enjoy during your visit, but sometimes you just want to slow down and enjoy the view. Here are some beautiful areas on the island that will have you in awe.

The hidden Natural Bridge

Here in Aruba we have three natural bridges and many see this one on thinking that it's the world famous one but it's not. The why



is easy, it's way too dangerous to go down the cliff to reach this beauty and no tour companies will do that. Some people refuse to go down due fear of height. To reach this beauty you must go to San Nicolas and drive up the hill till The Point Lighthouse, park your car and walk until you reach the east point coast and go left along the coastline and good luck going down the cliff.

Surfside Beach

This beach was very famous when we were kids and many locals love to swim at this beach. After some years the locals shifted to the more north-west beaches like Eagle, Boca Catalina and Arashi but after the government renovated the whole area it got a new facelift and its back as a family beach



and weekends are just amazing at this area.

Natural Bridge at Blackstone Beach

As mentioned, there are three nat-

ural bridges and this one is in the Arikok National Park. The other two Bridges you can visit by car but for this one you must have a 4x4 jeep or you will get stuck at the Andicuri Beach.

Another treasure of Aruba's beaches: Sea Glass!



(Oranjestad)—It is hard to imagine this happening today, but years ago people dumped all kinds of refuse straight into the ocean, including old cars, and their household garbage, which of course included lots of glass.

Over the next 30 years the pounding waves cleaned the beach, by breaking down everything but glass and pottery. The pounding waves washed the trash up and down, back and forth. Tons of polished, broken glass pieces were created by the pounding surf. These smoothed, colored glass particles then settled along the sea shore in millions, and that is why you can

find these beautiful and colorful pieces on the north shore beaches of Aruba.

Especially on the strip on white sand between the famous Natural Bridge" and the huge red anchor close to "Grapefield" beach you will be able to find your own pieces of sea glass. The sea glass that was created is the product of a very long and interesting process.

It can take anywhere from 10 to 30 years to make sea glass.

The name for any piece of glass that finds its way to the ocean and tumbles around in the water long enough is "Sea glass.

The colorful pieces of glass are being used for decoration, handcrafts and jewelry!

Once glass makes its way into the ocean, the glass is broken up into shards and is tumbled around in the water, where sand and other rocks act like sandpaper to smooth out its rough edges.

Sometimes as the sea glass is passed through fire, it becomes fire glass, the rarest of sea glass with certain inclusions, just like precious gems.

For years, the water beat against the different kinds of trash being dumped.

Glass, household appliances and even motor parts were discarded on the beach. The waves and weather conditions wore down the overwhelming amount of garbage in the water, creating millions of beautiful smooth rocks.

It's hard to believe the short-sighted mistakes we were making that could have potentially ruined these beautiful beaches. But thanks to natural processes, the ocean transformed the trash into the sea glass.

Each colored gem on the beach has its own story.

The ruby red glass stones are typically from old car tail-lights.

Then, the sapphire rocks are the remnants of broken apothecary bottles. The most common and the easiest to find are the brown, green and clear glass.

If you like to see the sea glass for yourself, and be in awe of the power of nature, rent a car or jeep and go explore our deserted beaches on the north side of the island. Make it a fun family day!

Even if we didn't mean to pollute the Beaches how we did, it is inspiring to see just how the earth can correct our mistakes.

Funny, how trash can change into treasures!

Everybody knows that you are not allowed to take local shells home, but the people working at the airport have no problem you taking sea glass home. A few of those pieces make great souvenirs. You can place them in a wine glass or large bottle for decoration and every time you look at it a smile will light up your face thinking back of your unforgettable Aruba vacation!



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.



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.

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.

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 re-

mains 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 an 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 Caquetio 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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Birds of Aruba: Soaring through the blue skies

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's nature is very diverse and is home to several beautiful and majestic wildlife. Among these is the bright Trupial, whose angelic voice is always heard with the rising sun; the cuddly parakeet, always in company of another, and the majestic Warawara, a mighty bird that can be seen soaring in the clear blue skies.



Trupial

Icterus icterus, or known locally as the Venezuelan or Orange Troupial, is a striking songbird whose bright orange feathers can be spotted from a far distance. Known to be the first bird to sing at the first sign of sunrise, this beloved songbird likes to wake up with a tune. But don't let their angelic songs fool you; the Trupial can be a bit aggressive towards any threat, protective over their nesting spots—nesting spots

they most likely stole from other birds. Trupials can be seen regularly, often in trees or on top of a cactus.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Prikichi (parakeet)

The Brown-throated Prikichi (*Aratinga pertinax*) became the national bird of Aruba back in 2015, at the request of Aruba Birdlife Conservation. The bright green, adorable parakeet usually flies in flock of 30

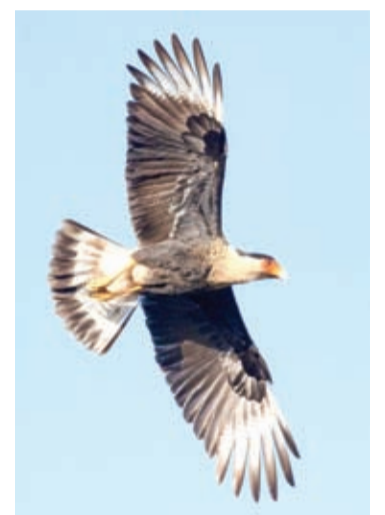
or more, but its population has been declining since the 2010s. Prikichis are a shier breed than the trupial, often flying away at the sign of any threat. They use termite nests for breeding spots and feed mostly on seeds from the Kwih tree, Divi Divi tree and fruits.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Warawara

The Warawara or Caracara is one of the biggest birds

found in the Aruban mondi. At a height of 41 to 60 cm, their wingspan can measure up to 125 cm. Known as the "garbage man", this bird of prey mostly feeds on dead animals. Its coat is dark brown, with a cream-colored neck, orange face, thick beak and long legs. The Warawara prefers to build its nest in the middle of tall cacti and produces a rattling, screaming sound, throwing its head back onto its back while calling.



While these birds are a beautiful sight to behold, it is very important to keep your distance and respect their habitats. This is how we protect our wildlife. By admiring the beauty of Aruba in a safe and respectful manner, we can do our part in protecting our sacred nature.

Photo Credit: Aruba Birdlife Conservation



Fun facts about the "transhi" hedges!



(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.

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

Cas di Torto

Cas di torto (also called cas di lodo or cas di bara) is a traditional building technique from Aruba. It refers to a type of houses made of mud with rounded corners. These houses were usually found around the plantations. The few structures that still exist are the oldest structures that are left standing in the country.

The technique probably came over from the Venezuelan Paraguaná Peninsula in the 18th century. Existing houses date back 150 years. Until 1925 many houses on Aruba were built using this technique, afterwards it fell into disuse. In 2005 there were 62 cas di torto houses left, of which only four were in good condition.

The skeleton of the houses is made up of round

wooden poles placed with distances of 1.5 feet between them. Branches are interwoven between them, completing the structural support. On this basis, loam is applied, mixed with sand, water and paragrass. This is then coated with aloe vera juice, which gives the white color and helps to protect against the weather.

On top of the poles pieces of wood are fitted that serve as the base for the roof beams. Until 1815 the roofing usually consisted of corn (maize) stems, afterwards the nuclei of columnar cacti were used. The floor is made of loam, mixed with cement or cow dung.

The houses were usually divided into a kitchen, a living room, a porch and a bedroom. In the kitchen would



be a wooden or metal barrel for storing water that was collected in small rain ponds. Around this barrel a

thick loam wall would be erected. Often large families would live in these houses; people would sleep on

mats on the floor. If you visit the Arikok National Park you will be able to see a very nice cas di torto.

Food culture in Aruba

(Oranjestad) – Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

Breakfast

Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick “to-go” breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie),



arepas and empanadas early in the morning.

Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi bonch'i rabo (red kidney

bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time

Dinner time can vary significantly from household to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening “meal” can typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

(Religious) Holidays

Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (fruit cake), drigidek (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

Snacks and tasty delights

Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty de-

lights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, baskets, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun.

*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao

*Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)

*Saco: Saco literally means “bag”. Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.

Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba

Get to know the history of the gold industry on Aruba

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

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

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

When the colonial governor in Curacao, Governor Cantz'laar, heard about the news, he sent his adju-



tant, Capitan van Raders, to start harvesting gold. This was in July 1824. In August of that same year, the governor followed suit to the island, accompanied by high-ranking military officials. When citizens started swarming the area in search for gold, The Netherlands sent more troops to safe guard the gold.

Prominent places where gold was found was in Daimari, Wacobana, Arikok, Rooi Fluit, Hadicouradi and later West punt, where gold ore was found. Because of a lack in advanced technology and materials to harvest the gold, the process took a more primitive approach: Clay rocks containing traces of gold were left to dry in the sun. Then, workers would start chipping the clay away on a large canvas to catch the gold particles that were left behind after the wind blew away the dust from the clay.

In the harvest period of 1824-1825, there was a total of 71,000 kilos collected

through commissioned harvesting. Locals themselves reportedly found about 25 pounds worth of gold in the nearby rivers. The following years after that first big harvest, commission work fell off, and in 1828, the director of the goldmines, Johan Gravenhorst, decided to halt harvesting.

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

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

Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. reportedly operated until 1899, and right after the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. was established, coincidentally also based in London. This time, the gold mill in Balashi was built, and more mines were dug up all around the island. The gold ores that were found were transported via track engine, locally called the “trekinchi”. Despite being more equipped for the job, the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. could not produce any real profit, and so the concession was terminated just eight years later, in 1908.

A local firm, the “Aruba Goud Maatschappij” (Aruba Gold Company)



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

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

According to an issue in Aruba Esso News paper in 1953, Henny Eman wanted to start up digging again, this time using independent miners. He argued that there was proof of more

gold to be discovered. Plus, hiring independent miners would boost the island's employment rate.

When it was proven that gold was in fact still present, the executive board on the island promised to fund the project only if the gold dug up proved to be valuable. However, nothing else was reported after this, so it could be concluded that there was no real profitable market on the island anymore.

The ruins of the Bushiribana and Balashi Gold Mills are still standing, and open for the public to visit. These structures offer a glance into the past, to a time where Aruba experienced one of its first wave of industrialization. Today, these structures are persevered as historical monuments.

Source:

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



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Wyoming city

1 Rams' mates

5 Base-eight system

10 Valleys

12 Pack animal

13 Billing leeway

15 Paris pal

16 Tissue layer

17 Program-ming error

18 Soprano Scotto

20 Glass section

21 Museum piece

22 Early carmaker

23 Bakery workers

25 Le Pew of cartoons

28 Track contests

31 Arkin of "Argo"

32 Peripherals

34 Mule of old song

35 Utmost

36 Mauna —

37 Compact items

40 Fancy tie

41 Ocean's motions

42 Oozes



DOWN

1 Painter

Degas

2 Appliance for buns

3 Pal of George

and Jerry

4 Brief time

5 Follow, as orders

6 Nasty dog

7 Of the clan

8 In the area

9 Ski resort buildings

11 Bacteria-ridden

14 Diner souvenirs

19 UFO flyer

20 Did some modeling

24 Cardinal's symbol

25 Successfully imitate

26 Go by

27 Royal home

29 Sword-making city

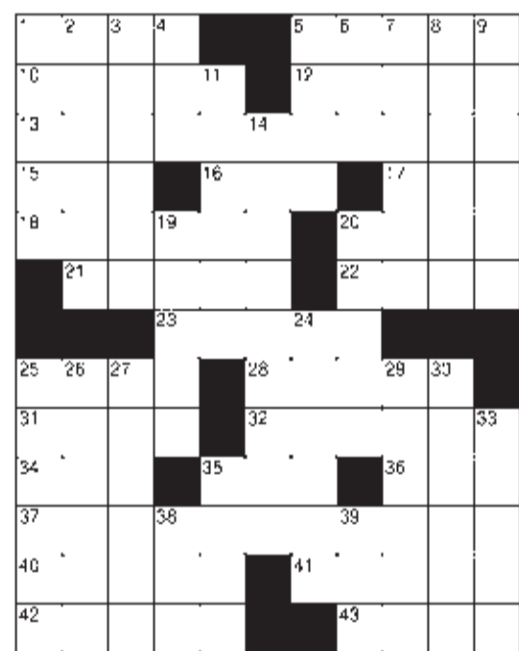
30 Was a noisy sleeper

33 Pert

35 Brooklyn team

38 Member of the force

39 Tayback of "Alice"



5-23

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.

5-23

CRYPTOQUOTE

O W W S J O M H Y S R

Q V C V K I Y V D V F Z I O Z

S R. — Q Y Q H X W O M

Cryptoquote: FOOD IS THE GREAT CONNECTOR, AND LAUGHS ARE THE CEMENT. — PHIL ROSENTHAL

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

02 SAT	CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
05 TUE	CELEBRITY SILHOUTTE CARNIVAL MAGIC	Arrival: 08:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: B Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
06 WED	GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 11:59 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
12 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
19 TUE	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
20 WED	ALLURE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL VISTA	Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: I Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: C
21 THU	CARNIVAL VENEZIA	Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
26 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 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

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

Difficulty: ★★★

5/7

Answer to previous puzzle

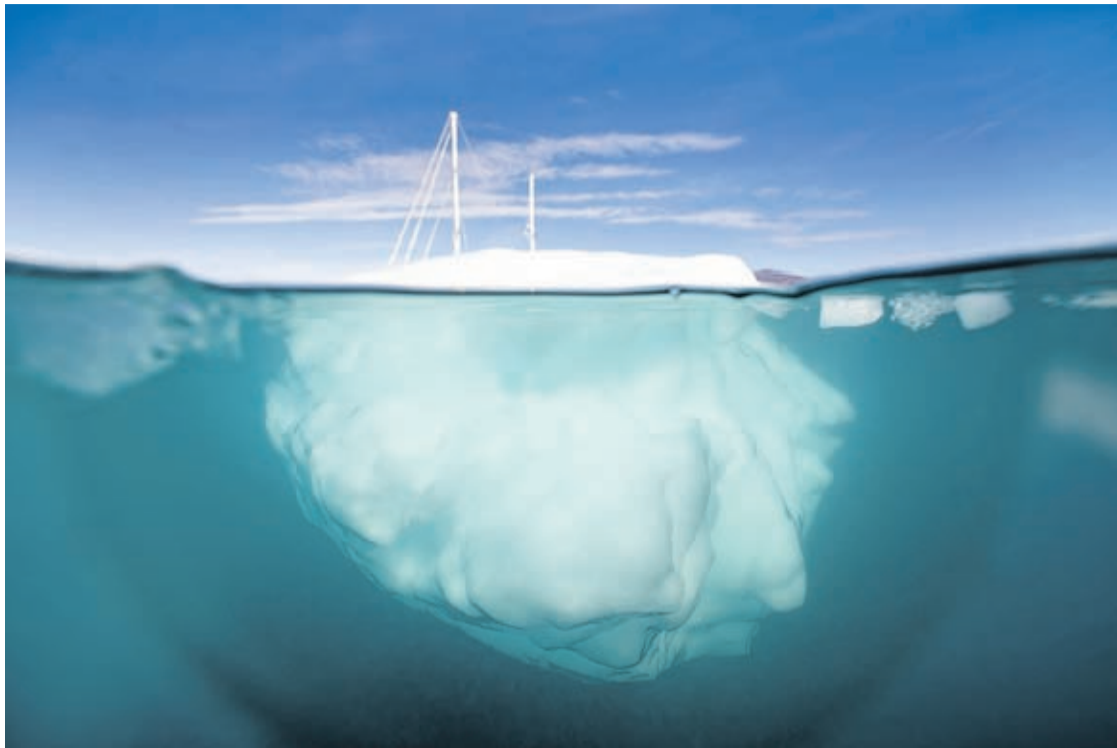
8	6	2	7	9	4	3	1	5
9	3	7	5	1	6	4	8	2
5	1	4	3	8	2	9	7	6
6	2	9	4	7	3	8	5	1
3	5	1	8	2	9	7	6	4
4	7	8	1	6	5	2	9	3
7	4	3	9	5	1	6	2	8
2	8	5	6	4	7	1	3	9
1	9	6	2	3	8	5	4	7

Difficulty: ★★★

5/6

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Europe climate report signals rising extremes



The Greenlandia expedition's sailing boat 'Kamak' sails between icebergs released by glaciers around Milne Land in the Scoresby Sound Fjord, Eastern Greenland, on August 15, 2023.

Paris, France

Europe endured a historic heatwave across Nordic countries, shrinking glaciers and record sea temperatures in 2025 as the fast-warming continent faces more frequent climate extremes, a new report showed Wednesday.

"The climate indicators ... are quite worrying," Mauro Facchini, a European Commission official, told journalists.

The European State of the Climate report underscores the urgent need for the region to adapt to global warming and accelerate its transition to clean energy, another EU official said. Here are some key findings of the report published by the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO):

- Record heatwaves -

At least 95 percent of the region experienced above-average annual temperatures, with Britain, Norway and Iceland recording their warmest year on record, according to the report.

"Since 1980, Europe has been warming twice as fast as the global average, making it the fastest warming continent on Earth," WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said in a briefing on the report.

"Heatwaves are becom-

ing more frequent and severe. And in 2025, we saw long duration heatwaves from the Mediterranean to the Arctic Circle," Saulo said.

Sub-Arctic Finland, Norway and Sweden a region dubbed Fennoscandia experienced a record three-week heatwave in July, with temperatures reaching 30C within the Arctic Circle.

Parts of Fennoscandia had almost two weeks of "strong heat stress" when temperatures feel hotter than 32C. In an average year, the region will normally have up to two days of strong heat stress.

In Turkey, temperatures

reached 50C for the first time in July while 85 percent of the Greek population was affected by extreme temperatures close to or above 40C.

Large parts of western and southern Europe were hit with two significant heatwaves in June, including most of Spain, Portugal, France and southern parts of Britain.

A third major heatwave struck Portugal, Spain and France in August.

Europe and the rest of the world could face another extremely hot summer as the El Nino weather phenomenon, which pushed global temperatures to record highs in 2024, is ex-

pected to return in the middle of the year.

- Melting ice -

Glaciers across Europe recorded a net mass loss in 2025, with Iceland experiencing its second-largest ever melt.

Europe's glaciers are found in mountainous areas such as the Alps, northern Scandinavia, Iceland and Greenland's periphery.

"Glaciers across Europe and globally are projected to continue to lose mass throughout the 21st century, regardless of the emission scenario," the report said.

The Greenland Ice Sheet lost round 139 billion tonnes of ice "equivalent to losing 100 Olympic-sized swimming pools every single hour", said Samantha Burgess, strategic lead for climate at the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (EC-MWF), which operates Copernicus.

It raised the global mean sea level by 0.4 mm.



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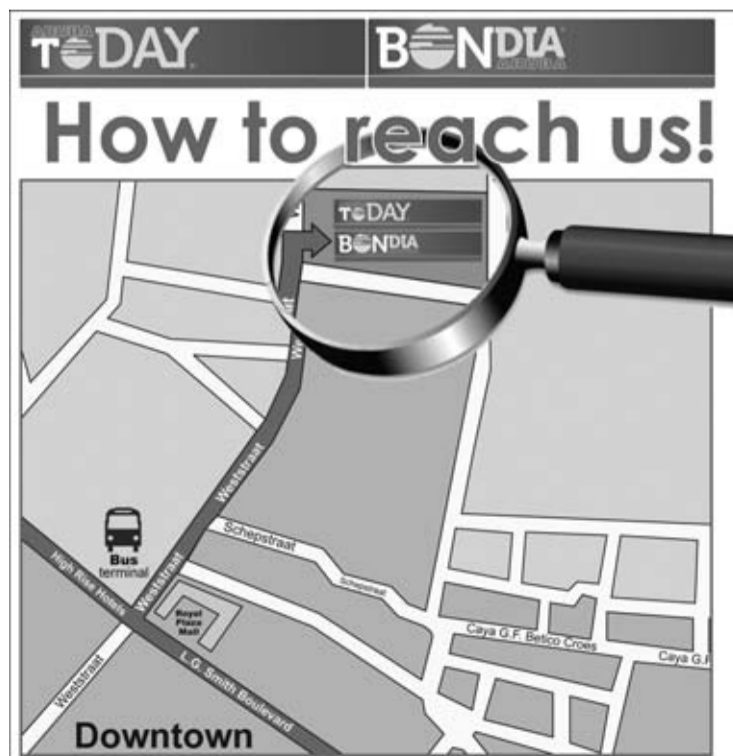
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Oranjestad Hospital 7:00 pm/10:00pm Tel. 527 4000	San Nicolas IMSAN 24 HOURS Tel. 524 8833
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PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad: Dakota
Tel. 588 7364

San Nicolas: Centro Medico
Tel. 584 5794

OTHER

Dental Clinic	587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba	587 0002
Urgent Care	586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic	588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Police Oranjestad	527 3140
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 Tel. 582 5051
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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Mexican BTS fans go wild as concerts grow near

Mexico City, Mexico

Dancers bounced to the sound of BTS on an avenue in Mexico City, clapping and screaming at a pep rally kicking off a string of concerts by the South Korean superstars.

And K-pop fervor in Mexico is not limited to fans like these young people. Many parents approve of all this passion for the group, which returned to the world spotlight in March following an almost four-year pause so its members could carry out their obligatory military service.

BTS will perform shows in the Mexican capital on May 7, 9, and 10 and the more than 135,000 tickets on sale were snapped up in a matter of minutes. President Claudia Sheinbaum even tried in vain to arrange more concerts.

Jude Pelaez was among the dancers who showed up Monday on Paseo de la Reforma, a major thoroughfare in Mexico's capital, for a BTS promotional event to get fans ready for the concerts.

Some kids danced while others put on temporary tattoos, as a poster with black-and-white photos of



Fans of South Korean K-pop group BTS attend a fan gathering in Mexico City on May 3, 2026.

the seven group members rose up between two street posts.

"Like everyone here, I'm so happy," Pelaez told AFP. "We do these types of events to emotionally and psychologically prepare ourselves, and to prepare the energy and vibe of the place."

"That makes Mexico different," he said.

- 'Let's live life' -

Mare Sousa, 16, said BTS

mania is a phenomenon in which "everyone is free to be who they are."

She takes classes in a school called K-pop Dance with around 30 colleagues, most of them women.

The students rehearse their choreography before a mirror even before class starts, and many of them use rest breaks to ask friends for help to correct their steps.

"Take it easy, breathe," 22-year-old teacher Ginna

Montoya said.

K-pop fever in Mexico goes beyond dance. Some groups meet in cafes with BTS posters to eat noodles. Other fans take language classes in the South Korean cultural center.

Lucio Campos decided to learn it when his adolescent daughter asked to go to South Korea for her 15th birthday. "BTS was born with the idea of transmitting healthy questions for young people," Campos

said. "Their war cry is 'let's live life, let's live it healthily, let's live well,' and obviously this fascinates me."

Campos said the music contrasts with what he called the sexuality of reggaeton or 'narcocorridos,' a popular subgenre in Mexico that celebrates drug trafficking.

In a room with band photos, Lucio pointed his finger and names the group members. His daughter Ana corrected him. "This is Jin," she said.

"BTS taught me to love myself," Ana said as she went through the pages of an album with photos of the band members and motivational phrases on the back.

- Sheinbaum's letter -

Sheinbaum intervened to help thousands of frustrated fans who were stuck without tickets for the concerts, events that South Korea says have improved its global image.

The South Korean government has cited a study carried out in 26 countries that it says showed a favorable opinion of the Asian nation among 82% of those surveyed. □

Rolling Stones announce July 10 release of new album 'Foreign Tongues'

New York, United States

The Rolling Stones will release a new album on July 10 named "Foreign Tongues," the legendary British rockers announced on Tuesday.

The band's 25th studio album will come less than three years after its last release, "Hackney Diamonds," which topped the charts in more than a dozen countries and earned some critical acclaim.

"Hackney Diamonds" was the band's first album in 18 years.

The Stones announced the release date of "Foreign Tongues" online on Tuesday, while dropping a new single, "In The Stars."

A video posted on its Instagram channel showed singer Mick Jagger and fellow founding bandmate



British musicians and members of The Rolling Stones, Ronnie Wood, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards arrive for "The Rolling Stones: In Conversation with Conan O'Brien" at Weylin in Brooklyn, New York on May 5, 2026.

Keith Richards, who are both 82, with 78-year-old bass guitarist Ronnie Wood working in a recording studio.

At a promotional event in New York hosted by comedian Conan O'Brien, the

trio discussed their latest work and previewed a few tracks from the album.

"We're still having a lot of fun," Jagger said.

"It's a lot of fun, but also a lot of concentration," he added.

O'Brien voiced praise for Jagger's vocals, remarking: "There are people who, at a certain stage, their voice gets thin. Yours is absolutely impeccable, and there's such force. How do you do that?"

"Well, I was taking a lot more drugs in 1968," Jagger quipped, to laughter from the audience. He then added: "The secret is practice... it's simple."

"I had the time of my life. I'm the biggest fan in the world," Andrew Watt, one of the album's producers, told AFP about working on the project.

The rock act did not mention a concert tour during the event, with several media outlets reporting that it was discussed by their team but ultimately dis-

missed due to the age of the band members and the health risks it entailed.

"Foreign Tongues" will feature appearances from former Beatles bass player Paul McCartney and The Cure frontman Robert Smith.

Speculation had been mounting that they were poised to unveil a new record after they last month mysteriously released a new limited edition single on vinyl only, under the band name The Cockroaches. The name is an alias they have used in the past to play secret shows. The track, "Rough And Twisted," was sold at selected record stores only, in the UK for exactly £10.07 (\$13.64) prompting fans to predict the album would appear on July 10. □

Thunder overpower Lakers, Pistons down Cavs

Los Angeles, United States
The Oklahoma City Thunder overpowered LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers 108-90 on Tuesday to grab a 1-0 lead in their NBA Western Conference semi-final series.

A balanced offensive performance and steely defensive display from the reigning NBA champions was enough to seal victory over the depleted Lakers, who started brightly but trailed for the final three quarters.

Chet Holmgren led the Thunder with 24 points and 12 rebounds while reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Ajay Mitchell added 18 points apiece.

"We were a little choppy, a little rusty, but offensively we just stuck with it," Gilgeous-Alexander said, saluting a Thunder defense that restricted the Lakers to their lowest score in a playoff game since 2021.

"We just try to make people play outside their comfort zone, as simple as that," Gilgeous-Alexander said of the Thunder defense. "Whatever guys like to do, we like to take away from them."



Chet Holmgren #7 of the Oklahoma City Thunder dunks against Rui Hachimura #28 and Jarred Vanderbilt #2 of the Los Angeles Lakers during the second quarter in Game One of the Second Round of the NBA Western Conference Playoffs at Paycom Center on May 05, 2026 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The commanding Thunder victory underscored the size of the task facing the fourth-seeded Lakers if they are to defy the odds and upset the champions in the best-of-seven series.

Oklahoma City completed a 4-0 regular-season sweep over the Lakers, winning each game by an average margin of 29.3 points.

Tuesday's series-opener at Oklahoma City's Paycom Center echoed the Thunder's regular-season dominance, with the champions pulling away down the stretch to score an emphatic win.

James, who had defied his 41 years to lead the Lakers to a surprise 4-2 upset of the Houston Rockets in the first round, led Los Angeles with

27 points in a losing effort. Rui Hachimura added 18 points with Marcus Smart bagging 12 and Deandre Ayton 10.

Lakers head coach JJ Redick blamed unforced errors for his team's problems. "The mistakes hurt us," Redick said. "You're playing the world champs, your margin for error in terms of mistakes is not that

high... just too many tonight. We've got to clean that up.

"The guys played hard. We just got to do a better job with execution. It comes down to attention to detail. "I know we'll clean things up and be better."

- Pistons hold off Cavs -

In Tuesday's other playoff game, Cade Cunningham scored 23 points as the Detroit Pistons held off a second-half rally to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 111-101 in their NBA Eastern Conference semi-final series opener.

The top-seeded Pistons looked to be cruising to a comfortable win after dominating in the first half and taking a 17-point lead in the third period.

But a spirited Cleveland rally saw the Cavaliers close to within four points before Detroit finally pulled clear again in the fourth quarter. Cunningham was one of six Detroit players to finish in double figures, with Tobias Harris adding 20 points while Duncan Robinson bagged five three-pointers on his way to a 19-point haul at the Pistons' Little Caesars Arena. □

Seixas targets victory in Tour warm-up race

La Motte-Servolex, France
Budding French star Paul Seixas said on Wednesday he is aiming to win the main preparation race ahead of July's Tour de France.

With Tour favourites Tadej Pogacar, who will go to the Tour de Suisse instead, and Jonas Vingegaard, who is tackling the Giro d'Italia this month, skipping the Tour Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes, teenage prodigy Seixas will likely start as the favourite.

But he will face stiff competition from the likes of Mexican Isaac del Toro, who won the UAE Tour and Tirreno-Adriatico earlier this year, and Spaniard Juan Ayuso, who beat the Frenchman into second place at the Tour of the Algarve in February.

"Depending on my form and the competition, I will be aiming to go for the vic-

tory," Seixas said at a press conference for selective media at his Decathlon CMA CGM team's performance centre near the Alpine town of Chambéry in southeastern France.

"I certainly won't be in Tour de France form because that's not the aim, but I imagine that will also be the case for the other riders there," added Seixas of the June 7-14 stage race. The 19-year-old has been in sensational form this season, finishing either first or second in all six of his races. He won the Tour of the Basque Country last month, having also tasted success in one-day races the Ardeche Classic and Fleche Wallonne.

Other than finishing narrowly behind Ayuso in his opening race of the season, he was beaten only

by world champion Pogacar at Strade Bianche in March and Liege-Bastogne-Liege 10 days ago.

- Tour recon -

Before taking part in his first Grand Tour in July where the expectation around him will reach fever pitch as France pins its hopes on his young shoulders to end the 41-year wait for a home winner at the Grand Boucle he will use his time to ride the route of Tour stages and take part in altitude training.

The Tour Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes, in which he finished an impressive eighth last year when it was still known as the Criterium du Dauphine, will be his only race before the Tour.

On Thursday he is due to ride the route of the Tour's 16th stage time-trial between Thonon-les-Bains



Decathlon CMA CGM Team's French Paul Seixas celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win 'La Fleche Wallonne' one day cycling race, 200 km from Herstal to Huy, on April 22, 2026.

and Evian-les-Bains, "not far from my grandparents", he said.

He had announced on Monday his participation at the July 4-26 Tour with a social media video of him breaking the news first to his grandparents.

In Ayuso and Del Toro, as well as Briton Oscar Onley, who was fourth at last year's Tour, Seixas will face at the warm-up event some of the brightest young climbers in cycling who may be his main rivals in the years to come. □

Rahm doesn't see 'many ways out' of multi-year LIV deal

Washington, United States
Two-time major champion Jon Rahm revealed he has several years remaining on his LIV Golf contract and doesn't "see many ways out" after agreeing to a new deal that allows him to play on the DP World Tour.

The 31-year-old Spaniard, a former world number one, spoke Tuesday ahead of this week's LIV Golf Virginia event at Trump National Washington. Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), which had promised long-term support for the series, said last week it will pull funding after the 2026 campaign concludes, plunging the upstart circuit into uncertainty over his future beyond this year.



Jon Rahm in the Paddock prior to the F1 Grand Prix of Miami at Miami International Autodrome on May 03, 2026 in Miami, Florida.

But while the vexed question of how LIV players may return to the PGA Tour has dominated golf in recent weeks, Rahm said Tuesday he remained locked into his lucrative contract.

"I have several years on my contract left and I'm pretty sure they did a pretty good job when they drafted that, so I don't see many ways out," Rahm said.

"As of right now, I'm not really thinking about it since we still have a season to play and majors to compete for. So it's not something I want to think about just yet."

Rahm did however settle one long-running issue on Tuesday as the DP World Tour announced they reached a deal with the Spaniard that allows him to play on the European circuit this year while paying all outstanding fines since his 2024 jump to LIV.

"There's no longer a stand-off. We were able to reach an agreement," Rahm said. "There was some concessions on both sides. I offered some, they extended an olive branch. That will not be a stress anymore."

Rahm will no longer have to worry about his place on the Europe side for the 2027 Ryder Cup at Adare Manor in Ireland or future stops.

"The Ryder Cup is still really far away, but I'm happy that hopefully I won't have to think about any worries or any predicaments (ahead of) Adare Manor then or hopefully ever," Rahm said.

"I want to support the DP World Tour. There's a lot of events I want to play."

Rahm meanwhile admitted to shock at PIF's decision to pull the plug on LIV Golf, saying players had been assured financing from Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund was in place for years to come.

While LIV Golf chief executive officer Scott O'Neil seeks new backers, two-time defending LIV season champion Rahm says players will likely face compromises if the series is to continue. □



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