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How Aledo's "discover the extra" is sparking a rural renaissance

ALEDO, IL — In the quiet stretches of Mercer County, where the horizon is dominated by the rhythm of the seasons, a new kind of harvest is taking root. It isn't corn or soybeans, but rather a fierce, entrepreneurial spirit that is breathing fresh life into the American small town. At the center of this movement is the "Discover the Extra" initiative. Sponsored by the Mercer County Forever Fund, the program has become a national blueprint for rural survival in the 2020s. On Thursday night, community members gathered at the local VFW to hear from keynote speaker and rural advocate Andrew McCrea, marking a celebratory milestone: for the first time in a decade,

the town's Main Street storefronts are at 95% occupancy. "Small towns aren't dying; they're just waiting for a reason to wake up," said Sarah Miller, a local boutique owner who opened her doors thanks to a micro-grant from the initiative. "The 'extra' isn't just about money. It's about the extra mile a neighbor goes to help you fix a sign, or the extra hour a volunteer spends mentoring a high schooler on a business plan." The "Discover the Extra" initiative operates on a simple but radical premise: rural communities cannot wait for outside corporations to save them. Instead, they must cultivate their "extra" assets the unique local heritage, the special-

ized craftsmanship, and the tight-knit social fabric that big cities often lack. In Aledo, this has manifested in several tangible wins: **The Revitalization of the Historic District:** Through the Forever Fund, five historic buildings that were slated for demolition have been stabilized and converted into "maker spaces" where local artisans sell everything from hand-thrown pottery to custom leather goods. The Youth Entrepreneurship Pipeline: A partnership with the local high school now provides seniors with "starter kits" for service-based businesses, encouraging the next generation to build careers in Mercer County rather than fleeing to urban centers. □



Philadelphia students win guaranteed access to hydration and dignity

By Local Education Correspondent

PHILADELPHIA — In a landmark decision being hailed as a "victory for joy," the School District of Philadelphia has officially approved a comprehensive new wellness policy that guarantees more than 100,000 public school students the right to water and bathroom breaks.

The policy, passed by the Board of Education late last week and celebrated by families on Monday, marks a historic shift in how the district manages the basic biological needs of its students. For the first time, access to drinking water and restrooms is codified as a fundamental right that cannot be withheld as a form of disciplinary action.

"Dignity is Non-Negotiable"

The new rules follow an 18-month grassroots campaign led by Lift Every Voice Philly, an advocacy group of parents who shared harrowing stories of students being denied water or restricted from using the bathroom. "We refused to accept schools where our children could not drink water freely," said LEV board member Jamila Carter during a celebratory gathering. "This policy makes dignity non-negotiable". Key highlights of the newly adopted wellness policy include:
Protected Water Access: Drinking water must be available and accessible without restriction and at no cost throughout the entire school day.
Mandatory Movement: Elementary students are now guaranteed movement breaks every 90 minutes of seated instruction. □

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California's river barriers face the ultimate test

By Leah Mason
Environment Desk

LOS ANGELES, CA — Standing at the concrete mouth of Ballona Creek just before it empties into the Pacific Ocean, a dramatic dividing line cuts cleanly through the water. On the upstream side, a massive, multi-colored blanket of compressed plastic water bottles, single-use bags, and floating Styrofoam chunks stretches across the surface. On the downstream side, the water flows remarkably clear into Santa Monica Bay.

This floating defense system is Interceptor 007, a fully automated, solar-powered trash collection catamaran developed by the Dutch non-profit research organization The Ocean Cleanup. This technology forms the front line of an aggressive new environmental strategy: capturing plastic waste directly inside coastal rivers and storm channels before it can ever reach the open sea.

With recent expansions mapping out new barrier networks along the adjacent Los Angeles and San Gabriel rivers, local engineers are proving that the tidal wave of urban marine pollution can be successfully throttled at the source.

Choking the source, saving the seas

For decades, marine biologists have warned that cleaning up open ocean waste patches like the infamous Great Pacific Garbage Patch is an uphill battle. Peer-reviewed research from The Ocean Cleanup has established that roughly 80% of all global ocean plastic emissions originate from just 1,000 highly polluted rivers and storm channels. When seasonal rainstorms pummel dense coastal cities, urban trash from streets and alleys is washed down concrete storm drains, turning local rivers into literal conveyor belts for garbage.

"Trying to catch plastic once it enters the open ocean is like trying to vacuum during a hurricane,"



Ocean Cleanup recovers 10,000 tons of plastic from seas and rivers

said Boyan Slat, founder and CEO of The Ocean Cleanup. "It scatters, breaks down into toxic microplastics, and embeds itself into the marine food chain. If you want to solve the crisis, you have to intercept the trash at the mouth of the river, before the current carries it away."

The physics of high-volume defense

The technology behind Interceptor 007 relies on a brilliant mix of natural water mechanics and automated engineering. The vessel uses two long, flexible floating booms that form a wide V-shape across the creek. As the river current flows naturally toward the sea, the booms funnel the floating trash directly into the "mouth" of the barge. Inside the automated vessel, a solar-powered conveyor belt silently lifts the gathered plastic out of the water and distributes it evenly into six internal dumpsters. When the on-board computers register that the dumpsters are full, an automated text message notifies local public works crews to tow the barge to shore, empty the containers, and sort the debris for regional recycling facilities.

The pure scale of the technology was put to the ultimate test during record-breaking atmospheric river storms that slammed Southern California. The extreme storm runoff washed a colossal wave

of city trash down the county's concrete channels all at once. During a single 24-hour peak rain event, the device successfully trapped over four tons

of trash, single-handedly preventing it from washing onto local beaches.

Since its initial pilot deployment, Interceptor 007 has blocked more than 193.5

tons (386,945 pounds) of garbage from entering the Pacific Ocean, prompting the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to unanimously approve its transition into permanent, year-round operation.

Scaling up the blueprint
The success in Southern California has served as a critical proof-of-concept for similar initiatives across the state and the globe. Further south, the California State Water Resources Control Board deployed a 450-foot heavy-duty trash boom across the Tijuana River Valley. This regional line of defense targets thousands of cubic yards of cross-border plastics and discarded tires, shielding vulnerable South Bay marine ecosystems from catastrophic pollution. □

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How a grassroots village movement is rescuing America's homeless veteran

BY Amanda Reynolds
National Desk

MILWAUKEE, WI — On a brisk morning on Milwaukee's northwest side, the rhythmic thud of hammers and the high-pitched whine of circular saws echo across a construction site. For most passersby, it looks like a standard housing development. But for the volunteers turning the dirt, it is the construction of a sanctuary. This plot of land is the newest site for the Veterans Community Project (VCP), a grassroots nonprofit building communities of specialized tiny homes to rescue unhoused military veterans from the streets.

The Milwaukee village, which broke ground late last year, is the organization's sixth location nationwide, joining operational villages in cities like Kansas City, Missouri, and Longmont, Colorado. When completed, the network will feature 240 homes across the United States. The project represents a fundamental shift in how the nation tackles veteran homelessness, replacing massive, institutional shelters with a model centered on privacy, dignity, and tailored psychological support.



Contractors build tiny homes in Little River for Veterans Welcome Home and Resource Center.

The Architecture of Healing

Each 240-square-foot tiny home provides a fully self-contained apartment. They feature a kitchen, a private bathroom, a living area, and a bed.

What makes these homes different is their "trauma-informed" architecture. Designed specifically for combat veterans managing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the layouts ensure that the bed always faces the front door and windows, eliminating blind

spots that can trigger hyper-vigilance.

"When you are living on the street, you are constantly in survival mode," said Bryan Meyer, a Marine Corps veteran and chief executive officer of VCP. "Traditional shelters often fail because they require a veteran to sleep in a room with dozens of strangers. That triggers panic. Our tiny homes provide a lockable front door, a private space, and a sense of absolute safety." Critically, the program circumvents traditional bar-

riers to entry by accepting pets and allowing veterans to keep their personal belongings, two major factors that often cause unhoused individuals to refuse traditional shelter beds.

High accountability, zero rent

The financial structure of the village is simple: veterans pay zero dollars in rent or utilities. In exchange, residents must invest heavily in their own futures. The tiny homes serve as transitional housing. Veter-

ans stay for an average of 335 days while partnering with on-site case managers. These specialists guide them through customized rehabilitation plans, mental health counseling, addiction recovery, and job training.

This formula is proving incredibly successful. The Veterans Community Project reports an 85% success rate for participants who complete the program and transition into permanent housing, far outperforming the national average for traditional transitional programs.

"We don't believe in just putting a roof over someone's head and walking away," Meyer explained. "We address the underlying trauma that caused the homelessness in the first place. It's an intensive program of accountability and support."

A lifeline in the nick of time

For residents like Patrick Putnam, an Army veteran who moved into the VCP village in Longmont, Colorado, the tiny home village didn't just provide a roof it saved his life. Before finding the program, Putnam was staying in a local emergency shelter, facing a future of deep uncertainty. □

Activist Erin Brockovich takes on U.S. Big Tech's data center boom

New York, United States

U.S. environmental activist Erin Brockovich, made famous by the film bearing her name, has launched a citizen platform tracking data center projects across the country.

The self-taught legal assistant first made her name helping expose a water contamination scandal in Hinkley, California, in the early 1990s, when energy giant Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) was found to have poisoned the local water supply.

The resulting class action lawsuit ended in a \$333 million settlement for the plaintiffs.

Director Steven Soder-

bergh brought her story to the screen in "Erin Brockovich," earning Julia Roberts the Oscar for Best Actress in 2001.

Brockovich has since built a career taking on corporations over pollution concerns.

Now 65, she is targeting



U.S. consumer advocate Erin Brockovich speaks during a press conference to unveil evidence on the cause of the Eaton Fire, in Pasadena, California, on January 27, 2025.

data centers the sprawling buildings packed with microchips and servers that power cloud networks and, increasingly, artificial intelligence.

Across the United States, communities and elected officials are moving to regulate, limit or outright block new data center construction.

"I am watching you, communities showing up and speaking out," Brockovich wrote on the dedicated webpage at brockovich-datacenter.com.

Their concerns range from spiking electricity prices and fossil fuel use to water consumption, noise and

waste.

The platform features a real-time map of proposed and under-construction data centers across the US, fed by tips from the public and press reports, with users invited to update the database.

For now, it lists only a few dozen projects a fraction of the hundreds of centers estimated to be in preparation or under construction nationwide.

The site stops short of calling for a moratorium or ban on the centers, saying it wants to spotlight "the need for sustainable, secure, and efficient AI data center practices." □

Starbucks Korea reveals series of mishaps leading to 'Tank Day' campaign

Seoul, South Korea

Starbucks Korea revealed on Tuesday a series of mishaps leading to its heavily criticised "Tank Day" promotion, including the use of AI to develop the campaign, which it said lacked "social and historical sensitivity".

The company has faced outrage in South Korea for promoting a line of coffee cups with a campaign that evoked a deadly crackdown on a 1980 pro-democracy uprising.

The furor led to a "sharp decline in sales", and the dismissal of Son Jung-hyun, head of Starbucks Korea, according to the Shin-saege Group which operates the coffee chain in South Korea under a licensing agreement.

In a packed news conference in Seoul on Tuesday, Shinsegae executive Jeon Sang-jin said "priority was given to the speed and immediacy" of the campaign and "not a single objection was raised during either the planning or approval stages".

The campaign for "tank tumbler" cups was branded as "Tank Day" and launched on May 18, the



A woman walks past a Starbucks coffee shop in Seoul on May 26, 2026.

anniversary of the Gwangju uprising.

Official figures record the crackdown on the revolt killed 165 civilians, with 65 listed as missing and 376 others later dying of injuries. Many believe the true toll was higher.

The Gwangju uprising forms the haunting backdrop to Nobel laureate Han Kang's novel *Human Acts*.

The employees involved said they had "asked AI

for suggestions and that the May 18 anniversary had never even crossed their minds", he said of the findings from the internal probe.

It was unclear whether the team went ahead with the AI suggestions.

Jeon said those involved "denied any intentional wrongdoing, saying they only realised the campaign could be problematic after the issue drew public backlash".

The investigation also found that some of the seven officials who approved the campaign "had signed off on it, as a matter of routine, without even opening the attached design file contained in the email", Jeon said.

He added that "the legal team's review process, which had been conducted in the past, was also skipped".

"This incident went beyond the question of whether in-

dividual employees were at fault and exposed a lack of social and historical sensitivity within Starbucks Korea," he said.

- 'No excuses' -

The internal investigation did not determine whether employees had intentionally planned to make light of the uprising.

Three of the five marketing team members also refused to hand over their mobile devices for forensic investigation, citing privacy concerns.

Police have launched a separate investigation which could see anyone found intentionally mocking the uprising dismissed from the company and legal action pursued against them, Jeon said.

Shinsegae chairman Chung Yong-jin bowed in apology over the incident during the Tuesday news briefing and asked for forgiveness from bereaved families of the victims of the May 18 Democratic Uprising.

"I will make no excuses. I take full responsibility for this matter."

He did not take questions from the media. □

Fish-eating cormorant lands in EU's crosshairs

Brussels, Belgium

The great cormorant bird is eating too much fish for the liking of a group of EU nations that on Tuesday called for a cull.

Great cormorant numbers have ballooned in Europe since the bird became a protected species in 1979, much to the annoyance of human fishers in countries where the black feathered animal is a rival.

"The annual fish consumption of an adult great cormorant is estimated at approximately 180 kilogrammes whereas the average fish consumption per EU citizen amounts to around 23 kilogrammes," the Czech Republic, Sweden and seven other EU

members wrote in a note to illustrate "the urgency of the situation".

The issue was placed on the agenda of a meeting of European Union agriculture and fisheries ministers in Brussels Tuesday, where the countries called for the bird's population to be kept at "an ecologically and economically acceptable level".

In practice, this would entail lowering its protected status to allow for more hunting -- a move opposed by conservationists who say it would not help restore fish stocks.

"We cannot consider nature as if it only belongs to humans and treat native predators as a nuisance,"

Marion Bessol of BirdLife International said as the idea was first floated in September. "Cormorants have as much right to eat fish as we do."

Cormorants' appetite for fish drove the bird almost to the brink of extinction in Europe, with colonies systematically destroyed in some instances with help from fire brigades and military forces, according to a report by the European Parliament.

In the early 1960s, the species numbered only a few thousand breeding pairs in the main breeding range comprising the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Poland, the paper said.

Numbers rebounded after the bird was granted protection status. There are currently up to two million great cormorants in Europe.

"The great cormorant... is causing a lot of problems in the Baltic Sea," Finnish Agriculture Minister Sari Essayah told reporters in Brussels. □



A cormorant bird stands atop a statue of Britain's King Edward VII in Liverpool, north west England on October 2, 2020, following the announcement of new local restrictions for certain areas in the northwest of the country, due to a

Bulgarian mussel farmers face risk, and chance, in hotter sea

Kaliakra, Bulgaria

Faced with rising Black Sea temperatures that suffocate his mussels, Bulgarian farmer Nayden Stanev has been forced to change his ways shifting his seeding schedule and harvesting at cooler depths. Yet Stanev, a 56-year-old former marine commando, sees the fallout from climate change as both a threat and opportunity for his business.

As bad as it is for Bulgaria's mussel farmers, their peers in the Mediterranean Sea have had to deal with even higher water temperatures. "We are better off," Stanev told AFP.

Though the Balkan EU member still trails far behind major Mediterranean mussel producers such as Spain and Italy, it has taken the lead in the Black Sea. And it is less affected by marine heat waves, which have led to a sharp decline in Europe's mussel crop, according to experts. But the warmer waters are still a threat to Black Sea mussel farmers.

"About 20 percent of the mussels didn't survive" this year, Stanev said gravely, as empty shells piled up on deck of his old diesel boat. "Last year, it was a massacre 80 percent wiped out. The mussels literally suffo-



Harvesters sort mussels on a conveyor line of a harvesting ship during a mussel collection near Cape Kaliakra, in the northern Bulgarian Black Sea Coast on August 18, 2025.

cate in a sea that warms too fast," he added.

- 'Lasting change' -

Scientists say climate change is making marine heatwaves more frequent and powerful, and the Mediterranean region is warming faster than the global average.

In July, the average surface temperature of the Mediterranean Sea was 26.79C, the hottest ever for that month, according to research centre Mercator Ocean International.

During the same period,

the average surface temperature in the Black Sea was 25.46C less than in the Mediterranean, though it is also warming.

"When temperatures approach or exceed about 26C a threshold associated with mass mussel mortalities for extended periods during peak market seasons, it creates disruptions in the supply chain," John Theodorou, an expert at the University of Patras in Greece, told AFP.

In the Black Sea, the surface temperature has risen by nearly two degrees in

two years, according to Radoslava Bekova from the Institute of Oceanology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

"The sea is undergoing lasting changes," she told AFP. She added prolonged warming periods, when the sea doesn't have time to cool down, weaken the mussels, making them more vulnerable to diseases.

- High demand -

Together with his six employees, Bulgaria pioneer Stanev is on deck at dawn to harvest and deliver his

mussels, with the season reaching its peak at the end of August.

He set up his business more than 20 years ago in the bay of Cape Kaliakra, a prime location protected from currents.

His phone ringing incessantly, Stanev jots down the orders on a small notebook.

On this day, he has to deliver no fewer than 10 tonnes of mussels to cater to the demand of hundreds of restaurants and vendors in Bulgaria and neighbouring Romania.

After a short trip from shore, the crew reaches the 200-hectare mussel farm. Black buoys float on the surface, with long tubular nets holding the shells attached to them.

The men work in silence with synchronised gestures: one pulls the nets out of the water, another cleans them and a third sorts the shells.

Mussel bags pile up, each containing about 800 kilogrammes, as cormorants scout for leftovers.

When the boat returns to the quay in the early afternoon, several refrigerated trucks are already waiting, along with villagers with empty buckets, eager to buy fresh mussels for their families. □

Cleaning the chakras of Ecuador's cats and dogs

Quito, Ecuador

Is your pooch feeling peevish? Too much negative energy?

In Ecuador's capital Quito, traditional healers are tapping into a new market for herbal remedies: the anxious "parents" of pampered pets.

At the San Francisco market, dogs, cats, rabbits are all candidates for a "limpia" (cleansing), an ancient Andean ceremonial ritual designed to banish physical, emotional and spiritual blockages.

A "curandero" (healer) uses herbs, smoke and raw eggs to open the chakras of creatures great and

small and furry.

Ximena Tixi says her one-year-old golden retriever Lucas hasn't been himself

since he had a run-in with a cat.

But she's seen an improvement since he had two

cleanses.

"He's more active, he no longer shows that fear he had," the 49-year-old architect told AFP.

Now on his third session, Lucas trots into the stall, tail wagging.

Nancy Correa, 57, is a fifth generation healer from a family of female "curanderos."

She hugs Lucas and then rubs him with a bunch of medicinal herbs, including amaranths, rue, nettle and eucalyptus.

She chose these plants, she said, because they grow in ravines and therefore "hold the energy of water, air, and sun."

Next door, fellow healer Amparo Lugmana treats Copito, her four-year-old mongrel who has been "feeling down" of late, by rubbing petals, an egg, and herbs over his white, curly fur.

She finishes by hanging Amazonian huayroro seeds on a ribbon around his neck, to ward off evil spirits.

Lugmana has also worked on cats and rabbits and sends treatments to the countryside for owners of unproductive cows and chickens.

The cost of the treatment ranges from \$5 to \$10, depending on the size of the pet. □



Ecuadorean curandera Amparo Lugmana performs an energy cleansing on the dog Copito at the San Francisco market in Quito on May 17, 2026. Kaliakra, Bulgaria



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Iberostar Aruba Strengthens Commitment to Reducing Food Waste with Ai Technology and Supporting Responsible Tourism

JOIA Aruba by Iberostar continues to take important steps toward protecting the environment by introducing new technology in its kitchens to help reduce food waste and improve waste management practices at the hotel. Since April 2026, the hotel has been using an Ai food waste monitoring system that helps kitchen teams better understand how much food is being wasted and how it can be reduced.

The system works by tracking left-over food in the kitchens and providing information that helps chefs and staff make smarter decisions when preparing meals. By understanding what food is being thrown away most often, the hotel can improve planning, and as

a result, identify waste reduction measures, to operate in a more responsible way.

Recently, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts invited members of the local press to the JOIA Aruba for a special presentation and demonstration of how the system works in daily operations. During the visit, attendees had the opportunity to learn more about the company's sustainability efforts and its long-term goal to eliminate waste to landfill, through various actions led by its 3R team (Reduce Reuse Recycle) who work across all areas of operations to measure, sort and develop ways to rethink its approach to waste.

These efforts are part of Iberostar's



larger commitment to sustainability through its Iberostar Wave of Change movement, which includes a focus on circular economy initiatives including avoiding waste to landfill, reducing waste through efficient consumption, and reusing resources whenever possible. In 2025 the company has already reduced waste to landfill by 80% (against its 2021 baseline) and is working across different destinations to find different solutions locally.

Iberostar Hotels & Resorts believes that even small daily actions can create meaningful change over time. By improving food management and reducing waste, the ho-

tel aims to contribute towards a model of positive tourism in Aruba.

"At Iberostar, we are working to continuously lower our impact in our everyday operations," said Arnaud Le Lanchon, General Manager of Iberostar Aruba. "We are proud to introduce solutions that help us reduce waste, improve efficiency, and continue caring for the beautiful island of Aruba."

Iberostar Hotels & Resorts continues to work alongside employees, guests, partners, and the local community to promote responsible tourism and create a positive impact for future generations. □



(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right

Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!

next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.

The bridge was formed during thousands of years, cut and crafted by the wild waves that crash into the coral stone walls of the coast. Before its collapse, this bridge measured 30 meters in length and 7 meters in height, making it the biggest natural bridge in the Caribbean at the time. For many years, this site was also a frequently visited opening through which the water

would flow into the tiny beach.

Unfortunately in 2005, the bridge collapsed, and the little beach dried up. Despite this, this site remained a tourist attraction, with many visitors walking along the coral cliffs of the bridge to see the spectacular view of the northern coastline and the Caribbean Sea. Visitors can also still visit the souvenir shop on the left of the bridge entrance.

While the natural bridge no longer is functional, there is now a smaller natural bridge very close. This bridge is often called the "Baby Bridge" or "Daughter Bridge". □

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With its grand opening Voco proves it can attract high-value visitors to Aruba

(Oranjestad)—Last Friday, the Talk of the Town family opened their revitalized hotel rebranded as Voco with a particular focus on attracting high-valued visitors with a new and sustainable strategy.

CEO of Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA), Ronella Croes, called this transition an important step for the island. A key aspect lies in its partnership with ASG, a multinational parent company that manages hotels around the world. A partnership with an international hotel giant will give Voco the additional support it deserves in international sales, marketing and their platform in infrastructure.

'Voco', which means 'to invite' and 'call together' in Latin, represents the hotel charming and inviting nature. Voco's unique character and style sets it apart from other hotels, offering visitors a laid-back and approachable environment combined with premium style of hospitality so you can create long-lasting moments that'll be remembered for a lifetime. All this while maintaining committed to be a sustainable vacation destination, with plant-based amenities, energy-efficient fixtures and pillows and duvets made from 100% recycled materials.

Its success is praised globally. Voco is proud to be the winner of the World Travel Awards for Europe's Leading Premium Hotel Brand, Middle East's Leading Premium Hotel Brand, and Worlds Leading Premium Hotel Brand 2025 for five consecutive years.

For Aruba, the Voco hotel will surely add to the warm hospitality of the island, where our lovely visitors can feel more at home. A warm congratulations goes to the Talk of the Town Family for this new endeavor! □



Rock stacking and its harmful effects

(Oranjestad)—The organization Aruba Birdlife Conservation has in the past raised concerns about the phenomenon of "rock stacking" in the area of Baby Beach and warned about the dangers it poses, especially for children.

As known, "rock stacking" is not illegal in Aruba, but its impact on nature is harmful as the stones form part of the natural habitat of small animal species living in Aruba's wilderness. Experts warn that "rock stacking" could even lead certain species to extinction.

In Aruba, much of the "rock stacking" also oc-

curs near Arikok National Park. Although this activity is not illegal in Aruba, it may be time for park authorities to impose stricter regulations on this activity.

Tourists often believe that the meaning behind this activity is making a wish, but they do not realize its negative impact.

Aruba Birdlife Conservation's post not only raises alarms about the activity but also now that this phenomenon has reached Baby Beach, some of the stacked stone towers are up to 1.7 meters high, which can be very dangerous, especially for children. □



Article by Etnia Nativa
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Episode CCCLIV- 354

Aruba at a Crossroads

For decades, Etnia Nativa has warned about the consequences of uncontrolled tourism on Aruba's neighborhoods, beaches, culture, and environment. Today, many longtime residents no longer recognize the communities where they grew up — neighborhoods once filled with neighbors are now dominated by short-term visitors, noise, and disorder, off-road traffic, overflowing garbage containers, and crowded of visitors on beaches once enjoyed mainly by local families.

As natural spaces disappear and mass tourism reshapes the island, Etnia Nativa faces a difficult question: can tourism continue growing without destroying the identity, tranquility, and beauty that made the island unique in the first place?

The future of Aruba may depend on moving beyond extractive tourism toward a regenerative model — one that protects nature, respects local communities, and preserves the island for future generations before it is too late.

During the 1950s, when tourism began on our island, success was measured by the number of visitors and their spending. Aruba built its first high-rise hotel, the Aruba Caribbean Hotel and Casino (see details in episode 120, titled "In the Beginning"), which soon became an architectural icon attracting the international jet set and Hollywood celebrities. Its success helped drive the steady growth of tourism across the Caribbean region. Luxury came to mean large resorts, activity-filled itineraries, endless entertainment, and the promise of the "perfect getaway."

Years ago, as plastic pollution and environmental damage spread across the world, sustainable tourism emerged with one essential question: 'How do we reduce harm?'

Now, in 2026, a new question is transforming the global travel industry: 'How do we leave a place better than we found it?'

That shift changes everything. A new generation of travelers is no longer satisfied with simply visiting a destination; increasingly, people want their journeys to have purpose and leave a positive impact on the places they explore. Across the world, the tourism industry is evolving beyond sustainability toward regenerative tourism — a model focused not only on reducing harm, but on restoring ecosystems, strengthening



local communities, and preserving cultural identity for future generations. The difference is profound.

From community-led tourism projects in India to ecological restoration initiatives throughout Europe and the Caribbean, travelers are seeking experiences rooted in authenticity, connection, and responsibility rather than overcrowded excursions and mass-tourism attractions. Travel is no longer defined only by sightseeing or consumption, but by the opportunity to contribute, learn, and help protect the places and cultures that make each destination unique.

And perhaps nowhere is this conversation more urgent than in Aruba.

For years, Aruba has relied heavily on tourism while gradually sacrificing parts of its ecological and cultural authenticity in the process. The island adapted itself to external expectations: speaking the language visitors expected, promoting entertainment designed for outsiders, and reshaping cultural experiences into simplified versions of ourselves.

But why must Aruba continue imitating what tourists can already find elsewhere?

Why promote generic Caribbean imagery when Aruba possesses a distinct cultural identity of its own - a desolate and beautiful landscape, Paleolithic and prehistoric heritage sites, fertile seas, and natural orchestras of migrating birds? Aruba has the potential to embrace sustainable agriculture, ecological architecture, and

a way of living that feels deeply rooted, authentic, and unlike anywhere else in the region.

Our future cannot depend on becoming interchangeable.

Regenerative tourism offers another path. However legislation preventing gold rush activities investors must be kept at bay limiting over exploitation with discouraging fines.

Imagine tourism in Aruba not as consumption, but as restoration — visitors helping protect coral reefs, joining coastal cleanups, and supporting local farmers, fishermen, and artisans instead of disconnected global supply chains.

But that future also requires limits. Aruba cannot continue allowing environmentally destructive activities, overcrowding, off-road damage, noise, and pollution to expand in the name of entertainment and unchecked growth.

Without stronger protections and a clearer vision, Aruba is losing the beauty, tranquility, and cultural identity that once made the island unique. The question is whether Aruba will embrace a regenerative future, or continue being treated like a stationary cruise ship, where every experience is mediated through digital plastic and designed solely for consumption. □



Personal experiences with Etnia Nativa are available by appointment:

WhatsApp +297 592 2702
 etnianativa03@gmail.com

Alto Vista chapel and its link to Aruba's origins

According to *Etnia Nativa*, in the 18th century most of the inhabitants of Aruba were indigenous who lived on the north coast, one of the largest communities lived in Alto Vista.

As they were very religious, they had a chief with the name of Antonio Silvester who guided them in the Christian life and it was he who decided to build a stone chapel with a roof of corn rods, which would serve as a place of prayer. In 1750 it was blessed by Father Algemesi who came from Coro-Venezuela and appointed Domingo Antonio Silvester as the island's first prosecutor in the name of the Spanish crown and Rome. In 1752 the prosecution passed into the hands of Antonio Silvester's son-in-law, Miguel Álvarez, who continued to guide the parishioners in their prayers.

According to the book, *The History of Alto Vista* by R.H. Nooyen, it is not known when Domingo Antonio Silvester came to Aruba from Venezuela. The elders believe Antonio was a Spaniard. In 1780, father Joseph



Antonio de la Vegal called Bernardino Silvester, one of Antonio's sons with his wife Anna Cathalina Tromp, "neighbors and naturals of the island Aruba" and thus they became natives.

At the end of the eighteenth century many inhabitants the island died as a result of the black fever epidemic and since people believed that the Alto Vista area was the most infected, they began to build their homes

further south within the Noord area, so the town of Noord began to grow into a community till getting its own Church. However religious festivals continued to be celebrated at this sacred native place, with the custom of arriving in procession to Alto Vista.

Two-hundred years after the beautiful time of Alto Vista, people can no longer see much of the town of Alto Vista from 1750. With

a lot of work they found the old foundations of the Church of the Queen of the Holiest Rosary to build a new chapel on the same place. The entire surrounding area was empty and desolated, making it hard to imagine that Alto Vista was a town at all. A hundred years later, people can see the remains of around twenty houses, some made of stone and others of clay. Nowadays, only around six of these

houses remain.

South of the chapel in the yard two graves can be observed, there was the cemetery which father Pablo de Algemesi blessed. It is not certain, but it is believed that the two graves belong to Antonio Silvester and Miguel Alvares, according to Nooyen. About 50 meters near the chapel there are still the markings of an old house, where Antonio and Bernardino Silvester would have lived. About 200 meters from the chapel there is a water tank which the locals call Tanki Cacique. In the past this tank was closed. But mostly water was brought out from the Poz di Noord, a well dug in the sand.

The chapel can be viewed from basically any point in the north side, even from Paradera and Sero Plat. All the historical remains around the chapel provide us with an idea on how the old people of Alto Vista used to live. Don't miss the opportunity to visit a place of historical significance with a window to Aruba's past. □

Fun facts about the Terns

(Oranjestad)—Throughout the months of January to September, big groups of terns migrate to the island for breeding season. These terns are important seabirds, and their presence on Aruba is a unique phenomenon. Here are some fun facts about terns.

Why terns matter

Terns (*Sternchi* in Papiamentu) migrate annually to Aruba for breeding season. Our island, hosts 10 different species of terns which is crucial for global seabird conservation. 90% of Caribbean population of Common Tern nest on Aruba, 25% of Global population of Cayenne Tern nest on Aruba and 25% of Caribbean population of Black Noddy nest on Aruba, making their conservation especially important.

Breeding season

The terns breed mainly along the north coast of Aruba as well as the San Nicolas Reef Islands (No-Go conservation zones). Baby Beach is a particularly special site for terns, since this is where they carry out their reproduction rituals. Referred to as a "discotheque" by Natasha Silva, the point of Baby Beach near the open water is where a large group of terns spends the season searching for their partner—for life—to reproduce.

In Aruba, there are ten different species of terns, all of which breed at different times. The ten species of terns that migrate to the island include the Cayenne Tern; Cabot's Tern; Common Tern; Roseate Tern; Least Tern; Brown Noddy; Black Noddy; Sooty Tern; Bridled Tern and the Royal

Tern

Main threats to these seabirds are human proximity, kite-surfing, unleashed dogs, ATVs/UTVs, Jet Ski's and pollution.

How to protect them

Aruba Conservation Foundation advises everyone to keep their distance from these seabirds, do not visit the reefs, do not fly drones around nesting areas, keep

your dogs on leashes, do not drive on the coastline and do not leave trash thrown about. "Nature has no boundaries and its protection is a shared responsibility." □



CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

- ACROSS**
- 40 Spring sign
 - 1 Gold hue
 - 6 Elephant of stories
 - 11 Too trusting
 - 12 Skirt
 - 13 Change
 - 14 Turning tool
 - 15 Back muscle, for short
 - 16 Anticipated
 - 18 Have debts
 - 19 D.C. baseballer
 - 20 Hosp. parts
 - 21 Young miss
 - 23 Movie category
 - 25 Twisty fish
 - 27 Bashful pal
 - 28 Pig part
 - 30 Coyote call
 - 33 Serving feat
 - 34 Scot's cap
 - 36 Cry of insight
 - 37 Halloween costume choice
 - 39 Family
- DOWN**
- 8 Danish sweets
 - 1 Counterpart
 - 2 Neighbor of Zambia
 - 3 Archfoes
 - 4 Seth's mother
 - 5 Showed over
 - 6 Like some birthday cards
 - 7 Jai —
 - 9 Stick
 - 10 Oboe parts
 - 17 Funny fellow
 - 22 Summer sign
 - 24 Japanese drama
 - 26 Some minstrels
 - 28 Uncommon
 - 29 La Brea stuff
 - 31 Acts spoiled
 - 32 Desolate
 - 33 Sailor's cry
 - 35 Monument Valley sights
 - 38 Cooped (up)
 - 42 Hurler's stat

P	O	L	S		D	E	U	C	E	
O	M	I	T		R	E	A	S	O	N
M	A	M	A		E	A	R	N	E	D
P	R	A	Y	T	E	L	L			
		S	O	F	T	S	E	L	L	
S	T	R	U	T	S		M	O	E	
C	O	O	P	S		W	A	I	V	E
A	G	O			H	A	L	T	E	R
R	A	K	E	H	E	L	L			
		F	U	E	L	C	E	L	L	
R	E	F	I	L	L		A	R	E	A
A	T	O	L	L	S		P	I	N	S
T	A	X	E	S			S	C	A	T

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10
11						12				
13						14				
15				16	17					
18				19				20		
21			22		23		24			
		25		26		27				
	28			29		30		31	32	
33			34		35		36			
37		38					39			
40						41	42			
43						44				
45						46				

A X Y D L B A A X R
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.

5-5 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

N X O O G Q N O A W S Y W U X

A T U A R T A C O U W Q P X

V Q U A R T A C O W P Y X. — R W C U V L

L W R V X Y L L A Q

Cryptoquote: GREENS ARE A DISH THAT MOST SOUTHERNERS WOULD WALK A MILE FOR. — EDNA LEWIS

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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

found in homes and establishments.

10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Drinking water



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

Safety



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

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

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

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

Difficulty: ★★★

5/27

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★

5/26

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Why is Europe the world's fastest warming continent?

Paris, France

Europe, which is in the throes of a record-smashing heatwave this week, is the world's fastest-warming continent and stretches into an even more rapidly heating Arctic.

After record high temperatures for May were broken in Britain, Ireland and France on Monday and Tuesday, the continent still faces more brutal heat in the coming days.

A so-called "heat dome" of warm air from northern Africa trapped under a high-pressure system over western Europe is behind the sort of heat not usually seen until high summer.

Here is a look at why Europe is warming faster than elsewhere:

- A higher degree -

The planet is around 1.4C warmer than in preindustrial times, defined as 1850-1900.

By comparison, Europe is around 2.4 hotter than the preindustrial era, according to the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

"Almost all of this heat is driven by the human-induced greenhouse effect from fossil fuel emissions, with the actual distribution of this excess heat determined by (several) factors," Ben Clarke, researcher in extreme weather and climate change at Imperial College London, told AFP.

- Changing weather patterns -

Shifts in atmospheric circulation have driven more frequent and more intense heatwaves in the European summer, according to Copernicus.

High-pressure systems, which bring settled weather and higher temperatures, have become more common in Europe, Copernicus Director Carlo Bu-



A pharmacy thermometer shows 35 degrees with the dome of St Peter's basilica in the background during an early-season heatwave in Rome on May 26, 2026.

ontempo said. "If you look over the last 20, 30 years, there has been a prevalence, especially in summer, of those sort of anticyclonic conditions that are making heatwaves more likely," Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo told AFP.

Whether the increased frequency of that specific type of high-pressure system is due to climate change or is just a "statistical fluctuation" is still a scientific debate, Buontempo said.

Such high-pressure systems are also known as "blocking highs" as they can remain stationary and stop other weather systems from moving into a region.

Explaining how they work, Mary Bourke, geography professor at Trinity College Dublin, told AFP: "The sky is exposed to us, there are no clouds. It's a stable mass of air that is bringing warm air down to the surface and taking away moist air, so the air is not only warm, but it's also dry."

- Rapidly warming Arctic -

Another major reason is geography. "Europe is connected to the Arctic, which is warming much faster than the rest of the planet," Clarke said.

The Arctic is 3.2C warmer than in preindustrial times, according to Copernicus. The region's rising temperatures are partly due to a

process known as the albedo feedback.

Bright snow and ice reflect much of the sun's heat back into space, but as they melt they reveal darker, heat-absorbing surfaces such as land and the ocean. □



Editor
 Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
 Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
 Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.
 Acc. #23951903
 RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Editors

Pilar Flores
 Richard Brooks
 Angenette Figuereo
 Oriana Geerman

Sales

Mark Gomes
 Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

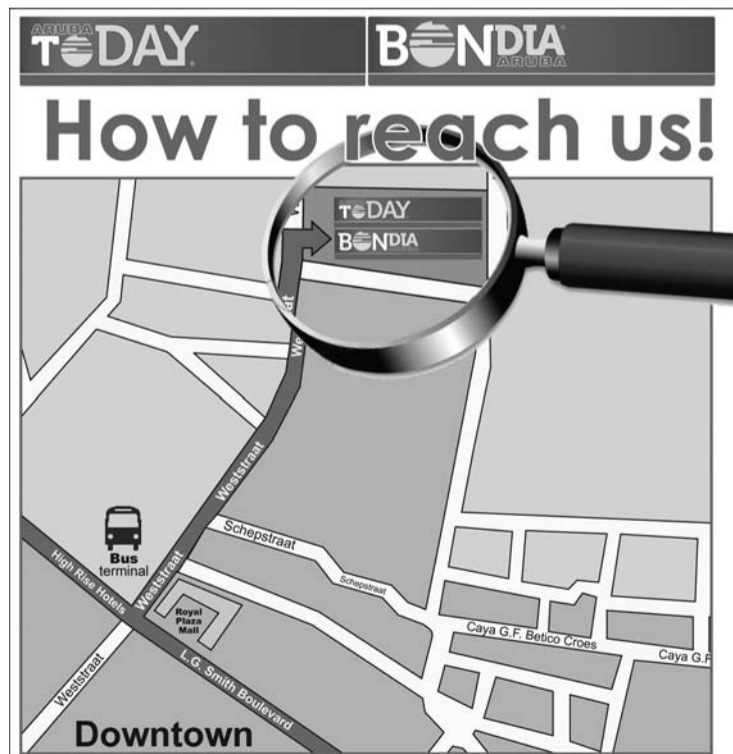
Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22
 T: 582-7800
 E: news@arubatoday.com
 W: www.arubatoday.com
 @ArubaTodayNews



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PHARMACY ON DUTY

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Tel. 582 1780

San Nicolas: Aloe
Tel. 584 4606

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
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Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Narcotics Anonymous Tel. 583 8989
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Child Abuse Prevention Tel. 582 4433
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Video games turn to classic films to woo middle-aged millennials

Paris, France

Millennial gamers who grew up on 80s and 90s blockbusters are today being courted by the industry, with the latest James Bond offering hard on the heels of an Indiana Jones adventure and soon to be followed by "Jurassic Park". "I've worked on a lot of different projects, but always had an eye to Bond," Rasmus Poulsen, art director for "007 First Light", set for release on Wednesday, told AFP ahead of the game's publication.

The Dane, in his 40s, also runs a YouTube channel showing off 3D models of spacecraft from the Star Wars and Star Trek universes underscoring his part in a generation of game developers now turning their hands to adapting the worlds they fantasised about as kids.

With his firearms, high-tech gadgets, luxury cars and over-the-top flirting, "James Bond is a perfect fit for video games, because he's a character built around the imperative to act," said Alexis Blanchet, a cinema and media lecturer at Paris' Sorbonne-Nouvelle University.

The British agent had not appeared in a game title for more than a decade before "First Light" -- with follow-ups to 1997 Ninten-



Video games are seen on display at a Gamestop store in the Barton Creek Square mall on May 04, 2026 in Austin, Texas.

do 64 mega-hit "Goldeneye" leaving most players neither shaken nor stirred. "First Light" is also the first game with the Bond franchise under the stewardship of Amazon, which bought studio MGM in 2022.

- Modern reboot -

Built by "Hitman" developers IO Interactive, "First Light" offers a new version of Bond's origin story, dropping players into the shoes of a cocky but callow young version of the spy still earning his stripes.

"It makes sense that Amazon's first dip into 007 mythology should be with a

game," games and culture journalist Keith Stuart of British paper The Guardian argued in a newsletter this month.

"In the cinema, Bond's legacy as a character has become problematic and his motivations as a modern British secret agent uncertain," he added.

Video game adaptations of films date back as far as the late 1970s.

But they had their moment in the sun from the mid-1980s, with games often released alongside blockbusters' appearance in cinemas.

Frequently of questionable

quality, the tie-in games felt to many players like a cash grab profiting from the movies' marketing campaigns.

By the 2000s, some franchises offered games that fleshed out or complemented the worlds depicted on the silver screen.

But data provided by Blanchet shows the genre rapidly tailing off in the early 2010s.

- Ageing gamers -

Between 1975 and 2011, just 547 films inspired around 2,000 games -- 10 percent of the total published over

the period, he estimated. Blanchet argued that today's resurgence in beloved pop-culture sagas is part of the "routine functioning" of the industry, rather than representing any kind of "renewal".

"The average age of video game players has been getting older, and studios know it," he said.

To stand out, publishers "try to guarantee their game will succeed" by including characters known and loved by large audiences. The pressure is all the greater given the doldrums the whole games industry has been traversing for more than two years, Blanchet noted.

Successes like "Indiana Jones and the Great Circle" or "Hogwarts Legacy" have been matched by more mixed receptions, such as for "Star Wars Outlaws" from Ubisoft.

That chance of success means audiences are likely to see still more adaptations in the coming years.

"Modern video games are able to sidestep the complexities of, let's say, compromised cinematic franchises, giving fans the bits of the experience they want without the detritus of dodgy story arcs and strait-jacketed mythologies," journalist Stuart wrote. □



Newly-installed iron window guards adorn the window of the Gallerie d'Apollon (Apollo's gallery) of the Louvre Museum, on the Quai Francois Mitterrand side, in Paris on January 6, 2026, several weeks after thieves used a furniture lift to break into the museum.

Paris, France

Last year's brazen robbery of the Louvre when thieves made off with jewellery worth some \$100 million

is set to become a movie and a documentary series, a publisher said on Tuesday.

French director Romain

Louvre heist to be turned into film

Gavras whose work includes 2025 Hollywood film "Sacrifice" starring Anya Taylor-Joy and music videos including most recently a hypnotic school-boy choreography for GENER8ION will draw inspiration from the investigative book "Main basse sur le Louvre" (literally "A grab at the Louvre").

Film rights to the book about the October 19, 2025 heist had been sold to the production company Iconoclast while rights for a documentary series were acquired by a British producer, the Flammarion

publishing house said. The book, written by three journalists, from French dailies Le Parisien and Le Monde, and weekly glossy magazine Paris Match, is to hit bookstores on Wednesday.

According to trade magazine Le Film Francais, the movie project is in development, though neither the title nor the cast has been announced.

The Louvre heist sent shockwaves around the world and sparked a security crisis within the world-famous museum that ultimately

led to the replacement of its director, Laurence des Cars.

After seven months of investigation, and despite the arrests of the main suspects, the jewels have still not been found.

The authors said their apparent disappearance "has become a dense mystery, a puzzle that has plunged investigators into deep confusion".

The heist illustrates how "the theft of artworks has become a business like any other for many criminals", they say. "The criminal underworld has found a new cash cow." □

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SETAR



Karl-Anthony Towns #32 and Miles McBride #2 of the New York Knicks celebrate with the Bob Cousy Trophy after defeating the Cleveland Cavaliers 130-93 in Game Four of the NBA Eastern Conference Finals at Rocket Arena on May 25, 2026 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Knicks sweep Cavs to reach first NBA Finals since 1999

Washington, United States

The New York Knicks advanced to the NBA Finals for the first time since 1999 with a 130-93 victory at Cleveland on Monday, stretching their team-record playoff win streak to 11 games.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 19 points and 14 rebounds, O.G. Anunoby added 17 points and reserve Landry Shamet had 16 points with 4-of-4 three-point shooting to lead the Knicks' blowout triumph.

"We're going to enjoy it for a day or two but we've got a larger goal here and we've got to start locking in," Shamet said.

New York swept the Cavaliers 4-0 in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference final and will play for the crown starting June 3.

New York, who won their only NBA titles in 1970 and 1973, will face either defending champions Oklahoma City or San Antonio,

who are tied 2-2 in the Western Conference final. "We've got four more wins to try and go get and we know it's going to be even harder," Shamet said. "Being in this position with this team, it's pretty special."

The Knicks would have to sweep the finals to equal the NBA record playoff win streak of 15 by Golden State in 2017.

"We knew our team was capable of doing this," Towns said.

"All we had to do is put the work in and continue to believe in each other. That's what we did and that's why we're here."

- Brunson stars -

Jalen Brunson, who was named the series Most Valuable Player with an average 25.5 points, 7.8 assists and 3.3 rebounds, added 15 points for New York, who improved to 12-2 in the playoffs. "It means a lot, but I wouldn't be here

without my teammates, the belief they had in me," said Brunson, who was two years old when the Knicks last made the finals, when his father was a guard on the club.

"They give me the confidence. They let me be me. Most importantly, we all believe in each other from top to bottom. It's an honor to play with them."

Teammate Josh Hart paid tribute to Brunson.

"He doesn't let us get too high or too low," said Hart. "He wants to make sure we double down on our habits and play this game to win. "Everybody wants each other to be successful. Everybody is willing to sacrifice for the betterment of the team. When you do that, that's what makes a great team."

The Knicks closed the first quarter with an 8-0 run and began the second with a 12-0 surge to lead 50-26. □



Team Visma Lease a Bike Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard wearing the overall leader's pink jersey (Maglia Rosa) celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 16th stage of the Giro d'Italia 2026 - Tour of Italy cycling race between Bellinzona and Cari, Switzerland, on May 26, 2026.

Vingegaard climbs to his fourth stage win to tighten grip on Giro

Cari, Switzerland

Jonas Vingegaard soloed to victory in the 16th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Tuesday in the Swiss resort of Cari to tighten his grip on the overall race lead.

The Dane launched his attack 6.5km from the finish line at the end of 113km stage raced entirely within Switzerland to claim his fourth win in as many summit finishes.

Vingegaard finished more than a minute ahead of Austria's Felix Gall and Australia's Jay Hindley to consolidate his pink jersey with a lead of more than four minutes with five stages left until the final stage in Rome on Sunday.

"My teammates and I were very motivated, we wanted to try to win while wearing the pink jersey," said Vingegaard.

"We decided to go for it at the first opportunity because if it hadn't worked out we would still have had another chance later on."

The 29-year-old Visma Lease a Bike rider is bidding to become just the eighth man to complete the clean sweep of the three Grand Tours.

Having won the Tour de France in 2022 and 2023, and the Vuelta a Espana last year, he is now well-placed in the Giro's pink jersey.

On Tuesday, Vingegaard secured his tenth win of the season, more than any other rider in the peloton including Slovenian Tadej Pogacar, who has nine.

Before the Giro, the stage race specialist had won the Paris-Nice and the Tour of Catalonia, each time with two stage wins.

And he has continued his momentum in the Italian race deprived of big stars including Pogacar, who won six stages on his way to overall victory in the 2024 edition, before also triumphing in the Tour de France two months later.

"I'm taking it day by day. There are still four stages left and we'll see what we can do between now and the end of the race," added Vingegaard. □

Sabalenka thrives in French Open heat, Sinner waits in wings

Paris, France

Aryna Sabalenka began her French Open campaign with a comfortable win on Tuesday as fellow world number one Jannik Sinner prepared to open his bid for a career Grand Slam in the night session. The Belarusian top seed hurried through a 6-4, 6-2 win against Spanish world number 50 Jessica Bouzas Maneiro as temperatures continued to soar through the first week of the tournament.

The only real blip for Sabalenka as she returned to winning ways on clay after a surprise early exit from the Italian Open was her failure to serve out the match on Court Philippe Chatrier.

But the four-time major



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka plays a backhand return to Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro during their women's singles match on day 3 of the French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris on May 26, 2026.

Open the only major title still to elude his grasp.

Double-reigning champion Carlos Alcaraz is absent and the Italian has a 29-match win streak but six rounds stand between him and the men's final on June 7, starting with his French first-round opponent, Clement Tabur.

For Sinner, the occasion also marks a return to Court Philippe Chatrier almost 12 months on from his five-set defeat in last year's final when he held three championship points against Alcaraz.

- Gauff 'glad' -

Women's defending champion Coco Gauff made short work of fellow American Taylor Townsend, kicking off her tournament with a clinical 6-4, 6-0 performance.

The fourth seed joked the heat was "nothing" as she grew up in Florida, but added: "Honestly I felt more bad for the fans. Dang you're watching in the heat and I hoped no one passed out. So I'm glad I finished quickly."

Gauff will next meet Egyptian qualifier Mayar Sherif. Russian sixth seed Daniil Medvedev went down in five sets to Australian wild-card Adam Walton.

It was the seventh time in 10 French Open appearances that the former world number one has fallen in the first round.

"I know that I am in good shape and I can play well in Roland Garros. I can," Medvedev said.

"It's just tougher for me, and first rounds are usually tougher for me, but I will always come here."

Rising US star Iva Jovic, 18, further confirmed her potential as she strolled past Alexandra Eala 6-4, 6-2 to book a clash with compatriot and former world number eight Emma Navarro, who defeated Indonesian Janice Tjen in straight sets.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, the 2021 runner-up, moved past the round of 128 as his French opponent Alexandre Muller retired injured when trailing 6-2, 3-0. □

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winner broke in the next game to book her spot in the second round after just 75 minutes on court.

"I'm super happy to be through. I feel like it was a tricky first-round opponent," Sabalenka said.

"I'd say that for me always not easy, the first rounds. And then, as I get further in the tournament, as I get more comfortable, my level becomes better."

Sabalenka will face France's Elsa Jacquemot in the round of 64.

Following a wet and cold Italian Open earlier in May and similar conditions during the practice week at Roland Garros, the big-hitting 28-year-old said the scorching conditions played somewhat in her favour.

"I'd say that it was a bit warm," she joked.

"Especially compared to the first days when I first got here, it was like 14C, like, freezing.

"Now it's boiling hot and balls are flying, everything is much faster. But physically I feel strong, so I feel like it can benefit me."

Conditions will have cooled somewhat when Sinner makes his bow later Tuesday.

The 24-year-old stands on the brink of a career Grand Slam, with the French