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Live snakes, dead bears and brain worms: RFK Jr's wild animal antics



This screenshot from a video posted May 26, 2026 on the social media platform X account of US Secretary of Health Robert F. Kennedy Jr. shows Kennedy Jr. grabbing two snakes with his bare hands on a patio in Florida.

Washington, United States

A viral video of U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. picking up two writhing black snakes with his bare hands has put his often bizarre adventures with animals back in the spotlight.

Kennedy is an unusual government minister, surrounded by controversy over his fringe views that edge into conspiracy theories.

He's expressed skepticism about vaccines, falsely linking childhood immunizations to autism, and insisted that fluoride in public drinking water is unsafe.

And numerous stories have emerged about Kennedy's offbeat antics involving animals, accentuating his eccentric image.

In 2024, Kennedy acknowl-

edged in a video that a decade earlier, he had put a dead bear cub in New York City's Central Park with a bicycle to make it look like a biking accident.

He said he had found the bear upstate after it had been hit by a car, and had put it in his vehicle to skin it, but then abandoned the plan. The case mystified authorities for years.

According to a story recounted by his daughter, Kennedy also used a chainsaw to cut off the head of a dead whale that had washed ashore in Massachusetts.

He then strapped it to the roof of the family minivan to take it home to study its skull, she said.

Similarly, in a 2026 biogra-

phy, Kennedy said he cut off the penis of a road-killed raccoon to study it later.

In another case, the New York Times reported that a doctor found a dead parasitic worm in Kennedy's brain after he had complained of memory loss. He said he has recovered with no lasting impact.

None of these stories seem to embarrass Kennedy, the son of Robert F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1968 while running for president.

"He has a relationship with animals that most of us only dream of. Nightmares are also dreams," wrote Washington Post columnist Monica Hesse.

- 'Don't copy him' -

In the latest animal adventure, Kennedy on Tuesday posted a video of himself on X picking up two thin black snakes by their tails from the corner of an outdoor patio.

Wearing a tie and dress shirt, he holds up the writhing snakes and smiles.

At one point, he appears to be bitten by one of the snakes, while off camera a woman's voice says, "Bobby, Bobby, please."

"Cheryl cheerleads the removal of a pair of Black Racers from Dr Oz's patio," Kennedy's caption reads, an apparent reference to his wife, actress Cheryl Hines.

Mehmet Oz is the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, part of the health department Kennedy heads.

Black racers "are non-venomous and harmless to humans as long as they are left alone," according to the National Park Service.

Cameron Young, of the Center for Snake Conservation, warned that people should not pick them up as they will bite.

"What I don't want is people copying him," Young told AFP. "If a kid picks up a venomous snake because RFK did, then the kid may receive a medically significant bite." □



Handlers hold Andy Warhol's "Brigitte Bardot" during a press preview on May 1, 2026 for Sotheby's May Marquee Modern & Contemporary Auctions in New York.

New York art auctions roar back with blockbuster sales

New York, United States

With record prices for Jackson Pollock, Constantin Brancusi and Mark Rothko, New York's spring auctions are soaring, confirming a trend that began in late 2025: blockbuster sales are back.

According to an AFP database, 12 works have already sold for more than \$30 million this May in the city, including two that exceeded \$100 million.

That's a reversal following a slump in sales leading up to 2025, which experts attributed to global economic uncertainty and a lack of high-value works on the market. "We're really in a trend reversal," Thierry Ehrmann, head of art market information firm Artprice, told AFP.

A Jackson Pollock painting on Monday became the fourth most expensive work ever sold at auction when it was bought at Christie's in New York.

With its black drips of paint accented by touches of red on a huge canvas spanning over three meters (nine feet), Pollock's "Number 7A, 1948" sold for \$181.2 million. The previous record for American painter Pollock was \$61.2 million, set in 2021.

Also on Monday, a bronze head cast by the French-Romanian artist Constantin Brancusi reached \$107.6 million compared with \$71.2 million for his previous record in 2018.

- Market shift -

The first signs of a spending surge date back to late 2025. Sixteen works sold for more than \$30 million that year, all in New York, with two records at Sotheby's.

Bought for \$236.4 million, "Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer" by Austrian painter Gustav Klimt became the second most expensive work ever sold at auction.

And "The Dream (The Bed)," a self-portrait by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, was acquired for \$54.7 million -- making it the priciest painting by a woman.

Market analysts note that many of these works come from prestigious private collections released onto the market in single blocks, which increases their appeal to major collectors.

Ehrmann, of Artprice, said there has also been a shift in the demographic of buyers.

"It's no longer a market for the ultra-rich," he said, with younger people aged around 35 pursuing auctions, often drawn from the tech world and the global south.

And more buyers are women, Ehrmann said, which can benefit female artists.

The auction record for the American painter Alice Neel was broken on Monday at Christie's, with \$5.7 million for "Mother and Child (Nancy and Olivia)." □

The safer scenic route: U.S. road fatalities hit historic low

For decades, the great American road trip has been a symbol of freedom, punctuated by the hum of tires on asphalt and the unfolding of the vast continental landscape. However, for many travelers, that sense of freedom was often shadowed by a lingering anxiety over safety. This week, new data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has provided the ultimate peace of mind: road-related fatalities in the United States have plummeted to their second-lowest level on record.

This statistical milestone isn't just a win for data analysts; it is a profound victory for every family currently packing a cooler and loading a suitcase into a trunk. As we enter the peak spring and summer travel season, the American highway is becoming a sanctuary of safety rather than a source of stress.

The tech guardian on your dashboard Experts attribute this dramatic shift to a "perfect storm" of safety innovations that have finally reached a critical mass in the American fleet. Features that were once considered lux-



Cars pass through the southbound toll plaza of the Golden Gate Bridge on November 25, 2025 in San Francisco, California.

ury add-ons such as automatic emergency braking, lane-departure warnings, and blind-spot detection are now standard in most vehicles. These technologies act as a silent co-pilot, correcting human error before it can lead to a collision.

"We are seeing the results of a decade of engineering excellence," says Dr. Elena Rossi, a transport safety consultant. "It's no longer

just about surviving a crash; it's about the vehicle's ability to prevent the crash from happening in the first place. For the vacationing family, this means the car is looking out for them, even when the driver is distracted by a beautiful view or a backseat singalong."

Infrastructure for the people Beyond the car itself, the "Safe Streets for All" initiative a federal program that funded thousands of lo-

cal infrastructure projects over the last few years is paying massive dividends. Travelers will notice subtler changes on their journeys: clearer signage, high-visibility road markings, and "rumble strips" that are more effective than ever. In many towns along popular tourist routes, "road diets" have narrowed lanes and added protected bike paths, slowing down traffic and making main-street

strolls safer for pedestrians and motorists alike.

A cultural shift toward mindfulness Perhaps most encouraging is the change in driver behavior. Following a period of increased recklessness during the early 2020s, a new culture of "mindful motoring" has taken hold. National awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement of distracted driving laws have begun to shift the social tide. Texting while driving is increasingly viewed with the same social stigma as drunk driving, leading to a more focused and polite driving environment.

The road ahead For the readers of this vacation newspaper, this news is an invitation to explore. Whether you are navigating the winding curves of the Pacific Coast Highway or the long, straight stretches of the Great Plains, the environment around you is more forgiving than it has been in nearly a century.

As we look toward a future with even more integrated smart-road technology, the goal of "Vision Zero" zero road deaths no longer feels like a utopian dream. □

N. Mexico becomes first in nation to guarantee no-cost care for all families

By **JOSHUA BOWLING**
Gazette Staff Writer

SANTA FE — In a move that has sent ripples across the national political landscape, New Mexico has officially become the first state in the union to offer universal, no-cost childcare to nearly all its residents. The initiative, signed into law this week, effectively treats early childhood education as a public right, similar to the K-12 school system.

Under the new "Universal Child Care" (UCC) framework, the state has eliminated traditional income eligibility "cliffs." Previously, families who received a modest raise at work often found themselves disquali-

fied from subsidies, leaving them with childcare bills that outpaced their earnings. Now, the state will cover the full cost of care at licensed providers for families across the economic spectrum.

"This is a transformation of our social contract," Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham said during a press conference at a local community center. "We are telling every parent in New Mexico that your ability to go to work or finish your degree should not be dictated by the crushing cost of daycare."

The program's engine is the Early Childhood Trust Fund, which has swelled

to an unprecedented \$11 billion. This war chest is fueled by the state's record-breaking oil and natural gas revenues. By pivoting these resources toward the youngest New Mexicans, the state expects to save the average family approximately \$1,000 per month per child.

Economists are already signaling that the move could be a massive boon for the local workforce. By removing the financial barrier to care, thousands of parents predominantly mothers who were previously sidelined by high costs are expected to re-enter the labor market.

To meet the anticipated surge in demand, the state is also pouring \$12.7 mil-

lion into a low-interest loan fund to help providers expand their facilities. Furthermore, the policy includes a "wage floor" incentive, offering higher reimburse-

ment rates to centers that pay their staff a minimum of \$18 per hour, addressing the chronic labor shortages that have long plagued the industry. □



New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham delivers a speech during the COP30 UN Climate Change Conference, in Belem, Para State, Brazil on November 11, 2025.

'I'm still lost': Los Angeles airport baffles travelers ahead of World Cup

Los Angeles, United States

An exhausted TJ James has just stepped off an 18-hour flight at Los Angeles international airport where he is getting a taste of the chaos that awaits tens of thousands of people expected for the World Cup, which starts on June 11.

With his wife, their two children, and four suitcases in tow, he steps out into a river of frustrated drivers.

Amid a cacophony of honking horns, the family struggles to identify the shuttle bus that will take them to their rental car.

"There's no signs really saying where I gotta go," says the mining industry employee, who traveled from Perth, Australia. "I did my research, and I'm still struggling."

James, 47, has passed through this airport several times before, and feels sorry for foreign visitors.

"I'm still lost, and I'm an American," he tells AFP. "This is really annoying."

The infuriating design of LAX -- the main airport in America's second biggest city -- is almost legendary. About 95,000 vehicles pass through the airport daily, most of which funnel into a bottleneck: a horseshoe-shaped roadway looping past all the terminals, where every passenger tries to get



A passenger rolls his luggage on Sepulveda Blvd near Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) Los Angeles, California, on May 15, 2026.

dropped off or picked up as close to the entrance as possible.

In an effort to alleviate congestion, taxis and ride-share services are prohibited from picking up passengers along this main thoroughfare.

- Unfinished train -

To make their way out of the airport, arriving passengers who don't have friends or family coming must take shuttle buses, which all look alike, yet travel to different destinations depending on the color of their designat-

ed stop: green for the taxi lot, purple for car rentals, red for certain hotels, pink for other terminals.

"LAX airport is definitely an airport that people in Los Angeles love to hate," says Joshua Schank, a public policy specialist at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Next month's World Cup, where Los Angeles is hosting eight matches, was supposed to allow the Californian metropolis to burnish its image, just two years before the city hosts the Olympic Games.

To help ease blockages at the airport, an "automated people mover" train connecting it to the city's sparse subway system was scheduled to go into service in 2023.

But the \$3.5 billion project has become bogged down in delays and contractual disputes, and remains in the testing phase. People arriving at the airport now can watch as the empty trains shuttle impotently back and forth.

They will not be ready in time for World Cup fans, and authorities are no lon-

ger providing a start date. LAX managers declined AFP requests for an interview.

This train "has not received the kind of attention that it really deserves in terms of urgency from elected leaders," sighs Schank.

- 'Hell' -

It's not just at the airport that the transport network is creaky.

As a place that came of age with the automobile, Los Angeles is a sprawl of freeways with a public transport system that would embarrass any medium-sized European city.

Buses are infrequent and haphazard, while the subway has only six trundling lines radiating out from the centre, making connections impossible without going all the way in and then all the way out again.

The roads are often pockmarked with potholes, further slowing down the millions of tightly-packed cars, with 5-mile (8-kilometer) commute easily taking 45 minutes.

City managers, eager to ease the headaches for fans flocking to the stadium in Inglewood, have said they will deploy 300 buses running to the games from a dozen different locations, including the airport. □

New York, New Jersey announce probe into FIFA's World Cup ticket sales

New York, United States

The U.S. states of New York and New Jersey announced a probe Wednesday into whether FIFA has

exploited football fans with "impossibly high" World Cup ticket prices.

Prosecutors in the two states said they would in-

vestigate ticket practices by the game's governing body and organizer of the tournament starting June 11 in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

"FIFA has turned buying a ticket to the World Cup into a gauntlet of confusion, fake scarcity, and impossibly high prices," said Jennifer Davenport, attorney general for New Jersey, which will host the final on July 19.

"We are committed to conducting a thorough investigation of FIFA's conduct," she said.

The investigation will probe reports that fans were misled about seat locations

and hurt by aggressive demand-based price-setting, where prices rise according to sales.

"New Yorkers have been waiting years for the World Cup to come to their backyard and they deserve a fair shot at affordable tickets," said the state's attorney general, Letitia James.

"No one should be manipulated into paying sky-high prices for seats, and fans should be able to trust that the tickets they purchase will be the ones they receive."

Much of the controversy has focused on the cost of attending the eight games at the New York Giants

and Jets NFL stadium just outside New York City in New Jersey.

In addition to tickets, it will cost \$100 to take the train from New York -- instead of the typical \$12.90 fare.

In May, authorities in California also said they had contacted FIFA over possible legal violations in ticket sales.

Fan organization Football Supporters Europe (FSE) has branded the World Cup pricing structure as "extortionate" and a "monumental betrayal," citing ticket prices that have put the tournament - expected to help generate \$13 billion for FIFA - out of reach for many. □



A "FIFA World Cup 2026" banner is displayed at the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey on May 9, 2026.

Frugal and more online: smarter spenders rewrite luxury's China dream



Two women chat beside empty display shelves at the Galeries Lafayette mall, a day before it closes, in Beijing on May 26, 2026.

Beijing, China

When Beijinger Jacqueline Li first heard one of her favorite luxury department stores in the city was closing, she was shocked -- until she considered how Chinese spending habits have changed in recent years. The closure of France's Galeries Lafayette in the Chinese capital on Wednesday takes place against the backdrop of a sluggish post-pandemic economy and shifting consumption practices.

It is the latest sign foreign luxury brands might not retain the pull and the cash-

flow that they counted on in the world's second largest economy in the 2010s. "I think people's spending habits after the pandemic may be more cost-effective and practical," Li told AFP, on a pilgrimage to the Galeries on its penultimate day of operations. "It's no longer as over-the-top as before, like needing to have an impressive logo. So you'll see that (demand for) luxury goods has fallen," the international school admissions officer said.

While luxury consumption in Europe and the United States has been driven by

pandemic-era savings, Chinese consumers have spent more frugally as the post-Covid recovery has stuttered.

The property market, into which millions had poured their savings, is struggling to recover from a long-running crisis, while middle class incomes have stagnated and youth unemployment remains high. Last month, consumer spending grew at the slowest pace in more than three years, official data showed. In 2025, the luxury market in China declined three to five percent, after plummeting 17 to 19 percent

the year before, according to consultancy Bain & Company.

- Pandemic hangover -

Before the pandemic, China's burgeoning middle class produced plenty of first-time high-end buyers, said Lisa Nan, editor at Jing Daily, a publication that focuses on China's luxury market.

Now, "because of the economic downturn, people are much more rational and they have to navigate through this difficult period", she said.

Even in financial hub Shanghai's swanky shopping districts, buyers still viscerally feel the uncertainty of the Covid pandemic.

"I find myself wanting to save money even more now," said 24-year-old July Xu, who was browsing the stores in upmarket Xintiandi with her friends.

"Having lived through such an extraordinary period (during the pandemic), I've come to realise that having some personal savings is quite important."

"Beforehand, people felt like money came pretty easily, with their income increasing every year, but during the pandemic a lot of people suddenly lost their jobs," said 61-year-old Hu Shuqing, speaking to AFP outside a luxury fra-

grance store.

Some analysts think there could be light on the horizon though, with the country's high-wage sector steadily growing.

"There could be a pent-up demand," said Jelena Sokolova from investment research firm Morningstar.

"(People) have a lot of savings, and once they feel kind of good, or better about their financial situation, they could go on and spend this money that has been accumulated."

- Changing market -

Unfortunately for traditional brands, consumer confidence is not the only challenge they face in China.

The dominance of e-commerce means shoppers from college students to retirees are used to buying marked-down clothing in just a few taps from the comfort of their sofas.

They have a plethora of choices, from apps like Taobao and JD.com to hours-long sales livestreams on the Instagram-like Xiaohongshu and Douyin, China's version of TikTok.

At Galeries Lafayette on Tuesday, as employees packed away denuded mannequins, admissions officer Li said she thought the store had been too reliant on "the traditional... business model that has existed for decades in France".

U.N. rights chief hails Pope's 'timely' AI appeal

Geneva, Switzerland The United Nations rights

chief on Wednesday welcomed as "timely" Pope Leo XIV's manifesto warning of the risks of artificial intelligence, urging the world to remain focused on "shared humanity".

In an encyclical called "Magnifica Humanitas" (Magnificent Humanity), the first U.S. pope on Monday set out a list of warnings about how the technology could impact humanity.

He warned among other things against "a race for

ever more powerful algorithms and larger datasets, driven by the desire to secure geopolitical or commercial dominance".

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk hailed the pope's manifesto, describing it on X as a "timely appeal for dignity and justice in the age of AI".

"Our compass must remain our shared humanity," he insisted.

AI could be worth up to \$4.8 trillion by 2033, a 25-fold increase in a decade, while concentrating its

profits in the hands of a limited few, according to the UN.

In his encyclical, Leo sounded the alarm over AI-directed weaponry, saying it was "not permissible to entrust lethal" decisions to tech.

He called for "disarming AI", which he stressed "means freeing it from the mentality of 'armed' competition".

"To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity," Leo wrote.

Turk agreed. "Technology should serve people - not

replace or control them," he wrote.



U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk speaks during a press conference as part of his working visit to South Korea at the Seoul Global Center in Seoul on May 13, 2026.



Puerto Rican singer Bad Bunny performs onstage during the Apple Music Super Bowl LX Halftime Show at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, on February 8, 2026.

Madrid pumps up the volume on Latin music

Madrid, Spain

Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny kicks off a series of 10 concerts on Saturday in Madrid, a city with a booming Latino population now emerging as a new hub of the Latin music industry.

It will be the most shows of the singer's "Debi Tirar Mas Fotos" tour outside of his native Puerto Rico, where he staged a 31-show residency last year.

Colombian pop superstar Shakira will follow with a 12-night residency beginning September 18 at a temporary venue under construction in southern Madrid that will hold roughly 50,000 people.

The so-called Queen of Latin Pop has vowed to go "all-out" for the Madrid shows, the final stop on her "Women Don't Cry Anymore" tour and her only dates in Europe.

"Right now, Madrid is an indispensable stop for any major Latin artist on tour," Billboard's chief content officer for Latin music, Miami-based Leila Cobo, told AFP.

"Every single Latin star of note plays Madrid."

That was not always the case, despite the Spanish capital's deep historical ties with Latin America.

For decades, Madrid's music scene was better known for Spanish pop, rock and

flamenco, with Latin music relegated to nightclubs outside the city centre.

But over the past two decades, Latin beats have increasingly taken the limelight.

The surge in high-profile Latin concerts reflects Madrid's expanding role in the Latin music industry, driven in part by rising immigration from Latin America that has reshaped the city's audience and music market. The number of residents in the Madrid region born in Latin America has risen from about 80,000 in 1999 to just over one million in 2024, roughly one in seven residents, according to the latest official figures.

That demographic shift has pushed Latin rhythms into the mainstream in Madrid, from reggaeton and hip-hop to pop and traditional styles, eased by a shared language, said Cobo, the author of "Decoding 'Despacito': An Oral History of Latin Music".

- 'Attracts talent' -

Music by Latin artists was largely absent from Spanish radio in 2008, but by 2023 it accounted for 44 percent of all songs played on music stations, according to a Nebrija University study published last year.

Latin artists have also become dominant on streaming platforms in Spain, with

reggaeton and urban acts such as Bad Bunny and Karol G regularly topping annual charts.

"Young people have grown up listening to reggaeton and Latin urban music, so it's basically their natural soundtrack," the study's author, Nebrija University communications professor Lourdes Moreno Cazalla, told AFP.

"For them, it doesn't feel like foreign music; it's the sound of their youth."

The genre's rise has attracted more producers and songwriters to Madrid, and spawned new festivals dedicated to the genre, a trend that exploded in the 2010s.

Colombian singer, songwriter and producer Mauricio Rengifo, who co-produced the 2017 hit "Despacito", moved to Madrid in March after a decade in Los Angeles, according to Spanish daily El Pais.

"It has become the capital of Spanish-language music. Madrid is very much in fashion it's a place where people live well, and that attracts talent," he told the paper.

- 'Gateway into Europe' -

Most major global record labels have offices in the Spanish capital and have stepped up their focus on Latin music, particularly artist development. □



A female dolphin, standing 2 meters tall and weighing 200 kg, swims among bathers near the beach in the bay of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, southwestern France on April 24, 2026.

'Curious' dolphin charms French town but experts concerned

Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France

A young bottlenose dolphin has taken up residence in the waters of the French beach town of Saint-Jean-de-Luz, delighting locals and tourists while raising concerns about the animal's safety.

The female cetacean has been lingering just off the southwestern town's central beach since mid-October. On a recent morning, with the heat already intense and the beach crowded, a dolphin's fin was seen regularly rising above the water just a few meters from the shore, weaving among the swimmers.

Pascale Fossecave, an oceanographer and the city's deputy for environmental affairs who has been observing the animal, said she had apparently been expelled from her pod.

The dolphin has been seeking "social interaction", readily approaching the shore and displaying a marked "curiosity toward humans", Fossecave said.

Measuring over two meters in length and weighing between 200 and 250 kilograms, the dolphin is believed to be between six and eight years old and has not yet reached maturity, she added.

"The reason why she came here escapes us," Fossecave said.

"These animals do not get lost. They can communicate over distances of up to 20 kilometres," she added. "We know she can hear the other animals."

While the dolphin has thrilled locals, her presence has also raised concerns about her safety, as well as that of swimmers, as the summer season approaches and France endures scorching temperatures this week.

Authorities have called on beachgoers to behave responsibly, warning that inappropriate conduct could result in a 750-euro fine, said Bixente Luberriaga, head of beach safety.

"Unfortunately, we end up managing humans more than the dolphin, because it's human behaviour that causes problems," said Fossecave.

"We see gatherings and attempts to surround her, which can create risky situations."

Experts caution that frequent close contact with humans can be harmful to dolphins, increasing the risk of injury or death. Once they become fully accustomed to human presence, they may lose their natural wariness of people, boats, and jet skis, and most do not survive for long under such conditions.

Fossecave expressed hope that the dolphin would eventually return to open sea.

Across the border in Spain, a dolphin nicknamed Pakito settled in the waters off San Sebastian in the 1990s, where he lived for several years and became both a local celebrity and a symbol of the city. □

Create museum memories with the entire family!

Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you to these locations.

Museum of Industry Aruba

The Museum of Industry is located in San Nicolas. This museum presents the history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments fund in 2003 so it could be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Aruban Museum Foundation (FMA), which is a foundation that maintains, preserves, and protects the Aruban cultural sector, history, and nature. The museum of Industry is

open daily from 9 am till 6 pm.

For more information check out their Facebook page: Museum of Industry Aruba.

Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury complex in downtown Oranjestad has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC.

In the late 1980's AMA identified its need for an adequate housing for its collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th



century on a plot of approximately 1,700 m2.

In 1997 the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project. In 2004 a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006 restoration and construction work began on the monumental buildings and the new to build exhibition space. In December 2007 the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employees moved to the new location. The final design for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.

At the new location the National Archaeological Mu-

seum Aruba uses approximately 500 m2 for its permanent exhibit. This exhibit showcases archaeological objects and conveys modern exhibition techniques information on the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum regularly hosts public seminars, special exhibitions and workshop for visitors to enjoy.

The museum is open daily from 9 am till 5 pm.

For more information check out the Facebook page National Archaeological Museum Aruba or website: www.manaruba.org

Editor's note: Pictures are property of the respective museums. □



Exploring the Mainstreet of San Nicolas

SAN NICOLAS— At Just 11 miles southeast from Oranjestad you will enter the city San Nicolas, also known as Sunrise City or Chocolate City. A city that is rich in authentic culture and island charm. San Nicolas is Aruba's second largest city and was once a bustling company town dominated by the oil industry since the early 1930's.

Over the course of four decades, its demographics had changed immensely due to a stream of Afro-Caribbean and South American workers who came to fill the jobs in the oil refinery between the 1920's until the 1960's. To this day trac-

es of the multicultural influences in culinary offerings and customs, housing and population are clearly visible in San Nicolas – more than anywhere else on the island.

Flow of history

If you are looking for history San Nicolas has it.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. Here you will learn about gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and the tourism industries which made San Nicolas once a bustling business center. Experience the touching

stories of those who were part of this history.

The Community Museum holds a remarkable collection that spans millennia. Ancient fossils stand next to tableaus of an authentically recreated colonial kitchen and bedroom and 19th-century barbershop, just to name a few of the items of old-time Aruba that has been preserved. A collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance can be found here for the purpose of education or enjoyment.

The new San Nicolas

In the shadow of the refin-



ery, an art capital is quietly beginning to grow. This is the new San Nicolas, a place that is starting to become a magnet for all that is young, cool and hip in Aruba. Indeed, San Nicolas has all of the ingredients of an emerging cultural hub — varied history,

interesting architecture, and, perhaps most importantly, an urban layout that makes it walkable. As you walk around, the streets are silent but the walls are loud, filled with bright, colorful murals painted by a collection of artists from around the world. □

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(Oranjestad)—Up to grab an early dinner after a day of shopping or cruising? Take advantage of L'Avenue's Early Bird Special, and experience their innovative twist of traditional Belgian cuisine!

Located in a cozy nook at The Cove Mall—a short walking distance from the Holiday Inn and Paseo Herencia, this Belgian and French bistro offers a delicious and rich menu available through lunch and dinner from 11am to 10pm. Enjoy your lunch and/or dinner in a cool, air-conditioned interior area of the restaurant, accompanied by the warm lights and chic design that emphasizes the restaurant's laid-back, yet sophisticated ambience.

Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches—with a healthy selection of bread options—if you're going for a light meal, but just like their dinner selection, also includes



steak, chicken, fish, and even mussels and rabbit if you're craving a bit more of L'Avenue's exquisite menu. And let's not forget their wide selection of Belgian beer and European wine to complete the tasty experience!

But that's not all! L'Avenue is offering their guests their Early Bird Special, available

every day from 4pm to 7pm. Enjoy this affordable and delectable 3-course meal special at a comfortable price of \$32 per guest, including a glass of house wine.

L'Avenue honors and takes pride in serving the traditional Belgian and French flavors, but does not shy away from offering a flexible menu for their guests' needs. That's right, L'Avenue also offers to cater for their guests' dietary restrictions, making sure that each guest gets well taken care of!



More information

L'Avenue is situated at The Cove Mall in Palm Beach and is open every day from 11am to 10pm for lunch and dinner. To book a reservation or ask for more information, please contact their phone line at +297 6996400, send an e-mail info@lavenuearuba.com, or visit their website at lavenuearuba.com □

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

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

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

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

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



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Visit the island's popular cave sites!



(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadirikiri cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an "off-road" tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves.

Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadirikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

Woman in Quadirikiri Cave, Arikok National Park, Aruba As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind

the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadirikiri cave, the two love birds found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadirikiri Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling

of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

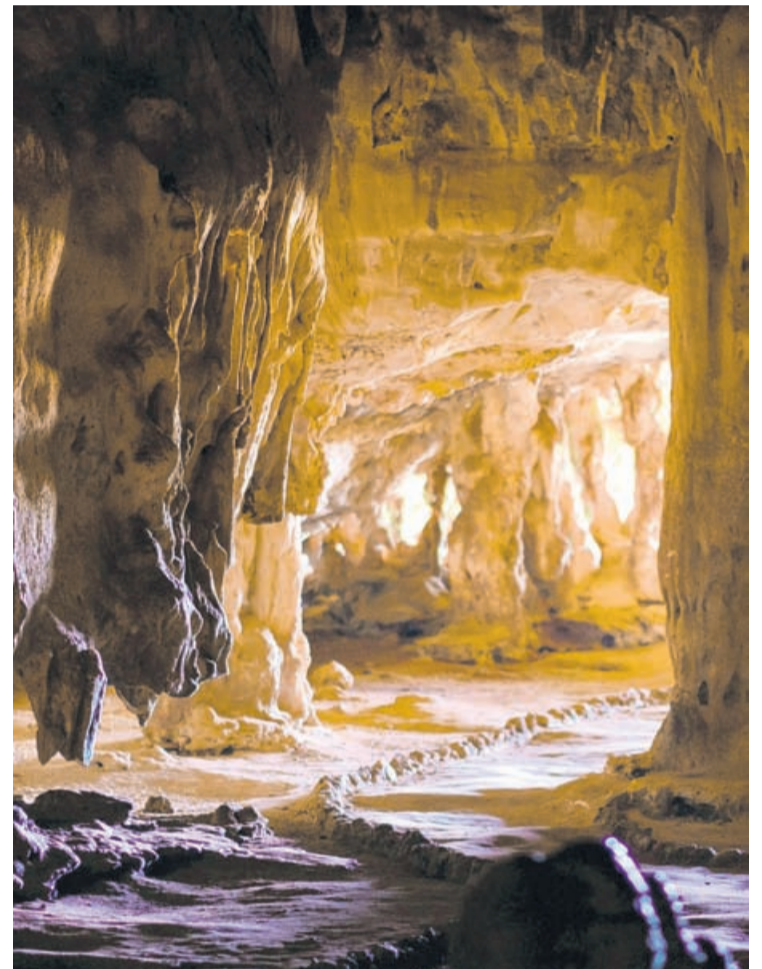
Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual ceremonies.

The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection



of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is inter-

esting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Arawak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy. Take care to not disturb the bats' habitat. □

Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses. Because of strong winds and breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.



There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come in hand if you want to try a new experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs one on each

side is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4x4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!



Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Lighthouse, is a good spot for learning and having fun if you're lucky! The waves at

Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most

southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City – San Nicolas, a trip to Boca Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and little crabs and snails.

Hadicurari

Here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get in on the action. Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest windsurfing competition in the Caribbean!

Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experience. The beach is also popular for paddleboarding and other watersport activities. □

Dining in? Try making some local favorites!

How to make "funchi"

(Oranjestad)—One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is "funchi hasa" (fried polenta sticks), a super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here's how to make it!

Before we start, get to know the basics

What is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups, stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick

and filling snack.

Ingredients (measured by heart)

1. Polenta flour/Funchi flour
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add too much. At this phase

of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it's cooled you can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.



When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it

with your favorite dipping sauce. □

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.

The Aruban Cunukero: From past to present

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's culture consists of rich historical traditions that make up the Aruban identity and lifestyle. However, the life of the cunukero (farmer) is perhaps the most important aspect of our culture, in a sense representing to locals the true essence of the Aruban.

Historically, cunucus (farms) played a huge role in the early social and economic development of Aruba, and its relevance dates back to the early days of the colonization era. Upon being discovered by Spanish conquistadors in the late 15th century, Aruba was used primarily as a ranch, housing horses and cattle brought from Europe. During the Dutch colonization era where the West Indian Company (WIC) dominated the economic sphere on the island, using the land to set up cattle farms and ranches remained popular.

Anthropologist Sidney Mintz divided Caribbean farmers back in four categories:

- The "squatters", who were mostly comprised of illegal and poor colonists, runaway slaves and deserters who took advantage of the Spanish's weak supervision on Caribbean islands like Cuba and the DR;
- Then you have "Early Yeomen", who were legal farmers who came to the west under contract. Once their contract expired, they were given a plot of land for independent use;
- Proto-Peasants were plantation slaves who were allowed to have a small piece of land to grow food for their own consumption. This was to curb the cost of living on the plantations;
- Lastly you have the "Runaway Peasantries", usually comprised of runaway slaves who acquired farming tools and cattle through stealing or through secret exchanges with other slaves from different plantations.



However, the Aruban cunukeros back then are hard to place, and their history may explain why.

From 1636 (beginning of Dutch colonization era) to before the oil industry in 1924, Aruba's population consisted of mostly farmers. These farmers were mostly indigenous and were characterized as peasants. They weren't allowed to participate in trading, but instead were granted a piece of land to live off of. However, in exchange for this grant, these indigenous farmers were obligated to work for the WIC, doing daily tasks such as taking care of or hunting cattle—large majority of which were destined for Curacao, clean water tanks and chop wood, among other things.

As much as these farmers were given to opportunity to live "free" with a plot of land, their exclusion from the trading and business world, as well as being deprived the chance

to become real property and cattle owners, made them a unique group among Caribbean farmers at the time.

The WIC placed a lot of restrictions on these indigenous farmers—a method to safeguard their cattle deposit on the island. The indigenous farmers were mostly granted less than 7 acres of land. Those who owned bigger land were either once affiliated with the WIC or were colonists who settled on the island to try their luck at farming. In 1767, there were about 120 houses/cunucus on the island.

These Aruban farmers were also limited to the amount of cattle they could keep. Most kept goats as cattle, as only those who were affiliated with the WIC could keep (more) sheep. Of the 76 goat herders on the island, about 45 of them had less than 30 goats, and only 7 of them had more than 60 goats.

It wasn't until the WIC was defunct in late 18th century that these farmers were able to obtain more freedom as cunukeros. After 1824, the government gave these farmers official permission to keep livestock, and the obligations once placed on them were officially discarded.

Because of the dry climate in Aruba, growing food for commercial purposes was not popular. The focus was mainly on cattle herding and taking care of livestock. However, livestock need food to

survive, and when Aruba experienced its duper dry climate, many farmers would see a big loss in their livestock, and hence profit.

Although the WIC at one point did try to come up with an initiative to get more people to have land on the island, the climate never really allowed real profit from farming. Because of the climate, Aruban farmers in general could not keep large quantities of livestock. At a certain point toward the end of the 18th century, the climate got so bad that many farmers decided to leave the island for a while.

For this reason, the farming economy on the island remained small. As the years went by and people noticed that these farms could not really produce any sustainable profit, farmers kept their small piece of land just to live off of. This is why the Aruban cunukeros only played a very tiny role into the plantation economy.

In modern Aruba, cunucus and cunukeros still exist on the island, fortunately with more freedom and more opportunity to tap into the agricultural market. These farmers usually sell their produce on a smaller scale, like during farmers' market events and other types of (holiday) events. □

Source: "Arubaans Akkoord: Opstellen over Aruba van voor de komst van de olieindustrie (Aruban Accord: Essays on Aruba Before the Arrival of the Oil Industry)" by Alofs, Luc; Rutgers, Wim; Coomans, Henny E. red.



CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

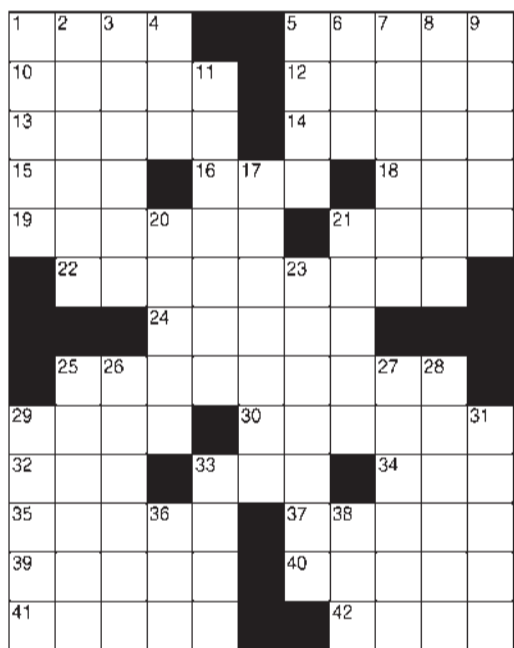


ACROSS

- 39 Loosen, as laces
- 1 Bit of change
- 5 Derision
- 10 Protons' places
- 12 Camp craft
- 13 Betray
- 14 Game setting
- 15 Quarter-back Manning
- 16 Resistance unit
- 18 Plopped down
- 19 Muralist Diego
- 21 Actor O'Shea
- 22 Vouched for
- 24 Kind of kitchen
- 25 Put right
- 29 Phone message
- 30 Charge for cash
- 32 Much of N. Amer.
- 33 French article
- 34 Phoned copy
- 35 Support staff
- 37 Bring to bear

DOWN

- 1 Bold one
- 2 Stressed type
- 3 Whodunit element
- 4 Moody music
- 5 Con man's con
- 6 Lot sight
- 7 Infant outfit
- 8 Jimmy's successor
- 9 "Swell!"
- 11 Express disdain for
- 17 From Port-au-Prince
- 20 Put up
- 21 Half note
- 23 Age for a quinceañera
- 25 Take offense at
- 26 Track bet
- 27 Decadent
- 28 More precious
- 29 Ballet costumes
- 31 Spare
- 33 Calls on
- 36 Popular song
- 38 Twice VII



5-6

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.

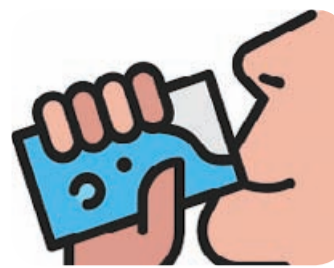
5-6 CRYPTOQUOTE

MWSHS XHS BSL WKCHR PE
NPBS IKHS XDHSSXQNS MWXE
MWS WKCH ASAPGXMSA MK
MWS GSHSIKEJ FEKLE XR
XBMSHEKKE MSX. — WSEHJ
OXISR

Cryptoquote: GETTING TO A PLACE OF COMFORT CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE. — MARCUS SAMUELSSON

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.



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

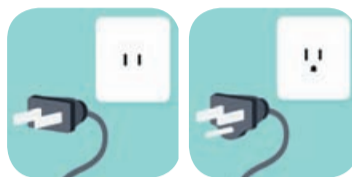
Safety

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.

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

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.

JUNE CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 02 TUE | GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C |
| 09 TUE | CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CARNIVAL MARDI GRAS Arrival: 13:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I |
| 16 TUE | ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C SEVEN SEAS MARINER Arrival: 10:00 Departure: 21:00 Berth: I |
| 17 WED | CARNIVAL VISTA Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: C ALLURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I |
| 23 THU | CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C |
| 30 TUE | GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C |

SUDOKU

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

King Classic Sudoku



Difficulty: ★★★

5/28

Answer to previous puzzle



Difficulty: ★★★

5/27

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Even moderately hot days raise risk of koala deaths: study

Paris, France

Koalas can endure tough conditions in the Australian bush but prolonged exposure to even moderately hot weather can increase their risk of heat-related death, researchers said on Wednesday.

The findings, based on more than 20 years of data of koala rescues, underscore the threat facing not just humans but wildlife as climate change makes heatwaves more frequent and intense.

Researchers found the odds of adult koalas being admitted into care or dying in the Australian state of New South Wales rose when average maximum temperatures over a seven-day period reached 27C.

At 30C or above, those risks "were between 1.5 and 3.5 times higher compared to conditions around 25C", said Valentina Mella, lead author of the study published in Biology Letters.

"Our findings suggest that even what might seem like moderate heat can become physiologically stressful when it is sustained over time," Mella, from the University of Sydney, told AFP.

On hotter days, koalas regulate body temperature by hugging trees to dissipate heat or seeking out denser foliage and lower trees away from direct sunlight.

The herbivorous marsupial can also reabsorb water from the colon and produce more concentrated urine to preserve hydration, or allow its body temperature to fluctuate with the environment in a process known as heterothermy.

But while they can survive conditions above 40C for



A Koala and her one year old baby sit on a tree at their enclosure at the Duisburg Zoo, western Germany on July 9, 2025.

a limited time, even prolonged exposure at much lower temperatures "appears to significantly compromise their health and survival", Mella said.

- Sedentary and vulnerable -

Researchers adapted a technique widely used to study heat and human health to establish the first "statistically validated association between ambient temperature and koala mortality", the study said.

They analysed nearly 12,000 records of koala admissions and mortality available from rescue organisations and koala hos-

pitals in NSW between 2000 and 2022.

The findings support the evidence that rising temperatures and climate-driven heatwaves are a key threat to wildlife health and survival.

Temperatures once rare are becoming more common, particularly during summer, Mella said, meaning koalas "are likely to experience heat stress conditions more regularly and over longer periods each year".

Koalas remain particularly vulnerable to climate change, even while some other wildlife adapt by switching diets or shifting habitats.

A largely sedentary and inflexible creature, dependent on eucalyptus leaves for much of their water, koalas quickly develop dehydration when hotter conditions persist.

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OTHER

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|-------------------------|----------|
| Dental Clinic | 587 9850 |
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| Urgent Care | 586 0448 |
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EMERGENCY

| | |
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| Police | 100 |
| Police Oranjestad | 527 3140 |
| Police Noord | 527 3200 |
| Police Sta. Cruz | 527 2900 |
| Police San Nicolas | 584 5000 |
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Against Domestic Violence(FCVR)
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Centre for Diabetes
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Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

'My job is going': UK workers squeezed out by AI

London, United Kingdom

When a client asked her a year ago to design a glossary to train an artificial intelligence system, translator Jessica Spengler realised she was going to train her own replacement.

"That was the day I really thought... my job is going," said the 52-year-old, who translates into English for German educational and historical organisations.

In the UK, where services account for around 80 per cent of the economy, AI has become flexible, fast and inexpensive competition for many white-collar workers, with the impacts beginning to emerge.

The IMF estimated in 2024 that more than two-thirds of British workers perform tasks that AI could potentially carry out, making the country more exposed than many other advanced economies.

"Some publishers have offered me lower rates than I was getting 10 years ago," the Brighton-based Spengler told AFP, adding that she no longer receives requests to translate corporate press releases or user manuals, typically an "entry point" into the profession. Instead, she is increasingly offered work proofreading machine-generated translations.



Protesters gather with banners and placards outside the offices of Google Deepmind at a protest organized by PauseAI UK and other groups concerned in controlling the development of advanced Artificial Intelligence systems, in London on February 28, 2026.

Translators "have to rewrite the whole thing, redo the translations, but they still only get paid the reduced rate," said Holly Parsons, a Spanish-to-English translator at the beginning of her career.

"It's hard as a translator to actually charge what the work is worth because people just don't want to pay it," the 24-year-old added. She still earns most of her income working as a children's activity leader.

- Change of direction -

According to a report from Morgan Stanley, British companies that adopted AI cut their workforces by eight percent in the year to October 2025 -- more than in Germany, Japan or Australia.

Among the countries featured in the report, only the United States saw employment rise with AI.

"Film work has definitely been impacted by AI... it's really kicked us down," said Laura, 35, a director of photography in London, who preferred not to share her last name for professional

reasons.

To escape the broader crisis hitting the film industry, she is retraining as an outdoor instructor in Dorset, south-west England, earning minimum wage.

After working on the short film "Mad Bills to Pay", which won an award at the Sundance Film Festival, 35-year-old Rufai Ajala also changed direction and is now training to become a plumber.

"I'm not going to rely on film as my main focus... I don't see it as a career option anymore where you can

have stability," Ajala said, adding that the aim was to find an "AI-proof" career.

- 'Painful transition' -

"There is going to be sort of a painful transition process because new jobs will take time to emerge," said Bouke Klein Teeselink, an economics professor at King's College London.

He said it would require "a massive adjustment for society," which could mean "a big increase in unemployment."

According to one of his studies, professions most exposed to AI, such as software developers and data analysts, reduced job postings after the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, particularly for entry-level positions.

The growth of AI comes as Britain already faces high levels of youth unemployment, with the war in the Middle East and an increased minimum wage weighing on hiring.

One in six Britons aged 16 to 24 is out of work, the highest level since 2014, according to official data.

Teeselink said, however, that another market dynamic is at play with AI: productivity gains could lead to lower prices, which in turn could stimulate demand and increase employment. □

AI chiefs walk back job apocalypse warnings

Washington, United States

The most prominent figures in artificial intelligence are stepping back from dire predictions about mass unemployment, as the in-

dustry faces growing public hostility over AI's promised transformation of the workplace. Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang and OpenAI CEO Sam Alt-

man, whose comments have stoked anxiety about AI's potential effects on society, are now arguing that doom-laden warnings were overblown or, in some cases, disingenuous. Speaking to Channel News Asia on Monday, Huang took direct aim at fellow executives who have publicly blamed AI for workforce reductions.

"The narrative that connects AI to job loss, for many of the CEOs that are doing it it is just too lazy," he said.

"AI has just arrived. How is it possible they're already losing jobs?"

Huang, who has long argued that AI will create as

many jobs as it displaces, pushed back against the doom-and-gloom forecasts of some industry insiders, saying that the recent wave of corporate layoffs was not driven by AI.

"How is it possible that AI became productive and useful only six months ago, and they were somehow laying people off two years ago because of AI? It doesn't make any sense," he said.

"It was just a way for them to sound smart, and I really hate that. I think we're scaring people and that's irresponsible," he said.

- Altman's mea culpa -

Last week, British bank Standard Chartered an-

nounced plans to axe thousands of jobs by 2030 as artificial intelligence replaces employees in a range of administrative roles.

The tech firm behind social network Snapchat cut 1,000 jobs last month, saying AI is boosting efficiency as it pushes towards profitability. Altman, meanwhile, offered a mea culpa.

Speaking at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia's Accelerate AI Conference in Sydney, he said rapid AI development would not produce the "jobs apocalypse that some of the companies in our space advocate or talk about" including his own. □



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman arrives at the federal courthouse during proceedings in the trial over Elon Musk's lawsuit against OpenAI in Oakland, California, on May 12, 2026.

Djokovic fights through at French Open, Rybakina dumped out

Paris, France

Novak Djokovic extended his latest bid for a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam title with a four-set victory over Valentin Royer in the French Open second round on Wednesday, but women's second seed Elena Rybakina crashed out of the tournament.

Elsewhere, four-time champion Iga Swiatek and Elina Svitolina both eased into the last 32 with straight-sets wins.

Djokovic had to come from a set down in his opening match against Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard and was pushed hard again by another Frenchman in Royer, before finally sealing a 6-3, 6-2, 6-7 (7/9), 6-3 win after three and three-quarter hours on Court Philippe Chatrier.

"I hope I won't play any more French players for the rest of the tournament," said the third seed, who has been tied on 24 Grand Slam titles with Margaret Court since winning the 2023 US Open, with a wry smile.

Djokovic, who beat world number one Jannik Sinner in the Australian Open last four earlier this year, cannot meet the red-hot title favourite until the final at Roland Garros.

Djokovic powered through the first two sets, although world number 74 Royer, born just 5km from Roland Garros, showed much more



Serbia's Novak Djokovic celebrates his victory over France's Valentin Royer during their men's singles match on day 4 of the French Open tennis tournament on Court Philippe-Chatrier at the Roland-Garros Complex in Paris on May 27, 2026.

resistance in the third before extending the match in a brilliant tie-break.

The Serb, who twice failed to consolidate breaks of serve in the third set, made no such mistake in the fourth as he belatedly booked his place in the next round on his fifth match point.

Czech Jakub Mensik, the only player other than Djokovic to beat Sinner this year, needed eight match points before eventually downing Mariano Navone 6-3, 2-6, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (13/11). Rising Spanish star Rafael Jodar reached the third round of a Grand Slam for the first time, seeing off James Duckworth 6-1, 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 7-5.

Rybakina stunned by Starodubtseva

Australian Open champion Rybakina blew a one-set lead to exit in dramatic fashion, slumping to a 3-6, 6-1, 7-6 (10/4) loss to Ukraine's Yuliia Starodubtseva.

It is Rybakina's earliest departure from any tour-level tournament since the 2025 Miami Open and first defeat in the opening two rounds of a major since the 2024 Australian Open.

"I couldn't find the balance. I couldn't find the right shot, and it was clearly just too many mistakes," said the Kazakh world number two.

Starodubtseva will face China's Wang Xiyu for a place in the last 16.

She has already matched her previous best run at a Grand Slam event, when she lost to Jasmine Paolini in the French Open third round as a lucky loser 12 months ago.

"Honestly, hard to describe, I'm super happy," said world number 55 Starodubtseva after beating a top-10 opponent for the first time in her career.

"I'm super proud of myself that I was able to do this today. It was a tricky third set but I got it done in the end."

Swiatek, Svitolina through Swiatek, looking to regain the title she last won in 2024, saw off battling Czech youngster Sara Bejlek 6-2, 6-3 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

The third-seeded Pole will next face compatriot Magda Linette, who beat former winner Jelena Ostapenko in three sets, as she bids to preserve her record of having always reached the second week at Roland Garros.

"Usually the weather is quite different here, but it doesn't matter," said Swiatek after spending 93 minutes on court on another boiling hot day in Paris.

Swiatek is playing at a first Grand Slam tournament since linking up with Rafael Nadal's former coach Francisco Roig.

Svitolina, who beat Swiatek en route to the Rome title, beat world number 126 Kai-lin Quevedo 6-0, 6-4.

The Ukrainian seventh seed ended an eight-year wait for her fifth WTA 1000 trophy at the Italian Open to underline her credentials as a contender in Paris.

She struggled through her first-round tie, edging out Hungary's Anna Bondar in a deciding-set tie-break on Monday, before watching her husband Gael Monfils' final French Open match in the night session.

But Svitolina raced out of the blocks this time, quickly taking control against Quevedo. □

Valgren wins Giro 17th stage, Vingegaard stays in pink

Andalo, Italy

Danish rider Michael Valgren won the 17th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Wednesday as Jonas Vingegaard continued his march to a first overall victory on the Grand Tour. Valgren took the honors in Andalo after attacking from a small group with a kilometer remaining of the undulating 202km ride from Cassano d'Adda in which riders suffered both from punishing heat and also sudden downpours.

The 34-year-old EF Education-EasyPost rider claimed his second win of the season, with his other also coming in Italy at the Tirreno-Adriatico, celebrating with his lucky charm Pokemon.

Valgren was part of a group which pulled away from the break on the final categorised Andalo-Lever climb.

Initially he looked to be contesting the stage honors with Einer Rubio before the pair were caught by a handful of other riders in the concluding kilometers.

"I thought I'd be beaten on the sprint so I attacked. I was

really tired and I was lucky that the stage wasn't 500 meters longer," said Valgren.

"I'd never won a Grand Tour stage before and I'm happy that I did it in Italy where I've had a lot of my success."

Valgren's success is something of a miracle as he has come back from a horror crash during the 2022 Route d'Occitanie when he fell into a ravine, fracturing his pelvis.

His countryman Vingegaard, who is hunting a Giro-Tour de France double this year, stays four minutes ahead of Felix Gall in the overall standings after rolling home with the peloton.

Jhonatan Narvaez won the intermediate sprint and took the points jersey from France's Paul Magnier, who wasn't part of the break and now trails the UAE rider by 12 points. Vingegaard is likely to maintain his advantage at the top of the general classification on Thursday when the peloton takes on a hilly 171km ride between Fai delle Paganella and Piege di Soligo. □



EF Education - EasyPost Danish rider Michael Valgren celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the 17th stage of the Giro d'Italia 2026 - Tour of Italy cycling race between Cassano d'Adda and Andalo, Italy, on May 27, 2026.

Gilgeous-Alexander, Thunder down Spurs to take 3-2 series lead

Los Angeles, United States
 Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 32 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder defeated the San Antonio Spurs 127-114 to move within one win of a return to the NBA Finals on Tuesday. Gilgeous-Alexander and the Thunder punished an error-strewn performance by San Antonio to claim a victory which leaves the reigning NBA champions 3-2 up with two games remaining in the Western Conference finals.

San Antonio had leveled the series at 2-2 with a battling performance on Sunday but never got going in a lacklustre game five display at Oklahoma City's Paycom Center. Spurs star Victor Wembanyama had a miserable shooting night, scoring 20 points but



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander #2 of the Oklahoma City Thunder looks on during the second quarter of a game against the San Antonio Spurs in Game Five of the NBA Western Conference Finals at Paycom Center on May 26, 2026 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

making just 4-of-15 attempts only six rebounds. also had a night to forget, from the field while grabbing Spurs forward Devin Vassell scoring just six points from

2-of-11 shooting after averaging 17 points in the opening four games of the series. Oklahoma City will head to San Antonio for Thursday's game six with a chance to clinch the series after a typically clinical performance, recovering from a slow start to seal a deserved win.

Gilgeous-Alexander was one of five Thunder players to finish in double figures, with Alex Caruso scoring 22 from the bench including four three-pointers and Jared McCain impressing with 20 points.

Chet Holmgren had 16 points with 11 rebounds, while Isaiah Hartenstein had 12 points with 15 rebounds. "I might have had the worst start to a basketball game in my career, but the group held it down and kept us in the game," Gilgeous-Alexander said of a sluggish first quarter by the Thunder that saw San Antonio jump into an early eight-point lead.

"I've been saying it all year we're a group of one through 15, and we wouldn't be this deep in the season without everybody on the team, and it showed again tonight," the two-time NBA Most Valuable Player added.

"Against a really good team you've just got to try to be better each and every game, and we definitely got better from the last game."

- 'Need to be a lot better' - After a slow start Gilgeous-Alexander scored 12 points in a 40-point second quarter for Oklahoma City that helped the champions pull into a comfortable lead that would ultimately prove decisive.

The Thunder led by as many as 20 points in the third quarter and while San Antonio cut the lead to eight points late in the quarter, Oklahoma City regrouped to pull clear again.

San Antonio coach Mitch Johnson bemoaned his team's error count throughout the game -- and called on Wembanyama to take a more aggressive approach in Thursday's must-win game six battle. □

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