



The district of Savaneta: Aruba's first capital



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Aruba's underwater wonderland



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U.S. refuses to extend North America trade pact in current form

Washington, United States

The United States has declined to renew a North American trade pact with Canada and Mexico in its current state, the US trade envoy said Wednesday, meaning the deal will now be reviewed annually.

The move is likely to fuel uncertainty for businesses, given the deep integration across North American supply chains in sectors like automobiles.

But the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) remains in force for another 10 years even if not extended by Wednesday's deadline.

The free trade pact will instead be subject to annual reviews, unless a country decides to withdraw entirely.

"The United States did not agree to renew the USMCA in its current form. As a result, the USMCA is not renewed," U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said in a statement.

"The United States will continue to engage with Mexico and Canada to address the agreement's shortcomings and our trade deficits with these countries," he added.

A senior US official told re-



SkyDio CEO Adam Bry (L) gives a tour of the SkyDio Drone manufacturing facility to US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer (R) in Hayward, California, on June 12, 2026.

porters that U.S. trade gaps were a key concern, alongside market access opportunities. The official flagged tensions in areas like dairy and corn.

Mexico's economy secretary, Marcelo Ebrard, confirmed the impasse but said there were no insurmountable differences to resolve. He noted that Washington's pending complaints over the agreement have dropped from 54 in 2025 to 14.

On Wednesday, the USTR held a virtual meeting with Ebrard and Ottawa's minister in charge of Canada-U.S. trade, Dominic LeBlanc.

The Trump administration's decision not to extend the pact was widely expected. President Donald Trump said in June that he was not "looking to renew" the agreement despite signing and praising it in his first term.

Canada and Mexico had

both called for a 16-year renewal of the USMCA. With the deal subject to rolling negotiations instead of a longer term extension, talks could last for months or years over everything from tariffs to trade rules governing specific sectors.

- Ticking clock -

Despite a 10-year countdown to the deal's expiration, the senior U.S. official said countries need not wait a decade to con-

clude their agreement. "I think we need to come to a conclusion quickly, if possible," the official added. Analysts say the development does not change day-to-day trade between the countries for now. But KPMG senior economist Benjamin Shoemith told AFP: "This definitely will have a large impact on investor sentiment, not just in the US but investing into Mexico in particular."

Mexico has benefited from businesses seeking to benefit from North American supply chains. Shoemith expects the auto sector to be top-of-mind in negotiations, alongside energy.

Still, analysts expect the USMCA to survive, with goods and services trade within North America amounting to nearly \$2 trillion in 2024.

Even as Trump unleashed tariffs on trading partners last year, he made critical exemptions for USMCA products.

American Automotive Policy Council President Matt Blunt stressed that "North American economic integration enables enormous competitive benefits for the region." □

'Everybody's profiting': Trump defends \$1B crypto earnings

Joint Base Andrews, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday defended earning \$1.2 billion from his family's cryptocurrency activities last year, saying "everybody's profiting" from his time in power.

Taking his maiden flight aboard a new Air Force One plane gifted by Qatar, Trump rejected criticisms that he was using his presidency to enrich himself.

"You know why I'm profiting, because the stock market's going up, everybody's profiting," Trump told reporters at Joint Base Andrews near Washington. The 80-year-old Republican said his earnings were placed in blind trusts to ensure that he could not influence government policy to boost his fortune.

"I don't get involved in my

personal (finances), we have funds that run my money," Trump said. "I've made a lot of money before I became president, and they invest my money, and I don't talk to them."

Trump also insisted that his wealth was due to his prior

career, despite the fact that the earnings were related to crypto ventures launched during his first year back in the White House.

"I don't know if I've had a better career in politics or

business, but I had a great career in business, and you know, you saw the cash, and you report the different things," he said.

"So we're all profiting. I'm profiting because I have a lot of money and a lot of cash."

According to financial disclosures released by the US Office of Government Ethics on Tuesday, Trump received nearly \$550 million from his ties to the startup World Liberty Financial (WLF) in 2025.

WLF was co-founded in September 2024 by Trump's sons and the son of Trump's Middle East special envoy Steve Witkoff.

Trump's sons Donald Jr. and Eric were flying with their father on Wednesday aboard the new Air Force One jet, whose donation

by Qatar has also raised ethical questions.

The 927-page filings also mention \$635 million in royalties received under a licensing agreement related to the \$TRUMP cryptocurrency, launched just hours before the president's inauguration in January 2025.

Trump also made millions from a host of branded merchandising sales, including bumper stickers and bibles, the financial disclosure showed.

The president's crypto activities are the main reason for the near tripling of his personal fortune, which rose from \$2.3 billion to \$6.5 billion between 2024 and 2026, according to Forbes. While in power, Trump has enacted measures to deregulate the sector, causing asset prices to soar. □



President Donald Trump delivers remarks during an event at the Burning Hills Amphitheatre on July 01, 2026 in Medora, North Dakota.

No corn dogs? Trump's 'Great American State Fair' threatens to be a flop

Washington, United States

Deserted booths, sparse crowds and prayer tents. Welcome to the Great American State Fair, where a celebration of the country's 250th birthday has morphed into a new political battlefield.

Summers in Washington are notoriously steamy, but the proverbial heat has soared over the 16-day fair and how people view President Donald Trump's tight grip on the event.

"This is once in a lifetime," military veteran Rhonda Smith, a 42-year-old living in Virginia, told AFP on Tuesday as she ducked into one pavilion to escape the punishing sun on the National Mall.

"It's important to support our president and the beautification of DC and all the things that go with it," she said, dismissing the naysayers and adding "I think everyone should attend."

Critics have not been so kind.

"Underwhelming," scoffed Jesse, a 50-year-old therapist as he walked on the mall.

"As soon as Trump takes



Part of the Ferris wheel and the U.S. Capitol dome are seen in the distance as people attend the "Great American State Fair" on the National Mall in Washington, DC, on June 30, 2026.

something over, he makes it political, he makes it about himself, and that's why it's so empty," said Jesse, who gave only his first name.

The fair was conceived years ago by a bipartisan group of lawmakers as a celebration of American history, culture and innovation.

But Trump's Freedom 250 group has largely taken over the festivities -- triggering a bitter clash over control, and harsh criticism over the lackluster exhibits and

downbeat atmosphere.

Each state has a booth, but some are virtually empty after several states Massachusetts and North Carolina among them declined to officially participate.

Pavilion structures have ill-fitting plastic coverings that contrast with the timeless marble and granite Smithsonian museums nearby.

- Birthday blues -

Jesse and others argue the fair lacks the all-American character that is part of

state fairs across the country, where youths handle livestock, ride on rollercoasters and gorge on sweet delicacies such as funnel cake.

There are whiffs of genuine Americana on the mall: a large Ferris wheel, a rodeo and multiple stages hosting music and talks.

But there are no life-size butter cows, or livestock shows, tractor pulls, or corn dogs a classic deep-fried snack.

Instead, US government

agencies are featured, including the Department of Defense, with a "War" banner hanging outside its pavilion. Inside, children tried on bullet-proof vests.

In another government pavilion, images of a newly redesigned US passport, featuring Trump's likeness, are on display.

Near the center of the mall stands a small-scale replica of the vast "triumphal arch" that the president wants erected in the capital.

It proved a bit much even for Gary Freyer, a Trump supporter attending from neighboring Maryland, who wrinkled his nose at the arch and considered how the president has sought to put his stamp on the fair.

"He wants to be remembered," the 76-year-old told AFP. "I think it's a little overboard."

Several exhibitors have also drawn attention, including Hillsdale College, a small school influential with conservatives, the Museum of the Bible, and Revival Ministries International.

"Can I pray for you?" asked a man outside a revival tent to fair attendees walking past. □

TikTok settles with U.S. teenager ahead of social media addiction trial

San Francisco, United States
TikTok settled a lawsuit with a teenager just weeks before the company was set to go to trial in a second landmark case over whether social media companies are responsible for the harms their products might cause.

The 15-year-old Florida teenager, identified only by his initials R.K.C., has accused four social media companies of harming his mental health and previously reached a settlement agreement with YouTube on June 23.

This leaves only Meta and Snapchat as defendants in the trial which is scheduled

to begin July 27 in Los Angeles.

"We can confirm that a settlement in principle has been reached with TikTok," law firm Morgan & Morgan, which represents the teenager, told AFP on Wednesday without specifying the terms.

TikTok also previously settled a similar case, the first of its kind, in January before the trial started.

This second trial, to be held in a Los Angeles courtroom, is considered another benchmark for how thousands of social media addiction lawsuits could play out in the United States.

The Florida teenager claims that years of compulsive social media use contributed to severe psychological disorders -- anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts -- for which he is still receiving treatment.

"These social media companies have been strategizing for years to hook children early and maximize their usage with insidious features like autoplay and infinite scroll, all with the aim of increasing profits at the expense of the mental health of our youth," the plaintiff's attorneys at Morgan & Morgan



This illustration photograph taken in Brussels on May 7, 2025 shows the logo of the Chinese social media application Tik Tok on a smartphone in front of a screen displaying an image of a skinny woman, as the "skinnytok" trend promoting thinness worries experts.

said in a statement after settling with YouTube.

In March, a Los Angeles jury ordered Meta and Google, YouTube's parent company, to pay the young woman known as K.G.M. \$6 million.

TikTok and Snap both settled before the trial without any admission of liability.

In May, Meta, Snap, TikTok, and YouTube agreed to pay about \$27 million to a school district in Kentucky to avoid a trial. □



(L-R) Singer Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce of the Kansas City Chiefs attend Game Three between the New York Knicks and the Cleveland Cavaliers in the NBA Eastern Conference Finals at Rocket Arena on May 23, 2026 in Cleveland, Ohio.

New York prepares for Taylor Swift-Travis Kelce wedding

New York, United States
Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce's official wedding plans are tightly under wraps, but New York is bracing to host the celebrity marriage of the year this week at Madison Square Garden. The billionaire pop superstar and the three-time NFL Super Bowl champion, both 36, have kept fans guessing, but details are beginning to emerge as the clock counts down to their big day. US media report that the A-list festivities will kick off Thursday evening with an exclusive dinner only around 100 people are invited at the storied sports arena. The wedding itself will reportedly take place Friday with a star-studded guest list of around 1,000, including models Gigi Hadid and Cara Delevingne, singer Selena Gomez, and actress Zoe Kravitz -- all known to be close Swift pals -- and Kelce's Kansas City Chiefs teammates. Rumor has it that Stevie Nicks and Tim McGraw, both close to Swift, will perform. British artists Ed Sheeran another Swift pal -- and Paul McCartney may also go on stage. Guests are said to have signed confidentiality agreements and will be without their phones for

the ceremony, expected to begin in the mid-afternoon with cocktails before a reception going into the night. Celebrity outlet TMZ said that the lavish decor will include a replica castle built inside Madison Square Garden.

- Rumor mill -
Rumors have run rampant for weeks over the couple's wedding, with no official confirmation, but clues have multiplied around Madison Square Garden. A procession of trucks and forklifts has been outside the arena for several days, while The New York Times has reported an increased police presence and street closures in the area from Thursday. The couple, who announced their engagement last August, appear to already be in New York. Swift's private jet landed nearby on Tuesday and her car was seen in the city. Meanwhile, Kelce was photographed jogging in Manhattan. Even Mayor Zohran Mamdani has added to the speculation with a video on social media warning New Yorkers -- and celebrity couples -- of a heat wave hitting the eastern United States this week. "We're ready but we want

to make sure that you are too. Especially if you're celebrating the World Cup, or the 4th of July, or renting out MSG to get married. Hypothetically," he says with a smirk.

- Unconventional venue -
Madison Square Garden boasts both an arena space and a smaller theater traditionally used for concerts and meetings. It is perhaps not a traditional wedding venue, but Swift would not be the first musician to marry there. Sly Stone, who died last year, was married there in June 1974 to actress Kathy Silva during a concert by his band, Sly and the Family Stone. It is shaping up to be a huge weekend in New York, with July 4 celebrations culminating in a massive fireworks show, and World Cup action scheduled for July 5. Swift, a 14-time Grammy winner, is coming off a banner year with the success of her album "The Life of a Showgirl," induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame and a new song on the "Toy Story 5" soundtrack. Kelce, a tight end for the Kansas City Chiefs, has signed to play for a 14th season in the National Football League. □



Visitors sit near a PlayStation advertisement displayed during the Bengaluru Comic Con 2025 fest in Bengaluru on December 21, 2025.

Sony to stop releasing PlayStation games on discs

Paris, France

Sony said Wednesday that it would stop releasing new video games for the PlayStation on disc in January 2028 following a shift in consumer preferences. "Following this date, new games will be available on PlayStation Store and at retailers in digital formats only," the company said on its official PlayStation blog. In practice that means gamers will have to download directly from Sony's PlayStation store or will obtain a download code when purchasing a title from a retailer. The announcement comes as the upcoming exclusively digital release of "Grand Theft Auto VI", which is predicted to become the biggest-selling cultural product of all time, has caused some consternation among gamers. There was grumbling on social media that the lack of a physical disc would eliminate any second-hand market for the title. Sony said the upcoming shift "has no impact on games that already released, or will be releasing, prior to January 2028 in disc format." Sony began its move towards digital downloads in 2020 with the release of the latest console, PlayStation 5, which had a version without a disk drive. "This is a natural direction for Sony Interactive Entertainment to adapt to consumer trends as the general preference for digital media significantly outpaces physical discs," the company said. "We remain committed to delivering a world-class gaming experience to our fans," it added. Piers Harding-Rolls at Ampere Analysis said "the purchasing trends of gamers are clear." In 2013, when the PS4 launched, only 13 percent of game sales were digital, but had risen to nearly 80 percent in 2025, he noted. That didn't stop gamers from complaining, however. "It's a catastrophe," said gamer and content creator Conkerax on YouTube. "Inevitably there will be concerns from PlayStation gamers around various aspects of this announcement including choice, accessing older physical games on new consoles, the ability to collect physical games, and game preservation," said Ampere's Harding-Rolls. He noted that the shift towards digital would have a negative impact on specialist games retailers, and would also hit the second-hand market. The announcement renewed speculation about the next-generation PlayStation 6 console. □

The Afghan women farmers keeping their village alive

Eshtiwi, Afghanistan

In a remote province of northeastern Afghanistan, women farmers are playing a vital role in their community's survival among the snow-capped mountains.

The fields of Eshtiwi show only the first faint signs of growth in June, with small green sprouts emerging around the village.

Habiba, who spoke to AFP while busy weeding, is proud to have been farming in Nuristan province for decades.

"Since I was eight years old, I've been going to the field with my mother," said the 46-year-old, who only has one name.

"When we harvest wheat, beans, potatoes and corn in the fields in autumn and bring them back home, we feel happy," she added.

In Afghanistan, women are generally allowed to farm despite being banned by the Taliban government from most employment.

Mohammad Yahya Faizi, a 34-year-old agriculture graduate, said he respects the women's work.

"We would not have food anymore in the middle of the winter" without their work, he said.

Eshtiwi in summertime is only reachable by a dirt track and, before AFP's visit, it had been years since



This photograph taken on June 8, 2026 shows Afghan women farmers Habiba (L) and her sister Bibi Jan working at a wheat field in the Eshtiwi village of Afghanistan's Parun district.

international media had reached the village.

Faizi said "tasks have been divided between men and women" for generations in the Parun Valley, where residents speak their own dialect.

"Women are busy with agriculture, planting, watering and cooking at home," said Faizi, a village farmer who volunteers with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Men help with animal-drawn ploughs, handle livestock, and gather firewood for winter, when snow cuts the village off from the outside world for almost six months.

Habiba's day starts at around 4:00 am, when she gets up to pray before preparing breakfast with her daughters on a wood-fired stove.

She makes bread using flour from her wheat, together with red beans from her fields, to eat alongside butter and dried yoghurt

made by her husband.

The room, which doubles as a kitchen and bedroom, was decorated with flowers drawn by Habiba's 11-year-old daughter, Nahida, who was practising English that she had learnt at the village school.

While her mother never had the chance to go to school, Nahida's education will soon stop as girls nationwide are banned from education beyond the age of 12.

- 'Unrecognised' -

FAO has declared 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer, with the agency highlighting how "unrecognised" their vital role is in supporting food security.

This is particularly true in Afghanistan, where almost a third of the population needs emergency food aid according to the UN.

Bibi Jan, a 70-year-old who grows beans and potatoes, said farming can be grueling.

"We have to work hard, our hands peel... but there are children to feed," she said. Habiba dreams of having a tractor, but it is too expensive; there is only one in the village that a family rents out to those who can afford it.

"I'm not that strong; my back and my legs hurt," she said.

Najia, who requested her surname not be used for privacy reasons, agreed local farmers need more tools as well as opportunities to trade.

"Farming is a great profession; it's not just for men," said the 28-year-old, who went to university in Pakistan.

The farmers often have surplus crops, she said, but "there is no structured market to sell our produce." □

Japan 'snow monkey' park to cap visitors after overcrowding, bad behavior

Tokyo, Japan

A Japanese park famous for "snow monkeys" soaking in hot springs will cap daily numbers after a surge in visitors and cases of bad behavior including bathing with the animals, an official said Friday.

Nestled in a valley with an altitude of 850 meters (nearly 2,800 feet) in the central Nagano region, Jigokudani Yaen-Koen is inhabited by wild Japanese macaques that regularly bathe in its hot volcanic spring waters.

On frigid, snowy winter days, "many monkeys are seen soaking in the hot spring, some for hours on end," its website says.

Touted as a "monkey paradise", the park is the "world's only place" to offer such a sight, its website claims.

Recent years have seen the number of tourists the vast majority of them non-Japanese rise sharply, sometimes totaling 3,000 to 4,000 a day, a park official told AFP, declining to be named.

"We have been seeing incredibly long queues of visitors waiting outside the ticket booth. To ease that, we will have them buy tickets in advance" online, the official said.

The shift toward an online booking system will start in August, with a possible

cap of 2,000 people a day. As the number of tourists snowballed, so did instances of bad behavior, such as trying to feed or touch the monkeys.

Some have even "tried to bathe" together with the animals, the official said. About 42.7 million tourists flocked to Japan in 2025, an all-time high, as the weak yen boosted the appeal of the "bucket list" destination.

Complaints of overcrowding have grown in hotspots like Kyoto, with some disrespectful tourists accused of harassing kimono-clad geisha performers in their frenzy for photos.

In February a cherry blos-

som festival in Fujiyoshida, boasting a highly Instagrammable view of Mount Fuji, was cancelled after

residents complained that their "quiet lives" were under threat. □



This photo taken on February 7, 2025 shows tourists taking photographs of Japanese macaques, commonly referred to as "snow monkeys", taking an open-air hot spring bath, or "onsen" at the Jigokudani (Hell's Valley) Monkey Park in the town of Yamanouchi, Nagano prefecture.

China's bull wrestlers fight to keep tradition alive

Jiaxing, China

In a half-covered amphitheatre in eastern China, 20-year-old Wang Shuangshuang locked his shoulder against the neck of a bull, grappling with its horns to force it to its knees. Chinese bull-wrestling, or "guanniu", dates back over 600 years but remains a little-known sport domestically, let alone internationally.

Students like Wang sporadically sign up for competitions, but a lack of funding and exposure means few adopt it as a full-time career, leaving it facing an existential struggle.

"Our heritage right now is neither dead nor alive," 72-year-old master Han Haihua told AFP in Jiaxing, a city just south of Shanghai.

"To bring in talent, you need money... I'm not bragging -- give me 30 or 50 kids, train them here for three years, and I'll make the whole world know about guanniu."

Guanniu was brought to Jiaxing by Hui Muslim migrants, and evolved from a herding skill into a folk competition.

Unlike Spanish bullfighting,



This photo taken on June 17, 2026 shows trainer Li Bo, 30, grasping a bull and bring it to the ground during a training session before the 15th China Bullfighting championship at an arena in Jiaxing, China's Zhejiang province.

Chinese wrestlers use no weapons and do not kill the animal at the end of the bout.

Instead, they seize the bull's horns and try to bring it to the ground, and win extra points if they can jump onto its back or crawl underneath its belly.

According to Han, in the early 2000s guanniu got a boost from Xi Jinping, then the provincial party secretary, who pushed for tradi-

tions like bull wrestling to be officially listed as "intangible cultural heritage".

These days, an annual competition run by Han's martial arts school is held at the "China Bullfighting Hall" amphitheatre, its nameplate inscribed by martial arts novelist Jin Yong.

Nine university students entered the preliminaries this year, wrestling bulls weighing hundreds of kilograms and sporting hard, stubby

horns.

"You have to go with its flow, shift your shoulders constantly to follow its resistance, lock its neck, and then throw it down," Wang said.

"Strength and technique, neither can be missing."

- 'Hot-blooded' -

Fellow competitor Xu Zhiqian, also 20, said he enjoyed testing his strength against nature.

"I think this sport is very youthful, very hot-blooded," he said.

Both Wang and Xu brought their bulls to the ground in the competition final, watched by a few hundred people.

But Xu said he planned to work in his field of study, and while Wang said he was "considering" pursuing guanniu, he was far from certain.

Thirty-year-old Li Bo is a rare example of someone who made a career of it.

He joined Han's martial arts school as a teenager, drawn by his love of kung fu films.

Han now considers him China's finest guanniu practitioner, but Li is troubled by the lack of others following in his footsteps.

"Nobody wants to do this full-time. That makes our inheritance extremely difficult," Li said.

To keep afloat, the school stages performances at tourist sites and runs a halal steamed-bun shop.

Li has also reached out to media outlets, sold souvenirs, organised regular tournaments and adapted guanniu's history for stage shows in an effort to boost its profile. □

U.S. signs agreement to build permanent embassy in Jerusalem

Jerusalem, Undefined

The United States on Wednesday signed an agreement to build a new embassy compound in Jerusalem, a move that Israel said reflected the "unbreakable alliance" between the countries.

During his first term, U.S. President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017 and ordered the relocation of Washington's diplomatic mission from Tel Aviv.

But the services were spread across several locations in Jerusalem until a single permanent site could be found.

U.S. ambassador Mike Huckabee said during a signing ceremony at Israel's foreign ministry that

Washington "recognizes Jerusalem as the eternal, indigenous, and forever capital of the Jewish people".

"We are going to plant our flag, our American flag, on the soil of Jerusalem for a

permanent and a brand new embassy compound that will serve as our motherhood of diplomatic activities here in Israel," he added.

"I would say God made that decision 3,800 years

ago, and we finally got around to acknowledging what had been determined long before the United States of America came along."

The embassy will be built at the Allenby compound in southern Jerusalem.

Trump's 2017 decision broke with decades of U.S. policy, under which Jerusalem's final status was expected to be determined through negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Jerusalem has long been one of the most contested cities in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

After Israel captured east Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, it declared the city its undiv-

ed capital, a claim that has not been widely recognized internationally.

- 'Historical injustice' -

Palestinians seek east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

Because of these competing claims, most countries established their embassies in Tel Aviv, maintaining that Jerusalem's status should be resolved through peace negotiations in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said the agreement to build Washington's permanent embassy in Jerusalem underscored the "unbreakable alliance" between the two countries. □



U.S. ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee departs after a meeting with US President Donald Trump, Lebanon Ambassador to the U.S. and Israel Ambassador to the U.S., at the White House in Washington, D.C. on April 23, 2026.

Beautiful areas around Aruba

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

The hidden Natural Bridge
Here in Aruba we have three natural bridges and many see this one on think-

ing that it's the world famous one but it's not. The why is easy, it's way too dangerous to go down the cliff to reach this beauty and no tour companies will do that. Some people re-



fuse to go down due fear of height. This bridge is located in San Nicolas, behind The Point Lighthouse along the east point coast.

a new facelift and its back as a family beach and weekends are just amazing at this area.

Surfside Beach

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

Natural Bridge at Blackstone Beach

As mentioned, there are three natural bridges and this one is in the Arikok National Park. The other two Bridges you can visit by car but for this one you must have a 4x4 jeep or you will get stuck at the Andicuri Beach. □

Place names in San Nicolas and their origins

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever taking a tour of Aruba, San Nicolas would definitely be on your itinerary. From relaxing on the white, sandy beaches of Baby and Roger's Beach, to exploring the prehistoric caves of Quadirikiri and Fontein, you are taking in a full view of what San Nicolas has to offer. But did you know that you are also passing through areas whose names have historical origins? Here are a few place names in San Nicolas and their origin story.

Sero Colorado

On your way to Baby or Roger's Beach, you'll pass by the famous Red Anchor at what was once the entrance to the Colony residential community and be greeted with red soiled hills by the coast. This is Sero Colorado. Named after the 30-meter, deep red, limestone hill, "Sero Colorado" translates to "Colored Hill". Sero Colorado has deep historical ties with the once-thriving phosphate industry in the area. Matter of fact, there are still underground shafts and passages deep in Sero Colorado from the time of phosphate mining. In 1958, the refinery at the time, Lago, adopted this name for the residential section of its employees.

Vader Piet

Another well visited area, Vader Piet is located in the Arikok National Park. Recognizable sites



within this area include the Wind Mills and the Quadirikiri Cave. The origin of this name is part historical and speculation, as there are slight deviations from what actually happened.

In 1829, Pieter Lampe was a planter and the person responsible for governing this remote area. As the story goes, Pieter was well known and beloved for his kindness and good treatment of his employees, and was therefore also called Vader Piet (Father Piet). However, he was tragically murdered—some speculate at the hands of a slave.

For his work and good heart, the area was named after him.

San Nicolas

Of course we can't forget San Nicolas itself. Much like Vader Piet, the origin of the name San Nicolas has so far two different accounts. In the literal sense, "San Nicolas" translates to "Saint Nicolas", leading many to believe that this district was named after a Spanish saint. Though one account does support this with the theory that the district was named after the saint by Spanish colonizers, the other account is much less divine, but does refer to

an influential figure in the area.

Nicolaas van der Biest was a successful landowner during the time of the phosphate boom in late 19th century Aruba. Back then, landowners (most, if not all of them men) were referred to as "Shon" by their subordinates. So, the district was originally named after Shon Nicolaas. Over time, the name evolved into what is now San Nicolas.

Source: "Aruba: Short History" by Dr. J. Hartog.

Unique fauna of Aruba



For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs

just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cunicularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for

hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color.

The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon



parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Coneu (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Coneu, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Coneu can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it

typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Coneu has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Coneu is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Coneu is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Coneu can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. □



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Aruba's underwater wonderland

(Oranjestad)—Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating underwater spots you can explore. So take your snorkeling gear and visit some of these top places for underwater exploration.

Tres Trapi

'Tres Trapi' means three steps in Papiamentu. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by a tiny stairway carved into the rocky coastline. Tres Trapi is a small beach, located on the north-western side of the island, an approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you walk right into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While you're snorkeling, you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean Sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animals, keep



your distance and just enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken WWII ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach is a lagoon with crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on

the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Further in the lagoon, you'll find a lot of people snorkeling. This is an excellent spot to go under water exploring—but do take care not to go too far out; outside the lagoon the waves can be pretty rough! In the lagoon there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different

from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. The main entrance to reach the beach is through a small bridge that takes you through the mangrove trees. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, accompanied with wooden stairs built to allow easy access to the water

and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you'll find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is snorkel heaven. □



What Aruba means to Tony & Diane!

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Tony & Diane Giamberardino from Meredith, NH, USA.

They wrote to us saying: "Aruba has been our Happy Place for over 40 years!"

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

Food culture in Aruba



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

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

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

Breakfast

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

Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be

largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi bonch'i rabo (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time

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

(Religious) Holidays

Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous



pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (fruit cake), drigidek (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

Snacks and tasty delights

Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, bas-

kets, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun. □

*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao

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

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

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

Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use

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

Pineapple

Pineapple has more uses than



topping it on your Christmas ham. According to elders, the skin of a pineapple is great to use to refresh your body. Clean the skin thoroughly and make tea or warapa* with it. It is said that this tea can also be drank after an operation on the ovaries or uterus. This gets rid of irritation and inflammation.

Arrowroot

Arrowroot is native to tropical America and can be sold as a powder or whole. It is said that you can take arrowroot powder and make a “shalup” (porridge) for stomach pain or when you're feeling weak. You can make it

with milk too, but it is advised to best use just water. You can also add prunes for a bit of sweetness. Arrowroot shalup is also good to treat an unhealthy gut or for diarrhea.

To make arrowroot shalup, boil a bit of water and add one tablespoon of arrowroot powder and stir continuously until you reach porridge consistency. If you make a shalup with milk, add a pinch of salt. Raw arrowroot powder can be used to powder babies.

Eggplant/Aubergine

Eggplants, or aubergines, are easy to find in supermarkets around the world and can be grown all year round on the island. Related to potato and tomato, eggplants are good to calm nerves. It can also be used to lower blood pressure, by steeping its leaves in boiled water and drinking it. You can also make eggplant juice to help pu-

rify your blood. However, do make sure to drink slowly; let it mix with your spit and then swallow.

Eggplant kataplan* can also be used to treat skin tumors, abscesses and hemorrhoids. Eggplant kataplan can also be used externally to treat arthritis. □

*warapa: term referring to a water and sugar solution, a.k.a a simple syrup.

*kataplan: porridge-like mixture used externally for wounds or parts of the body that are painful or swollen.



The district of Savaneta: A quick history guide to the island's first capital



(Oranjestad)—Before Oranjestad became the island nation's capital, Aruba's first capital was the district of Savaneta. Here is where the cultural identity of Aruba was born, and from where the rest of the island developed into what it is today.

Savaneta is said to have been the first place where the Caquetio inhabitants first stepped foot on the island. Though there isn't hard evidence to back this up, but considering the legend of the Cacique Arua, it is believed that there were already movements on Aruba and Savaneta around 88 AD.

The Caquetios probably made their way to the island either from Venezuela, Colombia or other Caribbean islands in the region, but with good weather it was relatively easy for them to travel back and forth in their canoes. So, since the Caquetios discovered the island, Aruba found her first form of civilization.

It wasn't until 1499 when Aruba met another group of people who set foot on the island: the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda. De Ojeda first took notice of Aruba off the coast of Venezuela, during his exploration of the Latin American country. This was on August 9th, 1499. However, de Ojeda didn't actually sail to the island till 4 days later, on August 23rd, 1499. This was the beginning of the Spanish era on Aruba (1499-1636).

Alonso usually didn't stop at every island or land he saw, especially not in the Caribbean. He would often take notice of land from afar and continue sailing. However, Aruba was an exception. He had heard that there were "quebracho" (Kibrahacha) trees on the island, which were commonly used to produce dye or paint. But since these trees could not be found in Savaneta, he continued to search in the area of what is now known as Santa Cruz. The best way to transport the tree barks was via a route passing through Savaneta, and so the first road between Savaneta and Santa Cruz was made.

The Dutch colonial era (1636-1805)

During the 80-year war between The Netherlands and Spain, Dutch explorers and merchants began to travel to the ABC islands. Once they landed in Aruba, they deported the small Arawakan and Spanish community that was living on the island. This was the beginning of colonization of the ABC islands by the Dutch empire. Around the same, the West Indian Company (WIC) was born.



Bonaire and Curacao were mostly used for plantations, where the Dutch had transported slaves from Africa. Aruba, on the other hand, was mostly used to raise cattle and to house the haring factory. The Dutch had often forced the indigenous community to work for them.

In 1636, when the Netherlands won the war against Spain, the country surrendered the islands to the Dutch.

The Dutch administration appointed the island's

first commander, an Irish man named N. Williams. Because the Dutch were interested in other Caribbean islands and countries in South America, they imported Dutch merchants and business men, all of whom resided in Savaneta. This way, Savaneta officially became the island's first capital.

However, at the end of the 18th century, the commander at the time, J.R. Lauffer, moved his office to what is now "Horse Bay" in Oranjestad. Because the highest office on the island

moved away from Savaneta, the capital lost its title to what was called then Playa.

How Savaneta got its name

The name Savaneta probably has a Spanish origin. It was said that when the Spanish climbed a hill called Yara, they saw that the area was mostly open and had no big trees. In Spanish, such a land area is called a "sabana".

Because of its land surface, Savaneta was a great place to construct cattle farms. From here, the farmer culture on Aruba was born. Before the Aruban Gold Rush and the construction of the Refinery in San Nicolas, most residents were farmers, and Savaneta had many inhabitants that farmed fruits and vegetables. They also continued the tradition of raising cattle, like goat, sheep, pigs and horses. Savaneta was one of the first places on the island to have a general farming culture. From this culture, many other traditions were born, like the Dera Gay Holiday that we celebrate every year on June 24th. □



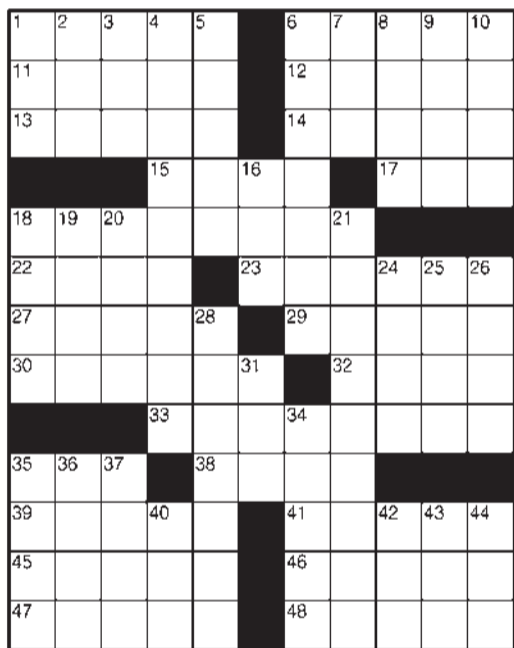
Source: Historia di Savaneta (History of Savaneta) by Adolf "Dufi" Kock.

CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

- ACROSS**
- 47 Held power
 - 1 Sprawling tales
 - 6 Site of a biblical tower

- DOWN**
- 1 Nest sight
 - 2 For each
 - 3 One — million
 - 4 Java joint
 - 5 Glossy fabric
 - 6 Soaking spot
 - 7 Brouhaha
 - 8 Like some cars
 - 9 Buffalo's lake
 - 10 Eye part
 - 16 Costa del —
 - 18 Final, for one
 - 19 Singer Guthrie
 - 20 Shoelace problem
 - 21 Snack in a gym bag
 - 24 Sticky stuff
 - 25 "Frozen" queen
 - 26 Doe or buck
 - 28 Hit, in a way
 - 31 Knight's title
 - 34 "Keen!"
 - 35 Harbor structure
 - 36 Beige
 - 37 Blue hue
 - 40 Try out
 - 42 Ancient
 - 43 Back-gammon cube
 - 44 Lobed organ



3-6

AXYDLBAAXR
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.

3-6 CRYPTOQUOTE

ZPJ AP ZFLP, ZBLP, YDH

NYQ FJ TPZZ FD IBBH

NPDJPD RPN. — NQZLFY VZYJC
Cryptoquote: ALL JOURNEYS HAVE SECRET DESTINATIONS OF WHICH THE TRAVELER IS UNAWARE. — MARTIN BUBER

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

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



store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through

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

Safety

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

JULY CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

- 07 TUE** CANIVAL HORIZON
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 22:00 | Berth: B
GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: C
- 08 WED** FREEWINDS
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: | Berth: E
- 12 SUN** FREEWINDS
Arrival: | Departure: 24:00 | Berth: E
- 14 TUE** GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: B
ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS
Arrival: 11:30 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: C
CARNIVAL VISTA
Arrival: 13:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: I
- 15 WED** ALLURE OF THE SEAS
Arrival: 7:00 | Departure: 16:00 | Berth: I
FREEWINDS
Arrival: 6:00 | Departure: | Berth: E
- 19 SUN** FREEWINDS
Arrival: | Departure: 24:00 | Berth: E
- 21 TUE** CARNIVAL HORIZON
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 22:00 | Berth: B
GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS
Arrival: 8:00 | Departure: 23:00 | Berth: C

SUDOKU

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

King Classic Sudoku

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

Difficulty: ★★★

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

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7/2

Planned 1.7 million satellites 'devastating' for astronomy: study

Paris, France

The 1.7 million satellites that companies are aiming to launch into Earth's orbit in the coming years will have "devastating consequences for astronomy", new research warned Wednesday. The plans to swarm Earth with huge, extremely bright satellites represent an "existential threat" to telescopes viewing the universe, according to the European Southern Observatory (ESO) which conducted the research. To retain humanity's ability to properly explore the night sky, the team of researchers called for a maximum limit of 100,000 satellites orbiting Earth.

The study is the first to calculate how much the constellations of big and particularly bright satellites being planned would impact astronomical observations by making the night sky brighter.

The number of satellites orbiting Earth has now reached 14,000 after surging in recent years, many of them part of billionaire Elon Musk's Starlink internet constellation. But that is just the start.

Musk's SpaceX company has announced plans to launch more than one million satellites by 2028 to serve as data centres powering the artificial intelligence boom.

Other projects such as the "Cinnamon" plans of startup E-Space and Chinese constellations CTC-1 and CTC-2 would add hundreds of thousands more satellites spinning around our planet.

And US startup Reflect Orbital hopes to launch 50,000 huge satellites that use giant mirrors to point sunlight back down to Earth, with the aim of providing light during the night.

In total, more than 1.7 million satellites could soon be lighting up the night sky, obscuring or blotting out the view of ground-based telescopes.



A KH-7 GAMBIT satellite is seen on display in the "RTX Living in the Space Age Hall" gallery at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum on June 23, 2026 in Washington, DC.

- Night sky four times brighter -

"When a satellite crosses what we observe, it makes a bright streak on our image, zapping whatever is behind it," said ESO astronomer Olivier Hainaut, who led the study published in Astronomy & Astrophysics.

"For the past few years, this has been happening -- but it is still manageable," Hainaut told AFP.

"But if we go from 14,000 to 1.7 million, we are really going to have problems."

The Reflect Orbital satellites pose a particularly significant threat to dark skies.

Even when their mirrors are not pointed at the observer, the light they scatter will make each one as bright as Venus -- which is known as the "morning star", Hainaut said. The researchers determined that almost all images captured by the largest camera ever built -- part of the new Vera C. Rubin Observatory in Chile -- would be rendered unusable.

Whether you were in France, the Sahara Desert or Chile, the sky "would no longer be clear, resembling instead the sky seen in the suburbs of a city," he warned. And in light-polluted cities, the satellites "would be the only 'stars' visible in the night sky," according to the ESO. All 50,000 Reflect Orbital satellites would also make the whole night sky up to four times brighter, it added.

ARUBA TODAY
BONDIA

How to reach us!

Downtown

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3 min walk to eagle beach
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House for sale
Fixer upper
Pos chigito
Near mangel halto beach
3 BR 1 bath
Property land 622 m2
Price :\$1,100,000
Call :011-297-630-1307
johnnypaesch@gmail.com

House for sale
Fixer upper
Pos chigito
Near mangel halto beach
2 BR 1 bath
Property land 395 m2
Price :\$790 ,000
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johnnypaesch@gmail.com

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San Nicolas:
Centro Medico
Tel. 584 5794

OTHER

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

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Police Oranjestad	527 3140
Police Noord	527 3200
Police Sta. Cruz	527 2900
Police San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulance	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Chinese firm sells hyper-real, 'always loyal' humanoid robots

Shenzhen, China

Their metallic frames covered in supple, lifelike skin, a posse of new Chinese robots meant for companionship can offer users AI-generated conversation or a hand to hold, complete with manicured nails.

The company UBTECH says its "U1" robot -- equipped with eye cameras, chest sensors, and listening microphones -- is the world's first full-sized, ultra-realistic humanoid designed for mass production.

Touted as an antidote to loneliness, the robots are priced at 119,800 yuan (\$17,600) for the most basic type and 990,000 yuan (\$145,700) for an "Ultra" version with more advanced features.

"Our bionic robots can accompany you for a lifetime," Michael Tam, head of UBTECH's brand UWorld, said Tuesday at a launch event in the southern Chinese tech hub Shenzhen.

"It will never betray you, will always be loyal to you, and



Humanoid robots are displayed during the launch of the U1 humanoid robot produced by UWORLD, a brand under UBTECH Robotics, in Shenzhen, China's Guangdong province on June 30, 2026.

will love you unconditionally."

If you pay enough, the androids' hair, face and outfits can be customised to resemble a loved one, a celebrity, or an imaginary character.

Male and female U1s can speak through an artificial intelligence tool programmed by the company to offer soothing words if it detects fatigue or stress, and get to know its user over time.

The product is mainly aimed at single people and those aged over 60 a "colossal market" in China of around 120 and 320 million respectively, according to Tam.

"These people have a

great need for companionship," he said.

UBTECH says it has already had more than 13,300 pre-orders, with deliveries due to start in September.

- 'Niche market' -

Robotics is a booming sector worldwide, and Chinese startups have raced ahead in recent years, helped in part by their access to the country's existing supply chains.

The basic U1 can move its head, eyes and mouth, and has a battery life of up to four hours but it doesn't do housework or cooking, and its skills do not extend to the bedroom either.

It is not designed to offer

intimate relations, at least "for now", UBTECH says.

But it can discuss users' daily concerns, remind them to take medication and help spot potential health problems, or even propose watching a World Cup match together.

Generative AI is also being deployed elsewhere in an effort to ease loneliness, especially among elderly populations.

In South Korea, cuddly ChatGPT-powered dolls are used in some care homes, while a lamp-like AI device called ElliQ offers similar companionship and safety-monitoring services. Lian Jye Su, a Singapore-

based chief analyst at Omdia, told AFP that he does see "value in a companion robot, albeit in a niche market" such as elderly care or mental wellness.

But "they have to pass the 'uncanny valley' test to appear physically and emotionally acceptable", with current models perhaps too off-putting to sell well, Su said, referring to the phenomenon in which interactions with artificial objects are so human-like it triggers unease.

- Sci-fi vibes -

The race to develop AI tools that humans trust has raised concerns over data privacy and the risk of becoming emotionally attached to a machine, including accusations that chatbots have encouraged suicides.

UBTECH says the data processed by its U1 robots is encrypted and will not be used to train its AI models.

In Shenzhen on Tuesday, the company did not shy away from sci-fi associations, showing off its ultra-realistic bots with outfits and visuals inspired by video games, and a spaceship on a giant screen.

Robots of all shapes and sizes can be seen in many places in China, from hotels to shopping centres and in factories.

The country accounted for 85 percent of the world's humanoid installations last year, according to Barclays bank. □



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End of the line for Finland's analogue phone network

Helsinki, Finland

Finland on Tuesday pulled the plug on analog landline phone calls after almost 150 years, the latest country to push forward in a global transition towards digital infrastructure. Estonia, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain have already made the jump, as countries across the world roll out fiber optic cable that can handle both internet services and voice calls.

Finland's fixed-line network began operating in the 1880s, but like everywhere else the digital revolution has swallowed up the old technology based on copper wires.

And the Nordic country, home of mobile phone pioneer Nokia, has seen the use of landline phones gobbled up by mobile technology.

Elisa, the country's last major telecom operator with a fixed-line copper-wire network, marked the end of its service with a call between the firm's CEO Topi Manner and Jarkko Saarimaki, head of the country's communi-

cation and transport agency.

The two chatted about their memories of landline phones, with Manner recalling his time as a teenager in London in the 1980s when he would call home once a week at an agreed time to make sure the family were all there.

They also discussed the future of mobile technologies, before ending the call with a casual "kuulemiin", meaning "speak later" in Finnish.

When announcing its decision to retire the network in January a move its competitors had already made earlier Elisa said its customers had just a "few thousand" landline-only plans, with no new ones being sold in years. After Tuesday, the only providers of landline plans in Finland will be local operators, currently covering a few thousand plans for local calls, public broadcaster Yle said. □

Zverev says Wimbledon hopes 'about me' despite open draw

London, United Kingdom

French Open champion Alexander Zverev insists his aim of a first deep run at Wimbledon depends purely on himself, despite being in a wide-open half of the men's draw.

The world number three came through a testing four-set battle with Belgian debutant Alexander Blockx in the opening round, winning 6-4, 6-7 (8/10), 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/0) on Centre Court and will next face France's Valentin Royer.

Zverev clinched his long-awaited maiden Grand Slam title at the French Open earlier this month after several near-misses, taking full advantage of shock early exits for Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic.

He has never had much joy at Wimbledon, failing to get past the last 16 in nine previous appearances.

But Sinner and Djokovic, the two favourites for the title in the absence of the injured Carlos Alcaraz, are in the opposite half of the



Germany's Alexander Zverev returns the ball against Belgium's Alexander Blockx during their men's singles first round tennis match on the second day of the 2026 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on June 30, 2026.

draw.

American fourth seed Ben Shelton exited the tournament from Zverev's half on Tuesday.

"It's very different than a French Open. For me, the draw doesn't really matter, because I have played a

top-10 opponent one time in my career here, which was Milos Raonic, in 2017," said Zverev.

"All the other years, I have lost to players outside of the top 10. So it's really about me.

"It's really about me getting through my matches and playing my matches, because yes, maybe the names of Jannik and Novak and all those guys, they're in the other side of the draw, but for me, that doesn't really matter, be-

cause historically I have not gotten to them.

"So for me, it's about focusing on the matches that are ahead of me to get to those names. I think that's the most important thing."

Zverev was in danger of becoming the first reigning men's Roland Garros champion to go out in the first round at the All England Club since Rafael Nadal in 2013 at several points in the match.

But the 29-year-old dug deep to beat Blockx for the third time in as many meetings this year.

The second seed needed just 30 minutes to take the first set, courtesy of the only break in the ninth game.

Blockx showed his mettle in a second-set tie-break, saving a set point and then levelling the match when Zverev double-faulted.

But a couple of double-faults in the third-set breaker proved costly for the 21-year-old, and Zverev wrapped up victory in the next set in another tie-break. □

Leonard returning to Raptors in trade from Clippers: media

Los Angeles, United States

The Los Angeles Clippers are finalizing a deal to trade Kawhi Leonard to the Toronto Raptors, the team he led to the NBA title in 2019, US media reported on Tuesday.

ESPN and The Athletic reported that Leonard, a two-time NBA Finals Most Valuable Player, will land in Toronto in exchange for All-Star forward Brandon Ingram, backup guard Grady Dick and first-round draft selections in 2031 and 2033.

The move could mean that Leonard, 35, will depart the Clippers before the NBA announces the findings of an independent investigation into the Clippers' dealings with the now-bankrupt company Aspiration and whether Leonard's \$28 million contract to endorse the firm was a means of circumventing the salary cap.

Leonard's contract with

the Clippers was due to expire after next season and the seven-time All-Star indicated he wanted to stay in Los Angeles.

But ESPN reported that the franchise, owned by former Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer, had made no moves to sign him to a long-term contract extension.

The deal was reported as the NBA's free agency negotiation period opened Tuesday, with the news of the day the revelation that LeBron James will depart from the Los Angeles Lakers to a team still to be determined.

It will be the second time the Raptors have made a big bet on Leonard, the first in 2018 when they acquired him from the San Antonio Spurs with one year left on his contract for DeMar DeRozan and other considerations.

Leonard, who won a title with the Spurs in 2014, led

the Raptors to the only championship in franchise history, eventually departing in free agency to the Clippers.

His final season in Los An-

geles was clouded by controversy after allegations surfaced that the Clippers used indirect payments, through Aspiration, to secure his signing while skirt-

ing salary cap rules.

The Clippers and Leonard have denied wrongdoing, and the NBA has yet to disclose the findings of the investigation. □



Kawhi Leonard #2 of the Los Angeles Clippers controls the ball against Draymond Green #23 of the Golden State Warriors in the first half of an NBA play-in tournament game at Intuit Dome on April 15, 2026 in Inglewood, California.

Kane rescues England from DR Congo calamity to reach World Cup last 16

Atlanta, United States

Harry Kane rescued England from a seismic World Cup shock with two late goals to beat the Democratic Republic of Congo 2-1 in Atlanta and secure a place in the last 16.

Aiming to end a 60-year wait to win a major tournament, Thomas Tuchel's men escaped humiliation and one of England's worst ever World Cup exits thanks to their talismanic captain after Brian Cipenga's early goal gave Congo an early lead.

But the Three Lions will need to improve for the daunting task of facing co-hosts Mexico at the Estadio Azteca in the last 16 on Sunday.



England's forward #09 Harry Kane shoots and scores his team's second goal during the 2026 World Cup round of 32 match football between England and the Democratic Republic of Congo at the Atlanta Stadium in Atlanta on July 1, 2026.

Already England's all-time top goal scorer in the competition, Kane now has 13 World Cup goals and moves onto five for the tournament to remain in the star-studded battle for the Golden Boot.

"What a crazy game, obviously," said Kane. "I think you have to stay patient in these games."

"Their keeper definitely made some unbelievable saves in that first half. And it was just about pounding the rock, keep pounding the rock, and our moments will come."

Defeat ended Congo's fairytale run on their return to the World Cup for the first time in 52 years.

The Leopards had never even won a point or scored a goal at the World Cup until a few weeks ago, but had one of the tournament favorites teetering on the brink of elimination.

Tuchel made two changes from victory over Panama as Declan Rice return in midfield, while Djed Spence came in at right-back with Reece James and Jarrell Quansah both ruled out through injury.

The German coach's decision not to select more specialist right-back cover in a 26-man squad will face more scrutiny after Congo took the lead down that flank.

Spence was caught under Chancel Mbemba's cross as the ball fell for Cipenga. The Almeria winger's shot was low and hard but Jordan Pickford should still have kept it out at his near post.

The vast majority of the nearly 70,000 crowd decked out in England red and white were silenced, while Tuchel's players were visibly rattled.

Jude Bellingham was shown a yellow card for a lunge and was then involved in a heated exchange with his coach during the mid-half hydration break.

The stoppage in play at least allowed Tuchel the chance to restore order. □



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