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Record-smashing heat wave surges from West to eastern U.S., Canada

Washington, United States

A record-smashing heat wave was spreading Tuesday from the Mountain West toward the eastern United States and Canada, placing more than 100 million people under heat alerts.

Hot and dry conditions also contributed to fierce wildfires in southwestern Ontario and northern Minnesota, with air quality expected to worsen over the Midwestern and Northeastern United States in the coming days.

The phenomenon known as a heat dome has already shattered all-time temperature records in western states, including 111F (44C) in Billings, Montana, where the previous record was 108F, and 109F in Salt Lake City, where the previous one was 107F.

Extreme heat and humidity persist in the Mountain West but are now spilling over to the densely populated East Coast, which also faced brutal temperatures earlier in the month, as well as Canada's Ontario and, to a lesser extent, Montreal.

"Above average temperatures and dangerous levels of heat are forecast



People cross a street at an intersection in Toronto, Ontario on July 14, 2026. Environment Canada issued a heat warning for the City of Toronto with daytime highs of 30 to 38 degrees Celsius.

to enter the Northeast on Tuesday before the most intense heat occurs on Wednesday and expands into the Mid-Atlantic," said the U.S. National Weather Service.

U.S. cities from Richmond, Virginia, to Boston, Massachusetts, are set to see temperatures soar from the upper 90s to near 100 degrees, with daily high records under threat.

In Ottawa, the federal capital of Canada, and Toronto, highs are expected to reach 100.4F on Tuesday, with temperatures feeling even hotter because of high humidity levels.

"Hot and humid air can also bring deteriorating air quality and can result in the Air Quality Health Index approaching the high-risk category," Environment and Climate Change Canada said.

In Montreal, the sky turned yellow on Tuesday morning due to smoke from wildfires burning several hundred miles away in northern Quebec and northwestern Ontario.

Cooler temperatures are expected to follow by the end of the week, though the heat dome will persist in the US Mountain West for the rest of July.

Heat domes are large areas of high pressure, where

sinking air suppresses development of precipitation and clouds, allowing heat to build up over days and weeks.

- New climate reality -

"We know that heat domes are, of course, a natural part of the climate system," Marc Alessi, a climate scientist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said in a briefing.

"But the climate system now is fundamentally different due to fossil fuel-driven climate change," he said. "Our atmosphere is much warmer. Our oceans are much warmer. They're releasing a lot more heat into the atmosphere, and this heat dome is an example of you know what fossil fuel-driven climate change looks like."

Scientists from the World Weather Attribution group released an analysis showing the hot and humid conditions in the earlier East Coast hot spell -- which fell as America celebrated its 250th anniversary on July 4 -- would have been "virtually impossible" without human-caused climate change. □

'Gus' the T. rex fetches record \$50.1M at U.S. auction



"Gus", a mounted Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton, one of the largest T. rex ever found, is pictured during a press preview at the Sotheby's Breuer building in New York, on July 1, 2026.

New York, United States

A Tyrannosaurus rex skeleton nicknamed "Gus" sold Tuesday for \$50.1 million at Sotheby's in New York, making it the most valuable dinosaur fossil bought at auction after a 10-minute battle between seven bidders.

"Gus" is one of the world's most complete T. rex skeletons -- with 183 fossilized bones -- and was discovered on a cattle ranch in South Dakota in 2021.

The giant beast lived some 72 to 66 million years ago -- a period characterized by a

warm climate, high sea levels and vast floodable coastal plains.

The skeleton measures 38 feet (11.6 meters) in body length, making it one of the largest T. rexes ever discovered. It is roughly 63 percent complete.

Tuesday's purchase by an anonymous buyer highlights a surging market for dinosaur bones -- a trend that has drawn criticism from some paleontologists over the specimens going into private hands.

"The United States is the only country in the world where fossils like this are considered personal property," Cassandra Hatton, head of science and natural history at Sotheby's, told AFP before the auction.

"If you own the land, you own the fossil and you have the right to sell it. So if you want a dinosaur, this is the only place that you can get it," she said. The previous record for a fossil auction was "Apex" the Stegosaurus, bought for \$44.6 million in 2024 by hedge fund billionaire Ken Griffin. □

U.S. Supreme Court justices defiant as threats hit home

Washington, United States

U.S. Supreme Court justices told Congress on Tuesday that escalating threats have forced them to confront dangers once unthinkable for the nation's top judges including explaining bulletproof vests to their children.

But in rare public testimony, they also delivered a defiant message: the court would continue deciding cases "without fear or favor" despite rising intimidation and a charged political climate.

The appearance came as the judiciary sought millions of dollars in new security funding after a bruising term that deepened tensions with President Donald Trump.

Justices Amy Coney Barrett and Elena Kagan testified before House and Senate panels that control federal spending, the first such appearance by sitting members of the nation's top court since 2019.

"For some of us, those threats have come very close, and all of us live with the knowledge that they may again materialize," Kagan, a liberal justice, told lawmakers in the House hearing.

"But as the chief justice has said, all members of the court can do their jobs as they believe legally right, adjudicating cases without fear or favor."

Barrett, who was sent home with a bulletproof vest around the time of the 2022 leak of the draft ruling overturning the nationwide right to abortion, described finding her 12-year-old son standing in her bedroom doorway after she put the item down.

"I didn't expect that performing the service was going to put me in the position of explaining to my children what a bulletproof vest was and why I had to wear one," she said.

The testimony came after a divisive term in which the court delivered major rulings on Trump's agenda, including decisions blocking his effort to end birthright citizenship and strik-



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett prepare to testify during a House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on July 14, 2026.

ing down sweeping global tariffs.

- 'Dangerous and disturbing' -

Trump has praised the conservative-dominated court when it has sided with him, including on presidential immunity, but has sharply criticized judges and justices who have ruled against him.

Barrett, whom Trump nominated in 2020, has drawn particular anger from some conservatives after joining decisions against the president despite remaining a reliable vote for many conservative legal outcomes. The judiciary is seeking nearly \$921 million for security, including more funding for protection at federal courthouses, while the Supreme Court itself wants \$228.4 million a \$20.5 million on-year increase. That includes \$14.6 million extra for the high court's specialized police department and building security, as well as \$6.5 million for a new visitor screening facility on the Supreme Court grounds.

Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said U.S. Marshals tracked 564 threats against federal judges last year, a "deeply alarming" 31 percent increase from the

previous year. Barrett has firsthand experience of the dangers. Her home was reportedly targeted in May in a "swatting" incident, in which a false emergency report is used to trigger an armed police response.

The most serious recent attack plot against a justice came in 2022, when an armed California resident traveled to the neighborhood of Justice Brett Kavanaugh intending to kill him. The would-be assailant was later sentenced to more than eight years in prison.

In the Senate panel's hearing, Republican Susan Collins slammed "dangerous and disturbing" rhetoric targeting the justices from both sides of the political divide. □

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Online same-sex romance series embrace AI 'freedom'

Hong Kong, China

Fed up with the dearth of same-sex love stories on Philippine screens, Vee Camallere created her own show using artificial intelligence, a technology described as a mixed blessing by LGBTQ campaigners. The web developer's campus romance and crime thriller series "Featherweight" has been watched hundreds of thousands of times on YouTube and TikTok since its March debut. Experts warn that AI tools, trained on massive and often biased datasets, risk perpetuating stereotypes and misinformation about minority groups.

But they have also become a means for LGBTQ expression and connection, especially in conservative parts of Asia.

AI "allows creators to produce stories independently and share them instantly", said Camallere, a 34-year-old lesbian who used several cutting-edge image generators to make "Featherweight".

"Filipino queer stories can reach international viewers faster, more frequently, and with more creative freedom," she told AFP.

In the first episode, student Daisy scrambles at rush hour to catch a jeepney, the country's most common form of public transport.

She later meets another student, Mika, in the library, as a Filipino love song heralds the start of their passionate saga.



"There still isn't a lot of content available for audiences who want to watch these kinds of stories" in the Philippines, said Camallere, whose show is part of the "Girls' Love" genre popularised in manga and anime. "It looks so real," said "Featherweight" fan Jhessy Aquino, 28.

If AI helps produce similar series, "it can help normalise queer relationships" in the country, Aquino said, particularly for women-centred narratives that are "often less visible".

- 'Stereotypical' -

"LGBTQ people and other historically underrepresented groups are finding global connection and important information through AI," Sarah Kate Ellis, head of campaign group GLAAD, said in a report published in

June, which is LGBTQ Pride Month.

"But we also face a dangerous reality," she warned. "Platforms and products disproportionately fail us in basic safety, data privacy, transparency, and accuracy -- including perpetuating factually incorrect information about our lives." The report cited research including a 2024 investigation by tech site Wired that found AI systems would often portray LGBTQ people as young, white, and with purple hair.

There are several high-profile LGBTQ celebrities in the Philippines, and Boys' and Girls' Love series have been growing in popularity for several years.

But same-sex marriage is illegal in the largely Catholic country, and no national law bans discrimination

based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

That is also the case in South Korea, where it would be "a major turning point if individual creators can use AI to produce high-quality queer content on par with existing K-dramas", said the maker of "The Summer of You", a self-published, AI-generated Korean Boys' Love series.

AI can be excellent "for visualising the voices of minorities who have struggled to cross the threshold of mainstream media", said the creator, who asked to use the pseudonym Tender Frame.

Like Camallere, they used AI image generators to carefully curate each scene in the story.

But they also hired real voice actors to give a more "nuanced" performance

by understanding the narrative as a whole.

- On the margins -

AI is also helping breathe life into queer histories that have been little acknowledged or risk being erased. Singaporean photographer Aik Beng Chia used an image generator to depict the lives of transgender people in the city-state's Bugis street, then known as a red-light district, in the 1970s and 80s.

"In Asian societies where LGBTQIA discourse often remains on the margins, AI may help create alternative visual archives, speculative histories, and new forms of public discussion," said National University of Singapore researcher Jiayu Chen, who has studied Chia's work.

"But responsible use also requires transparency, contextualisation, and care," she added.

Chen urged tech firms and governments to work with "communities with diverse backgrounds and expertise" to develop more culturally sensitive AI tools.

Established producers of non-AI same-sex art and entertainment had varied views on the new generation of "Girls' Love" and "Boys' Love" titles.

"Using AI to tell queer stories can feel unfair to existing creatives who are already capable of crafting these narratives with honesty and depth," Natts Jadaone, writer of the film "Rookie", told AFP. □

U.S. actress Ellen Burstyn to get Venice Lifetime award



U.S. actress Ellen Burstyn attends the "Law & Order" 25th Anniversary Celebration in New York City on January 6, 2026.

Rome, Italy

U.S. actress Ellen Burstyn, best known for her roles in "The Exorcist" and "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore", will receive a lifetime achievement award at this year's Venice film festival, organisers said Tuesday.

The 93-year-old, who has starred in over 150 films, said she was "so honoured" by the decision to award her the Golden Lion. "Wow! I not only get to travel to one of my top most favorite cities in the whole world. I get to return home carrying a Golden Lion in my arms!" she was quoted by the festival as saying.

This year's edition will run between September 2 and 12 and the jury will be led by U.S. actress Maggie Gyllenhaal.

Burstyn was elevated to global stardom

by the success of William Friedkin's 1973 film "The Exorcist", in which she played the mother of a pre-teen girl possessed by demonic forces.

She went on to win the Oscar for Best Actress for Martin Scorsese's 1974 "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore", and her 60-year acting career has since seen her win accolades for performances on film, stage and television.

The Venice Festival's Artistic Director Alberto Barbera said Burstyn was "an actress of rare intensity and truth".

She has brought "depth and complexity to unforgettable female characters embodying the contradictions and transformations in the contemporary woman," he said. □

Armenian apricots become geopolitical battleground with Russia

Vosketap, Armenia

In Armenia's Ararat valley, where apricots ripen beneath the biblical mountain of the same name, farmer Aramais Kazaryan's harvest has been swept into the centre of a geopolitical battle between Russia and the West.

Angered at Yerevan's pivot away from Moscow, the Kremlin imposed bans and restrictions on the imports of a wide range of Armenian goods, including fruits, vegetables and flowers, ahead of parliamentary elections last month.

Russia said it was for unspecified sanitary concerns, but it is widely seen as an attempt to heap economic pressure on Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to reverse course and turn back toward Moscow. The 75-year-old farmer's eyes filled with tears as he walked through his orchard in the village of Vosketap, where a breeze from snow-capped Mount Ararat, across the border in Turkey, dispelled the summer heat. "The apricot is a symbol of Armenia," he told AFP. "Its taste and aroma are royal. The apricot is a wonder of wonders."

Cultivated for millennia, Armenia's famed apricots



A woman buys apricots in Yerevan on July 4, 2026.

were known to ancient Romans as the "Armenian apple."

Before the ban, the vast majority of exports went to Russia.

- 'Cannot be forgiven' -

Kazaryan planted his orchard in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union when farmland was distributed to private owners.

Within five years, the trees were bearing fruit, and Russia became the natural destination for much of the harvest, trucked north

across the border.

Russia has also restricted Armenian fish, famed Jer-muk mineral water, wine and brandy.

The move has angered Kazaryan and many of his fellow farmers.

"For decades this trade went on. And suddenly everything changed?" he said.

"This cannot be forgiven in any way."

Moscow was punishing ordinary workers over the government's European course, despite Russia's

claims of historic friendship, he said.

"This is aimed not against Pashinyan or the leadership, it is going against our people."

Pashinyan's party won the June 7 vote -- despite intense pressure and allegations of interference from Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has so far withheld formal congratulations and Moscow has talked up alleged violations in the vote.

- Trade war -

Ex-Soviet Armenia has strong formal ties to Moscow a member of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union that hosts a Russian military base.

But Pashinyan has sought to reduce Yerevan's dependence on Moscow after Russia failed to intervene during military conflicts with Azerbaijan over the then-disputed Karabakh region. Armenia has frozen participation in a Moscow-led security bloc, deepened ties with the European Union and the United States, and set the country on a path toward possible EU membership.

The Armenian government has scrambled to soften the blow of the trade war unleashed by Moscow.

In early June, it approved support for farmers, including subsidies for greenhouse exports.

It is also compensating customs duties on fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers exported to the EU.

The European Commission has pledged more than 50 million euros in immediate assistance, along with measures granting nearly 80 percent of Armenian exports tariff-free access to the EU's 450-million-consumer single market. □

Mongolia's child jockeys ready to race in annual festival

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Six-year-old Hurts Gantumur raced across the Mongolian grasslands astride a galloping horse, training to become a child jockey in the country's biggest cultural festival.

His older brother Zolboo is 14 and is already too old to race at the annual Naadam festival, where only competitors between the ages of eight and 12 are eligible to be child jockeys. "In training, the child and the horse become one," Hurts's father, who spent years rearing racehorses for Naadam and oversaw his son's training, told AFP. "That's how they succeed," he said as he watched his son speeding across the steppe.

Children have long com-

peted in horse racing, one of the defining features of Naadam, galloping between 11 and 25 kilometres (7 and 16 miles), depending on their horse's age and race category.

Most children in rural Mongolia learn to ride from an early age, and those hoping to become jockeys usually begin training at around five years old.

More than 500 child jockeys are expected to compete at this year's Naadam.

But their inclusion in the sport has also drawn criticism from rights groups concerned about exploitation and the sport's dangerous conditions.

A UNICEF report said children were competing "under circumstances that are

detrimental to their health and lives", while NGO Their World said they often "miss school to prepare for races and work long hours for low wages at large stables".

One child jockey was killed and nine others were seriously injured while racing in 2022, according to Mongolian government figures, with around 3,200 child jockeys participating in 82 races that year.

In response, Mongolia raised the legal minimum age of child jockeys to eight years old, up from seven. Nevertheless, 46 child jockeys have died over the past 10 years while racing, according to the Mongolian National Human Rights Commission. The United Nations has expressed concern over a

sport it says poses "a fatal risk to the lives and well-being of children who are recruited or will be recruited as jockeys".

But for many families, horse racing remains an enduring tradition, with victory at

Naadam bringing honour to the winner's family and province.

As Hurts prepares to follow in his older brother's footsteps, his three-year-old twin brothers Galt and Gerelt await their turn. □



Fourteen-year-old jockey Zolboo Gantomor (R) and his little brother six-years-old Hurts Gantumur (L) practise horse riding ahead of the Naadam festival on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar on June 23, 2026.

'Indispensable' Xiaohongshu app fuels Chinese tourism

Beijing, China

Competition is fierce for professional photographers at Beijing's tourist hotspots, including a scenic lake where women in flowy traditional robes pose for snaps to share on Xiaohongshu, China's massively popular lifestyle app. The platform, which is reportedly preparing to file to go public as soon as this year, has shaken up the tourism industry in China, where domestic travel is booming to record levels. Known as RedNote in English, Xiaohongshu's interface is similar to the US social network Pinterest, but it is sometimes nicknamed "China's Instagram" as users can post photos, videos and even livestream.

Travellers use the app to discover new destinations and plan their itineraries around photogenic locations, like the lake in the capital's historic Shichahai area one of many "daka" or "check-in" spots where Xiaohongshu is driving even more footfall. On a recent Monday, photographer Li Geng, 18, stood with a camera slung across her neck, touting her services to wandering tourists whom she charges 10



Two tourists from Jilin province show their Xiaohongshu accounts on their mobile phones as they visit the Forbidden City in Beijing on July 11, 2026.

yuan (\$1.47) per photo. Metres away, other photographers yelled instructions to ornately dressed young women who held their fingers in victory signs and arched their backs for the camera.

Li told AFP many of her competitors have a significant social media presence, including one who has 45,000 followers on Xiaohongshu and charges lower prices for photos. That has caused "more customers to flock to him

while putting a massive amount of pressure on the rest of us", she said. In contrast Li, who has no big online following, can "only rely on calling out to people on the street to get customers".

- Travel inspiration -

Domestic travel in China hit record highs last year, Xinhua news agency reported in March, with trips by residents exceeding 6.5 billion, up more than 16 percent on-year. Meanwhile, Xiaohongshu's

user base has grown to 350 million monthly active users, data analysis platform Qiangua said in May, from 300 million a year earlier.

The app has boosted lesser-known businesses and sent tourists in droves to unconventional locations such as Zibo, a quiet industrial city in Shandong, after its cheap, marinated barbecue skewers went viral. Xiaohongshu is now the first place "a lot of younger travellers" seek inspiration, said Ming Yii Lai, senior

strategy consultant at Daxue Consulting.

Tourist Mina Chen, visiting the Shichahai area with her sister, had planned her Beijing trip using recommendations from other Xiaohongshu users.

Searching popular keywords like "citywalk" on the app brought up itineraries for the day, including where to eat and convenient routes from one attraction to another.

"It is now indispensable (to me)," the 20-year-old student from Hunan province told AFP.

- 'TikTok refugees' -

Xiaohongshu-driven travel has caused issues including overtourism at viral spots and businesses becoming too dependent on platform traffic, Lai told AFP.

Paid posts from food bloggers "who sing high praises about shops or destinations" have also drawn complaints when their recommendations are disappointing.

The app took the global spotlight last year when a proposed US government ban on the social media platform TikTok sent American users, dubbed "TikTok refugees", flocking to RedNote. □

Wildlife rescuers help birds survive Pakistan's hotter summers

Islamabad, Pakistan

Cradling an Asian koel in his hands, wildlife officer Zaheer Ahmed gently stretched its wings as part of a health checkup to rehabilitate birds hit with dehydration or heatstroke in Pakistan's capital.

Pakistan one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change experienced its second-warmest year since 1960 in 2025, according to government data.

Temperatures in Islamabad this summer have pushed past 40C.

"In the past, because of kite flying, the string used to damage their wings," said Sakhawat Ali, director of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board which oversees the Margallah Wildlife Rescue Centre in

Islamabad.

"But for the last one or two years, most of the cases we have been receiving involve birds that are dehydrated and suffering from heat stress."

The wildlife rescue centre,

located at the foot of the Margalla Hills, was once the site of the notorious Islamabad Zoo where neglected elephants and underfed lions were kept in cages.

The zoo was shuttered in

2020.

On the overgrown grounds where large dinosaur sculptures still stand, wild animals have been brought in for rehabilitation from across Pakistan, including bears and monkeys abused by their private owners.

Scientists warn that extreme weather events such as heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense as a result of human-induced climate change. Ahmed said the centre can receive up to 30 calls a day in summer from locals about distressed wildlife, including birds, adding that their top priorities are to provide medical attention, food and water.

The feathered creatures are kept in quarantine, sometimes for several

weeks, until they are fit to be released.

Birds face the heightened threat of forest fires, which can overlap with their breeding seasons, Ahmed said.

"Birds' nests also get burned. The birds themselves also get burned a little," says Ahmed. "So their entire habitat is being destroyed."

Ali encouraged residents to put out bowls of water for their friendly fowls to drink, bathe and keep cool.

The Islamabad Wildlife Management Board, a government agency, is looking into whether climate change is disrupting birds' breeding seasons and food sources, which could diminish their populations. □



This photograph taken on July 7, 2026 shows veterinarians hydrating an owlet at the Margallah Wildlife Rescue Centre in Islamabad.



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Explore Aruba!



(ORANJESTAD)—Aruba Today collected some things to do **BEYOND** the beach. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Arikok National Park

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In total, the park consists of 34 square kilo-



meters of protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whip-tail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.acf.aw

Natural Bridge

One of Aruba's favorite tourist attractions is the Natural Bridge. For thousands of years, pounding waves and strong winds have slowly chiseled away the limestone cliffs along Aruba's north coast to create several natural bridges. The largest of these bridges used to be the famous Natural Bridge. The bridge

was a formation of coral limestone cut out by years of pounding surf, and was one of the largest of these types of spans in the world. It stood some 23 feet (7 meters) above sea level and spans more than 100 feet (30 meters). Unfortunately the bridge collapsed on September 2, 2005. Despite this, it is still the most photographed natural bridge and it remains a popular tourist attraction in Aruba, with the adjacent and intact Baby Bridge also meriting a visit. The Natural Bridge is the perfect stop while touring Aruba. There is no admission fee or set hours for visiting. Quench your thirst with refreshing beverages & refuel your tank with local snacks.

The Lourdes Grotto

Named in commemoration of the famous French religious landmark, was created under the guidance of a priest named "Erkamp" and parishioners in the year 1958. The grotto, a shrine built into the rocks is located in Seroe Preto, just off the main road to San Nicolas. A statue of the Virgin Mary, weighing 700 kilos, was hoisted into place in the grotto. Every year, on February 11 (feast of Lady of Lourdes), a procession leaves from the St. Theresa church in San Nicolas to the grotto, where a mass is performed. The grotto is located road-side and can be visited daily. Just make sure you park safely in the event you wish to stop for pictures at this location. □

Rock stacking and its harmful effects

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

As known, "rock stacking" is not illegal in Aruba, but its impact on nature is

harmful as the stones form part of the natural habitat of small animal species living in Aruba's wilderness. Experts warn that "rock stacking" could even lead certain species to extinction.

In Aruba, much of the "rock stacking" also occurs near Arikok National Park. Although this activity is not

illegal in Aruba, it may be time for park authorities to impose stricter regulations on this activity.

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

Aruba Birdlife Conservation's post not only raises alarms about the activity



but also now that this phenomenon has reached Baby Beach, some of the stacked stone tow-

ers are up to 1.7 meters high, which can be very dangerous, especially for children. □



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Infini Unveils Menu XVI: Journey Through Time



Beginning July 16, 2026, Chef Urvin Croes and the team at Infini will debut Menu XVI: Journey Through Time, a new tasting experience that explores the cultures, traditions, and ingredients that have shaped the Caribbean. Remaining true to Infini's philosophy of "Limitless Possibilities," the menu blends history, storytelling, and modern culinary techniques into an immersive dining experience unlike any other on the island.

At Infini, every evening is about far more than exceptional food. The intimate chef's table concept encourages interaction between guests and the culinary team, with each course serving as another chapter in a story that unfolds throughout the night. Every ingredient has been carefully selected, and every dish carries inspiration drawn from the Caribbean's rich past while embracing a contemporary perspective.

The experience begins with Limpia Man, a refreshing hibiscus cleansing oil designed to awaken the palate before guests continue into Batata, where sweet potato, coconut, onions, tuna, mango, pineapple, mustard, and jerk spices come together in a vibrant opening course full of contrasting flavors and textures.

Next comes Kachá & Bada, featuring T2Pan chocolate sourdough paired with tomato, cilantro, and avocado, followed by Ikpiki, a bright seafood course of amberjack complemented by honeydew, jalapeño, lemon, and fragrant bay leaves.

Making a welcome return on Menu XVI is Jambo, one of Infini's signature creations. The dish brings together turbot, okra, cilantro, Madame Jeannete, celery, green grapes, mussels, and shrimp in a composition that reflects both precision and balance while celebrating Caribbean seafood.

Before the menu transitions into its heartier courses, guests are served Limpia Paladar, a refreshing Mojito Bonbon designed to cleanse the palate and prepare it for the next stage of the journey.

The story continues with Keshi Yena, Infini's modern interpretation of the beloved Caribbean classic. Pork, Gouda, green olives, raisins, capers, and chicken are reimaged using refined techniques while preserving the familiar flavors that have made the dish a regional favorite.



The centerpiece of the evening is Merchants and Mangroves, featuring sirloin accompanied by harissa, Creole spices, jack beans, bok choy, zaatar, vanilla, and dukkha. Inspired by centuries of trade and cultural exchange throughout the Caribbean, the course reflects the influences that continue to shape the region's cuisine today.

Guests are then introduced to Mosaic, an inventive combination of bread pudding, pecorino, king oyster mushrooms, coffee, verjus, pears, and soy, bridging the transition from savory to sweet.

Dessert arrives with Carnival, a playful composition featuring corn cake, rum, soursop, chocolate, mandarin, tamarind, lime, and

basil, bringing together bold flavors in a vibrant finale.

As the evening draws to a close, diners are presented with Cos Dushi, a delicate macaroon infused with ponche crema, rum, and passion fruit. Finally, guests leave with Infini's signature farewell gift, the Bahama Mama Cupcake, featuring orange, rum punch, coconut, and pineapple, allowing the experience to continue beyond the restaurant. Menu XVI reflects the philosophy that has guided Chef Urvin Croes throughout his career. Before opening his own restaurants, he worked his way from apprentice cook to Chef de Partie and Sous Chef at several of Aruba's highest-rated restaurants. He later expanded his experience in Europe at the Michelin-recognized Grand Hotel Karel V in Utrecht before returning to Aruba with a vision of elevating the island's culinary reputation.

That vision remains at the heart of Infini today. Chef Urvin combines traditional Caribbean recipes with modern techniques while working closely with local farmers and producers whenever possible. His dedication to showcasing local ingredients and Caribbean flavors has earned him numerous accolades, including becoming the first winner of Iron Chef Aruba.

With Menu XVI: Journey Through Time, Infini once again invites guests to experience more than a tasting menu. It is an evening of storytelling, interaction, and discovery that celebrates the people, cultures, and flavors that have shaped the Caribbean while continuing to push the boundaries of modern fine dining. □



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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitor at Marriott's Aruba Ocean Club!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Goodwill Ambassador of Aruba. The honoree was respectfully honored with a certificate for her years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honorary certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three levels of honor are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honoree was:
Goodwill Ambassador

Mrs. Katherine Lombardo from Bergenfield, New Jersey, United States. Ms. Keyttin Silva representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of Ocean Club bestowed

the certificate upon the honoree, presented her with gifts, and thanked her for choosing Aruba as her favorite vacation destination, as her home away from home.

The top reasons for returning to Aruba provided by the honoree was:

- Aruba's beautiful weather and blue water.
- Aruba's gorgeous sunsets.
- Aruba's amazing staff and management.
- Aruba's great food.
- "Friendship made on this beautiful island."



On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honoree for her continued visits to the "One Happy Island". ☐



Article by Etnia Nativa

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Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Episode CCCLXI - 361

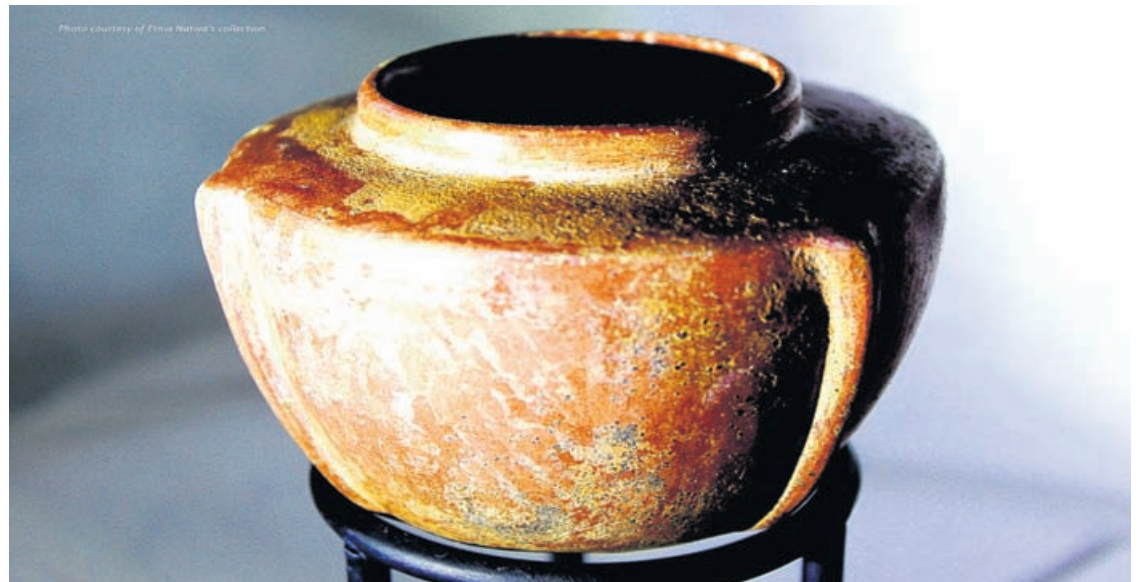
The Art That Keeps Aruba's History Alive

Each week in this cultural space, Etnia Nativa—one of Aruba's leading guardians of the island's cultural heritage—invites readers on a journey through the history, identity, and living traditions that have shaped the Aruban spirit across generations.

In this latest edition, Etnia Nativa explores the remarkable stories preserved within ancient works of art. A painted image on stone, a carefully carved petroglyph, or a beautifully crafted ceramic vessel is far more than an artistic creation; each is a lasting testament to the people who made it. These enduring artifacts offer invaluable insights into the beliefs, customs, daily lives, and cultural legacy of past civilizations, allowing us to better understand the human experience across time.

At the heart of this exploration is the archaeology of art—an interdisciplinary field that brings together archaeology and art history to uncover how people lived, expressed themselves, and understood the world across time. Through these remarkable artifacts, the past comes to life, offering a deeper understanding of our shared human history. For archaeology and anthropology, a work of art is far more than an aesthetic masterpiece. It is a cultural testament that preserves invaluable evidence about the society that created it. Through the careful study of ancient art, researchers uncover clues about religious beliefs, technological achievements, social organization, and the values that shaped everyday life.

Equally important is the context in which an object is discovered. A beautifully painted vessel unearthed in a burial site, for example, reveals far more than artistic skill. Its location can provide insights into a culture's beliefs about death, the afterlife, and the social standing of the individual buried with it. Every artifact tells a richer and more meaningful story when interpreted within the context of its surroundings. The materials used to create ancient art also speak volumes. Whether crafted from wood, stone, bone, clay, or natural pigments, these materials help archaeologists trace technological innovations, re-



source availability, and even ancient trade networks that connected distant communities. Likewise, studying the iconography—the symbols and imagery represented in artwork—offers profound insights into a civilization's customs, spiritual beliefs, and worldview.

Our own native rock artists provide a remarkable example. These early creators were more than artists; they were likely mystical healers, herbal practitioners, and makers of natural pigments. Their ability to heal and communicate with the supernatural may have inspired both their creativity and their important role within their communities. They were undoubtedly heirs to the earliest surviving shamans who migrated across the Bering Land Bridge more than 30,000 years ago. In our native tradition, such individuals became known as "curanderos" or "curiosos" (see Island Insight, Episode 269).

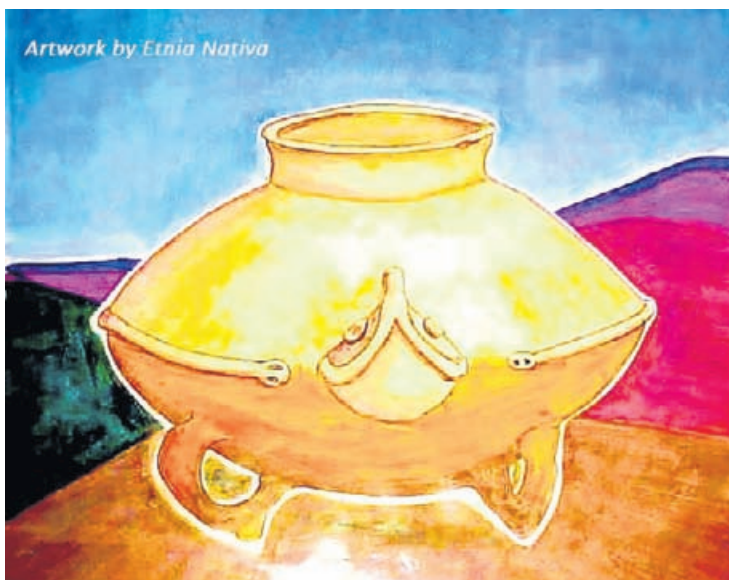
Throughout history, art has played a central role in rituals and religious ceremonies. Temple carvings, ceremonial objects, burial offerings, and sacred effigies allow archaeologists to better understand how ancient peoples worshipped, honored their ancestors, and interacted with the spiritual world. At the same time, artistic styles and techniques help researchers establish the age of archaeological sites, as motifs and methods evolve through different historical periods. Preserving these treasures presents another important challenge. Many ancient artworks are fragile and vulnerable to weathering and human activity. Today, archaeologists rely on

advanced conservation techniques to stabilize and restore these irreplaceable objects. Modern digital technologies—including 3D modeling, laser scanning, and photogrammetry—allow researchers to document artworks with extraordinary precision, create detailed replicas for museum exhibitions, and conduct further analysis without risking damage to the originals.

The relationship between archaeology and art continues long after excavation. Every generation interprets ancient symbols, styles, and artistic techniques through the lens of its own cultural experiences. As our understanding evolves, so too does our appreciation of the creativity, resilience, and ingenuity of those who came before us.

Ultimately, archaeology in art reminds us that every ancient brushstroke, carving, and painted stone carries a story waiting to be discovered. By preserving and studying these artistic legacies, we not only uncover the history of past civilizations but also gain a deeper understanding of our shared human heritage. For travelers who value authenticity over spectacle, meaningful experiences over photo opportunities, and cultural connection over crowded attractions, Etnia Nativa offers something increasingly rare: a genuine encounter with the spirit of Aruba. Leave not only with memories and photographs, but with a deeper appreciation of the island, its people, and its enduring heritage. □

Don't just visit Aruba—experience its spirit, uncover its stories, and connect with its ancestral roots. Reserve your mystical cultural experience:
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Basic driving rules on Aruba: Traffic signs

(Oranjestad)—Though Aruba's traffic is relatively easy to manage, driving here—especially if it's your first time visiting—can be foreign. To help you out, here's a breakdown of some traffic signs you might encounter on the road.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas

where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait un-

til traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba.

Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

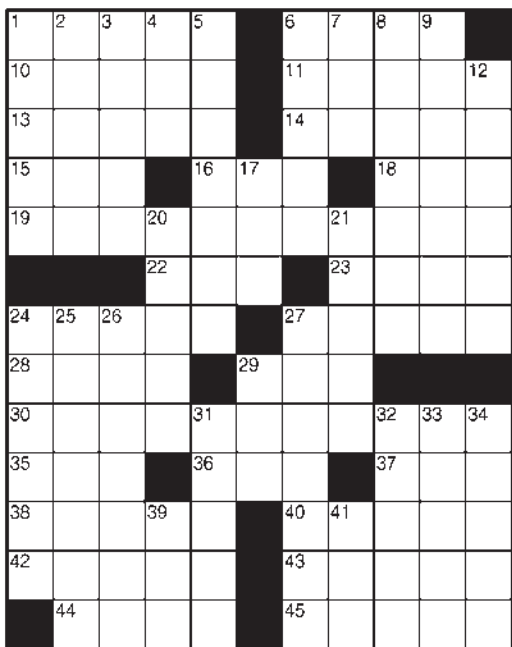
ACROSS

- 43 Fleet-based
1 Walk proudly
6 Rotisserie part
10 The ones here
11 Diminishes
13 Watch a second time
14 In the know
15 Had lunch
16 Total
18 Director Spike
19 Part of a Swiss timepiece
22 Director Howard
23 Formerly
24 Hitter's turn
27 Ranch animal
28 Noggin
29 In addition
30 Part of a mattress
35 Flop
36 Lobed organ
37 Rawls or Reed
38 Make blank
40 Coral island
42 TV's Leary

- 44 Appointment
45 Portents

DOWN

- 1 Sipping aid
2 Letter before iota
3 Stopwatch button
4 Take advantage of
5 Golfer's start
6 Marsh
7 Fido's foot
8 Queued up
9 Roman dramatist
12 Folk's Pete
17 Ensign's org.
20 Origami creation
21 Copter part
24 Tolerated
25 Like some pros
26 Colorful kerchief
27 Choir member
29 Airport screening org.
31 Baseball's Pee Wee
32 "— Lucy" Ryan
34 Shore birds
39 Plop down
41 Scot's cap



3-20

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

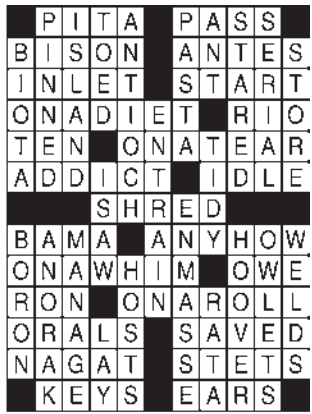
One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-20

CRYPTOQUOTE

H UGV'K MVGR RXHAX HE
DGLZ UHEAGJLTBHVB,
NHKZLTKJLZ GL AXHAMZVE.
— Z.F. RXHKZ

Cryptoquote: TRAVEL MAKES ONE MODEST. YOU SEE WHAT A TINY PLACE YOU OCCUPY IN THE WORLD. — GUSTAVE FLAUBERT



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	CARNIVAL 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: 6:00 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

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

Difficulty: ★★★

7/15

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★

7/14

Spaniard's rare skin disorder ups danger of summer heat

Madrid, Spain

Every summer, Alberto Gomez lives with a fear most people never consider. The 36-year-old Spanish physics and chemistry teacher has a rare genetic skin disorder that leaves him unable to sweat properly and therefore unable to cool himself naturally during extreme heat.

"If you're having a hard time, imagine what it means for me. My fear is suffering a heatstroke and not being able to recover from it," he told AFP at a gym near his home in Arroyomolinos near Madrid. As Spain's increasingly intense summers bring more frequent and prolonged periods of extreme heat, Gomez is among a small number of people living with the condition.

For them, a day that is merely uncomfortable for most people can quickly become life-threatening, forcing them to constantly monitor their bodies and avoid situations that could trigger dangerous overheating.

"When summer comes, we have a series of warning signs telling us something could happen if we don't start regulating our temperature," Gomez said. Ichthyosis is a rare inherited disorder that leaves the skin excessively dry, rough and red.

Gomez's skin peels from head to toe, while other



Spanish physics and chemistry teacher Alberto Gomez, living with ichthyosis, a genetic skin disorder that leaves him unable to cool himself naturally during extreme heat, shows his hands in Arroyomolinos, near Madrid on July 1, 2026.

patients develop sores or blisters. One of the condition's most dangerous consequences is that many patients sweat little or not at all.

- Lasts for life -

"Sweat protects us when it's very hot because through perspiration, we release heat," said dermatologist Angela Hernandez, an ichthyosis specialist in Spain who estimates around 300 people in the country have the disorder. "If we cannot release that heat, the body overheats to such an extent that it literally collapses. All the cells are destroyed," she said, describing the risk as potentially fatal. Usually diagnosed at birth, the genetic disorder lasts for life, although its severity varies widely. There is no

cure.

It affects the skin's ability to shed normally, causing thick, dry scales to build up and making patients more prone to dehydration, infections and painful cracking.

Beyond the immediate threat posed by extreme heat, the condition requires constant care. Many patients spend hours each day applying moisturising creams to relieve cracked skin, while its visible symptoms can also expose them to unwanted attention and stigma.

Patients must also avoid overheating and prolonged exposure to the sun.

To cope with Spain's increasingly hot summers, Gomez rarely goes outside without a UV-blocking umbrella. ☐

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Tel. 587 9011

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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
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Police Sta. Cruz 527 2900
Police San Nicolas 584 5000
Police Tipline 11141
Ambulance 911
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Red Cross 582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

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Prof. Taxi 588 0035
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Taxi Serv. Aruba 583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv. 280 2828

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Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
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-220717

After Mythos saga, Google AI boss wants U.S.-led global watchdog

Washington, United States

The head of Google's artificial intelligence lab called Tuesday for the United States to create an organization that would test the most powerful AI systems before they can be released to the public.

Demis Hassabis, who runs Google DeepMind and won a Nobel Prize for his work on protein science, said in an essay that AI capable of matching the full range of human thinking, known as artificial general intelligence, is likely just a few years away.

Hassabis leads the division behind Google's Gemini family of AI models, which compete directly with offerings from OpenAI and Anthropic in the fast-moving race to build more powerful systems.

The proposal lands amid growing calls from rival AI executives for binding government oversight of the technology and weeks



France, Cannes, 2026-06-24. Interview on the future of creativity with Sir Demis Hassabis AI researcher, entrepreneur, Nobel laureate, and co-founder and CEO of Google DeepMind at Cannes Lions, the International Festival of Creativity.

after a bruising standoff between the Trump administration and Anthropic that laid bare the absence of clear rules for the sector.

In June, the Commerce Department ordered Anthropic to suspend all for-

eign access to its Claude Fable 5 and Mythos 5 models, citing national security concerns linked to a reported jailbreak users successfully blowing past guardrails designed to contain them. The company was forced

to take both models offline entirely for more than two weeks before access was gradually restored.

Hassabis proposed a new regulatory body modeled on the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FIN-

RA), the private watchdog that polices Wall Street brokerage houses under federal oversight.

He said it would be staffed by leading technical experts, funded primarily by the AI industry, and tasked with developing safety benchmarks that frontier models must clear before entering the market.

Under his plan, AI developers would initially submit their most powerful models for review on a voluntary basis up to 30 days before release. Once the testing regime proves reliable, compliance would become mandatory.

"Nobody in the world knows for sure what is going to happen from here, and even the experts disagree," Hassabis wrote.

"When there is a large degree of uncertainty and the stakes are this high, proceeding with cautious optimism is the sensible and correct strategy." □

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

Editors
Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo
Oriana Geerman

Sales
Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds
classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection
accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website
Juan Luis Pinto

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

Swiss probe Google dropping search choice on Android phones

Zurich, Switzerland

The Swiss competition authority announced Tuesday it had opened a preliminary investigation into Google's removal of the "choice screen" feature on Android devices in Switzerland.

The feature allowed users to choose their default search engine during the initial set-up of a new An-

droid device.

"Recently, Google removed this feature in Switzerland," the Secretariat of the Competition Commission (COMCO) said in a statement.

"As a result, the Google search engine is imposed as the default on Swiss users, without a 'choice screen' being displayed during the initial set-up."



This photograph taken on January 22, 2026, shows signs of Google Search, Google Gemini, YouTube and Google Cloud displayed during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos.

COMCO said its removal could limit the visibility of search engines competing with Google, thereby reinforcing barriers to entry.

"This new practice by Google could affect the ability of search engine providers and, more broadly, other digital service providers to compete," it said.

It also creates an unequal treatment between Swiss users and those in the surrounding European Economic Area, "even though the competitive issues are comparable", it added. The EEA covers 30 countries, extending the 27-member European Union's common market to three other states. Switzerland is not a member of either bloc.

COMCO said that in digital markets, default settings played a decisive role, with the choice screen aiming to reduce the lock-

in effects associated with preconfigured settings.

"The preliminary investigation will determine whether there are indications of an unlawful restriction of competition under the Cartel Act," said COMCO.

A Google spokesperson told AFP that the tech giant was aware of the investigation.

"We look forward to cooperating fully with the authority to address their questions," the spokesperson added.

At the start of July, the EU's top court upheld a record 4.1-billion-euro (\$4.7 billion) fine the bloc slapped on Google for anti-competitive practices related to its Android operating system. The European Court of Justice dismissed the US tech giant's second attempt to overturn the penalty imposed by the European Commission in 2018 which remains the EU's highest ever antitrust fine. □



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Pogacar wins Tour de France 10th stage on Bastille Day

Le Lioran, France

Tadej Pogacar shrugged off the boo-boys and powered to victory on France's national holiday with another dominant display on Tuesday's mountainous 10th stage to extend his overall lead at the Tour de France.

World champion Pogacar won his third stage at this year's Tour and for the third time on Bastille Day to extend his lead over Jonas Vingegaard to more than three and a half minutes. It is the largest gap Pogacar has ever had over his rivals at this stage of the race.

It was also the four-time champion's 24th stage victory at the Tour, moving him to within one win of Frenchman Andre Leducq who twice won the Tour in the 1930s in fourth in that list. And even some jeers from the side of the road did not detract from his enjoyment. "Today was an incredible day. The team did a super good job," said the 27-year-old Slovenian. "We targeted this stage since a long time ago and it also happens that two years ago Jonas beat me in the sprint fair and square."



UAE Team Emirates - XRG's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar cycles to the finish line to win the 10th stage of the 113th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 166.6 km between Aurillac and Le Lioran in the Massif Central, on July 14, 2026.

That was two years ago, and the last time that Vingegaard beat Pogacar in a battle to win a stage. "I didn't know I'm gonna win until the last kilometre and then I remember it's Bastille Day and I try to honour the yellow jersey," added Pogacar.

"And thanks to all the fans that they came today to the road and it was an

amazing atmosphere, even though (there was) some booing. "All the guys that were booing, they give us more power."

- Vingegaard wilts -

The reigning champion exploded into action 15.5km from the finish of the 166.6km stage in the Cantal mountains and area of extinct volcanoes and

quickly opened up a decisive lead.

Behind him, the battle was for the minor placings both on the day and in the overall standings.

Olympic champion Remco Evenepoel dug in to finish second on the day, 32sec behind Pogacar, with French teenage hope Paul Seixas pipping Florian Lipowitz to third place two

seconds later.

"It was an extremely hard day and being able to take third place on a day for the Tour's toughest guys is brilliant," said Seixas, who moved up to fifth overall. Vingegaard wilted on the uphill drag to the finish line and came home seventh at 44sec.

He is now 3min 36sec behind Pogacar with Evenepoel climbing to third overall another 30sec back.

Pogacar's team-mate Isaac Del Toro was the biggest loser on the day, dropping from third to seventh overall after finishing the stage eighth at 1min 31sec. However, behind Pogacar the battle is intense with just over a minute and a half separating Vingegaard from Del Toro, and only 38sec separating Evenepoel from his Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe team-mate Lipowitz in sixth.

It took about 50km for the day's breakaway to form as Mads Pedersen's Lidl-Trek team set a furious pace to set him up for the intermediate sprint, where he extended his lead in the green sprinters' jersey competition. □

Balogun admits red card furor affected U.S. World Cup team

Washington, United States

Folarin Balogun admitted Tuesday that the suspension of his red card in the World Cup after President Donald Trump intervened put added pressure on the US team.

Balogun said in an interview with CBS he was "definitely in shock" when he was sent off for treading on the foot of a Bosnia-Herzegovina defender in his side's 2-0 group-stage win.

"When something is not intentional it should never be a red card," he said.

But days before the next match, the last-16 knockout game against Belgium, world football's governing body FIFA announced the red card had been suspended, clearing the way for Balogun to play.

Trump then admitted he had called FIFA president Gianni Infantino to ask for the card to be reviewed.

The U.S. went on to lose 4-1 to Belgium and Balogun made little impact despite starting the game.

"It was just an unfortunate situation and it put a lot

more pressure on us than we needed," said Balogun, 25.

"My initial reaction was I was happy to be back in the team but when I kind of started to reflect on it, I knew it was going to cause a lot of controversy."

He added: "I could almost see within my teammates a bit of nerves because it's something that's so unique. "The closer it got to the game I just tried to focus as best as I could. It was difficult, a lot of outside noise, and that's hard to avoid." □



Folarin Balogun (20) of USA warms up ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup Round of 16 match between USA and Belgium at Lumen Field (Seattle Stadium) in Seattle, Washington, United States on July 6, 2026.

Messi meets England at last with World Cup final place on the line

Atlanta, United States

Lionel Messi has done just about everything possible in a glorious career, but the 39-year-old Argentinian great has never taken on England -- he will finally get the chance in Wednesday's World Cup semi-final. Messi won his 200th cap for the Albiceleste in the group-stage victory against Algeria and dreams of leading his country to the final once again.

The diminutive playmaker is surely in the final days of a remarkable international career which began when he was a fresh-faced 18-year-old in 2005.

Having broken into the Barcelona team late the previous year, Messi had just starred for Argentina as they won the Under-20



Lionel Messi #10 of Argentina is thrown in the air by teammates after the 3-2 victory during the FIFA World Cup 2026 Round of 16 match between Argentina and Egypt at Atlanta Stadium on July 07, 2026 in Atlanta, Georgia.

beat Switzerland in Kansas City in the last eight.

- Emulating Maradona -

The man who emulated Diego Maradona by inspiring Argentina to World Cup glory in Qatar four years ago will now hope to leave a similar mark on England as his legendary predecessor.

Any meeting of these countries evokes memories of the 1986 quarter-final at the Estadio Azteca in Mexico City, when Maradona punched in to score the 'Hand of God' opener and then ran past half the England defence for his team's second goal -- perhaps the greatest World Cup goal of all time.

Messi has not scored one quite like that, but ahead of the semi-finals of the current tournament he had scored more World Cup goals than any other player.

With 21 goals from a tournament record 32 appearances, he led France skipper Kylian Mbappe by one after the quarter-finals.

The Inter Miami player had found the net in nine consecutive World Cup matches before the Switzerland game, when he let others notably Julian Alvarez take over the goalscoring duties.

Argentina are now one game away from reaching another World Cup final, as they aim to become the first team to retain the trophy since Brazil in 1962.

It would be a third final in four World Cups, and Messi could follow in the footsteps of Brazil great Cafu. The full-back played in three in a row from 1994 to 2002 even Maradona only played in two.

"Getting to another semi-final is not a normal, mundane thing, so this is something we should really enjoy because we don't know if it will happen again," Messi said. The England players will hope to enjoy it as well. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Nico O'Reilly, who is likely to come up against Messi if he starts at left-back, told BBC Radio 5 Live. □

World Cup in the Netherlands.

He was handed his Argentina bow by Jose Pékerman in a friendly against Hungary in Budapest that August, replacing Lisandro Lopez in the 64th minute and joining Hernan Crespo up front.

Ninety seconds later he was sent off for what the referee saw as an elbow. It was quite the ignominious way for his Argentina career to begin.

"An 18-year-old kid who is making his debut for the national team and has so much hope -- he can't be punished like that. The referee needed to be more understanding," said Crespo. Messi might look back now and laugh at that incident, which led to him being suspended for a friendly against England in Geneva three months later. The nations have not met since, and so Messi will play against the Three Lions for the very first time under the roof of the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta.

"I have played against everyone except England and it is special because they are a major nation, a powerhouse, and it is always nice to play against a side like that, especially in a World Cup semi-final," said Messi after Argentina

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