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Dominic LeBlanc, Canada's minister in charge of US-Canada trade, is surrounded by members of the press as he arrives to meet with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer at the headquarters of the Office of the United States Trade Representative in Washington, DC, on August 20, 2026.

U.S., Canada 'very close' to trade deal, Ottawa says, as details emerge

Washington, United States

The United States and Canada are "very close" to a final trade deal, the top Canadian negotiator said Thursday after talks with President Donald Trump's team.

Canada's Dominic LeBlanc met for three hours in Washington with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, as both countries push to finalize an agreement to avert new tariffs threatened by Trump.

"We're very close. We continue to make progress, and we're going to stay here and do the work that's necessary until we get to that point," LeBlanc told reporters after leaving Greer's office.

On Wednesday, both sides said they had moved close to a final agreement, a deal that could ease tensions following months of acrimony triggered by Trump's punishing levies.

A new round of 50-percent US tariffs was set to take effect on Canadian imports on Wednesday, but Trump said the day before that he was delaying enactment for 72 hours as a deal looked imminent.

Details of the prospective agreement remain unclear, but Prime Minister Mark Carney on Wednesday

updated the leaders of Canada's provinces and territories on the negotiations.

Carney made specific requests that the United States wanted implemented by Canada's provinces, Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston told reporters afterward.

Those include restocking U.S. wine and liquor, which several provinces removed in retaliation for Trump's tariffs on Canadian autos, steel, aluminum and lumber. "The prime minister has asked us, as premiers, as provinces, to return the U.S. alcohol to the shelves," Houston said.

"It's been an irritant... that has kind of really bothered the United States," he added.

- 'Emotionally draining' -

The leader of the Atlantic coast province noted that even if US alcohol returned to Canadian stores, there is no guarantee people will buy it, citing deep-seated frustration over Trump's treatment of Canada, including his annexation threats.

Beyond the provisions in any trade deal, there's "the emotional impact of what Canadians have experienced," Houston said. "It has been emotionally

draining."

Quebec's Premier Christine Frechette said her province had been hammered by Trump's tariffs and she would decide on restocking U.S. alcohol after studying the deal.

Wab Kinew, the left-wing premier of central Canada's Manitoba province, said he was prepared to put alcohol back on the shelves, even if he thinks Canada "should fight."

"I think America is weaker around the world today than it was a year ago," Kinew said.

Trump's "about to get slaughtered in the mid-terms," he added. "I think we've got the upper hand."

Carney also asked provinces to ensure they remove any language in procurement policies that "specifically excludes the United States," Houston said.

Provinces could still favor Canadian suppliers, but cannot have direct language that precludes a US supplier from a project.

The U.S. also likely has a range of demands of Canada's federal government, with Canadian media reports pointing to commitments on defense procurement and critical mineral supplies. □



Workers look on at the construction site of a helipad as US President Donald Trump speaks to the press on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, on August 19, 2026.

Trump unveils White House helipad as building frenzy escalates

Washington, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump showed off a giant new helicopter landing pad at the White House on Wednesday, the latest in a series of construction projects, as he seeks to leave his mark on Washington.

While the Iran war is stalled abroad and the economy stalls at home, the former property tycoon seemed reinvigorated as he led journalists on an impromptu tour of the new landing zone on the South Lawn.

"One thing I know how to do is build!" Trump told reporters.

Trump said the granite helipad was necessary because the new versions of the Marine One helicopter coming into service would burn or damage the grass on the iconic lawn at the back of the White House.

"So now with the helipad, we won't have any problem with the grass," Trump said.

The 80-year-old, who made his fortune in the New York real estate business, also confirmed reports that he had ordered the original work on the landing spot to be redone, saying it was originally on too much of a slope.

It would be ready in time for the arrival of Chinese President Xi Jinping on September 24, he said.

Trump then signed the back of a stone shaped like an eagle's head that will be inserted into the pad, which is a giant replica of the seal of the president of the United States.

To build the helipad, workers have torn up much of the historic lawn that has played host to moments like the departure of president Richard Nixon after his resignation in 1974 and the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords. Critics have slammed Trump's building frenzy during his second term in the White House, including the demolition of the East Wing to build a massive ballroom.

Trump boasted about the scale of the ballroom project, which he says will include a top-secret underground bunker and a drone port on the roof.

"This will be the greatest military complex-slash-ballroom anywhere in the world," he said. But the ballroom has been tied up by legal action, and the Trump administration last week asked the US Supreme Court to allow it to complete construction on national security grounds. Trump has insisted that the ballroom will be privately financed, but media reports in June showed that significant taxpayer funds were going to the project, which could cost as much as \$600 million. □

U.S. pushes allies, China to back Trump's economic war on Iran

Washington, United States

The United States on Thursday warned allies and China to join President Donald Trump's new campaign to isolate the Iranian economy, vowing that Washington would "collapse this regime" in Tehran.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's comments underscored how Trump is shifting to economic rather than military pressure on Tehran as his unpopular war drags toward the six-month mark.

Iran branded the US threats as "economic terrorism" and said they would fail.

Under fire at home over the impact of the war and with crucial midterm elections looming, Trump had on Wednesday promised the "most crushing" economic operation ever against Iran.

"It is going to work in Iran and we are going to collapse this regime," Bessent told U.S. broadcaster CNBC. Neither Trump nor his treasury chief has set out the measures they are planning against Iran. Bessent said he would give more details during a press conference on Monday.

But Bessent underlined that Washington expects both allies and rivals to join in.

"This is going to be the greatest coordinated economic isolation in the history of the world. And we are going to them and saying you are either with us or against us," he added in a



U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent attends an event announcing the expansion of a foster care initiative in the Rose Garden of the White House on August 20, 2026 in Washington, DC.

message to allies.

Asked whether the United States would pressure China, Bessent said that "many conversations are best to have in private," but called on Beijing "to get with the program."

Chinese President Xi Jinping is due to visit the White House on September 24.

- 'Crimes against humanity' -

Bessent's comments marked a notable return by a senior U.S. official to talking about regime change in Iran, after months of Trump insisting that the goal of the war is to stop Tehran getting a nuclear weapon. But the U.S. treasury boss said the economic plan meant the United States is

less likely to have to return to heavy military operations against Iran.

"If we are doing the maximum economic pressure, then that means that likely there will not be a large-scale kinetic restart, but I will emphasize that is for now," Bessent said.

Iran dismissed Trump's plan. "The so-called 'Economic D-Day' is a diversion from America's own crisis: unprecedented debt & surging interest costs," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X.

The Iranian foreign ministry blasted the US threats, which come after years of damaging American sanctions against Tehran.

"Undoubtedly, the U.S.

economic sanctions against Iran, which have targeted the fundamental human rights of every Iranian citizen, are a case of 'economic terrorism' and 'crimes against humanity'," it said in a statement carried by state media.

Despite the heavy international sanctions, Iran found ways to continue exporting its oil, with China the biggest buyer. Tehran operates a so-called shadow fleet of tankers, all of which are under international sanctions.

- 'Crushing' -

Trump said this week that talks with Iran were on hold as the war started by the US and Israel in February appears stalemated.

Tehran is keeping the key

Strait of Hormuz partially shut and Washington is persisting with a naval counter-blockade.

Trump's pledge on Wednesday of unprecedented "economic warfare" on Iran comes as the president grows increasingly frustrated with the lack of movement on the military front.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, the US leader said he was announcing "the MOST CRUSHING ECONOMIC OPERATION EVER TAKEN AGAINST ANY COUNTRY! This will be Economic Warfare and Isolation on an unprecedented scale."

But the US is also buttressing its military presence in the region.

A new US aircraft carrier strike group arrived in the Middle East on Wednesday, after grim conditions aboard a long-deployed carrier provoked fresh domestic criticism of Trump's war.

The USS George Washington is replacing the USS Abraham Lincoln, which had reportedly suffered food shortages, broken plumbing and a number of suicide attempts during a deployment that began in November 2025.

The United States meanwhile on Thursday approved a potential \$4.5 billion sale of refueling aircraft to Qatar, which has acted as a mediator in Washington's war with Iran. □

New U.S. carrier arrives in Mideast to relieve long-deployed ship

Washington, United States

A new U.S. aircraft carrier strike group has arrived in the Middle East, the US military announced Thursday, after conditions aboard a long-deployed carrier provoked fresh criticism of President Donald Trump's war against Iran.

"The George Washington Carrier Strike Group is operating in Middle East during a scheduled deployment after arriving in the CENTCOM theater yesterday," Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees U.S. forces in the Middle East,

said in a post on X.

The update comes just days after media reports on grim conditions aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier deployed since November 2025 had created an unwelcome distraction for Trump in his attempt to sell the already unpopular war. Several outlets, including specialist military publications, quoted relatives of crew members as saying that living conditions had deteriorated on the Lincoln, with food shortages and broken plumbing.

Notably, there have been

reports of several suicide attempts.

Trump dismissed the concerns but confirmed another carrier would swap out with the Lincoln.

The Japan-based USS George Washington had been operating in the Pacific.

Its transfer means there is no longer any US aircraft carrier in that region a boon for an assertive China.

The Lincoln had departed California in November 2025 for duty in the South China Sea and was re-

routed to the Middle East on Iran that began in late February. □



The USS George Washington aircraft carrier arrives at the port in Danang on July 30, 2026.

Hungary music festival basks in post-Orban freedom

Budapest, Hungary

Drifting between concert stages and chilling on hammocks, revelers partied in Hungary this year at one of Europe's largest outdoor festivals, with organizers saying they no longer felt "headwinds" under the country's new government. The Sziget Festival, held on a Danube island in Budapest known as the "Island of Freedom", has long had a reputation for openness, diversity and self-expression. That sometimes put it at odds with the "illiberal" vision of the central European country's former leader.

This year's edition came just months after pro-EU conservative Peter Magyar won April's vote by a landslide with many young Hungarians dancing in the streets of Budapest on election night ending nationalist Viktor Orban's 16 years in power. "It's as if everything that's happened over the past six months comes to a climax here," 27-year-old student Greta Racz, who volunteered at a local pro-



People play with the giant letters reading 'Sziget' at the Sziget Festival at Obuda Island, in Budapest, Hungary, on August 13, 2026.

democracy NGO's tent, told AFP at the festival.

"Foreigners came to us, talking about how they are proud of us, and asking what it was like, how we experienced this change," she added.

Organizers said unlike in past years, ministers consulted with them on prac-

tical issues ranging from transport to healthcare services and visited the grounds during the festival. "We were able to do our job without headwinds blowing against us. That is a huge thing in itself," Tamas Kadar, who heads the organization behind the festival, told AFP.

- 'Sziget's DNA' -

Established in 1993, Sziget has drawn about 400,000 visitors in recent times. This year, attendance of the week-long festival fell to around 350,000, with organizers blaming a scorching heatwave as one of the reasons for the drop.

The line-up included Twenty One Pilots, Florence + the Machine, Lewis Capaldi and Sombr.

Beyond the music, the festival also hosted, as every year, venues for advocacy, including promoting LGBTQ rights. Kadar said it was exactly the values within "Sziget's DNA" that had made it a target under Orban. He lamented that the festival one of Hungary's largest tourism events had received zero support in the past decade, even after it was forced to skip two years due to the Covid pandemic.

A 2021 anti-LGBTQ law banning the "promotion of homosexuality" to minors also forced organizers to implement ID checks at long-time Sziget venue Magic Mirror to ensure only adults could attend some events. "This is a measure that is beneath a festival and completely absurd; there's been something like this every year," Kadar said. The restriction ceased this year, after the EU's top court ruled that the legis-

'Girl with a Pearl Earring' in Japan, perhaps for the last time

Osaka, Japan

"Girl with a Pearl Earring" will go on show in Osaka this week, on a rare trip abroad for the 17th-century Johannes Vermeer masterpiece and potentially its last to Japan.

The work will be displayed from Friday at the Nakanoshima Museum of Art in Osaka while its home museum, the Mauritshuis in The Hague, closes until September 20 for maintenance.

"For the Mauritshuis, the Girl's journey is a special opportunity to share her with the Japanese public, perhaps for the very last time," said Mauritshuis' director Martine Gosselink. The museum generally does not loan the painting "because she is our most important and precious painting", but the renovations allowed it to travel, Gosselink told AFP. The Dutch institution is frequently visited by enthusiastic Japanese fans, and other nations like China, Singapore and South Korea also have asked about loaning it, she said.

"But we chose Japan, for Japan has a huge number of fans. And they really love Vermeer. They love 'Girl with a Pearl Earring,'" Gosselink said.

"And the amount of visitors coming from Japan every year to the Mauritshuis is so large. So we thought, if

one country deserves the girl, it should be Japan," she said.

- 'Mona Lisa of the North' -

The Osaka exhibition, running through September 27, will feature a total dozen paintings from the Mauritshuis collection, including Vermeer's "Diana and her Nymphs" and "The Laughing Man" by Rembrandt. Dubbed the "Mona Lisa of the North" for the inscrutable expression of its subject, which recalls Leonardo da Vinci's famous portrait, the painting attained global fame after inspiring a best-selling novel that was turned into a Hollywood film.

The small canvas shows a young woman set on a dark background, her head turned towards the viewer and a pearl earring glinting from beneath her blue and cream turban. □

lation was with the bloc's law.

According to Kadar, tensions culminated last year, when Orban's government prevented Irish rap group Kneecap from performing at Sziget, imposing a three-year entry ban on the band after accusing it of "anti-Semitic hate speech".

"You can judge a band's political position one way or another. But the fact that artistic freedom could be treated with such disregard in a country clearly made the island's situation even more difficult," he added.

- 'It's summer' -

Ruling Tisza party lawmaker Ildiko Eva Sopov pledged the new government would not bring politics and ideology into areas where the state "does not have a role".

"This is a festival; it is about recreation, it is about culture, and it must be treated within that context," she told AFP after participating in a panel discussion at Sziget. □



Japanese Princess Aiko, the eldest daughter of Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, visits a museum to view a work of Johannes Vermeer at the Nakanoshima Museum of Art, Osaka in Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture, Japan, on August 20, 2026.



Salem Muhanna, who manages the Al Qarara Seed Bank with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), displays white cowpea seeds at the bank, in Deir el-Balah, central Gaza Strip on August 11, 2026.

‘Ray of hope’: Gaza seed bank rebuilds after wartime destruction

Deir el-Balah, Palestinian Territories

From a small makeshift tent in the central Gaza Strip, a dedicated team works to carefully store and document some of the war-shattered territory's most precious commodities: local seeds.

Shelves of unassuming plastic tubs line the walls of the Al Qarara Seed Bank, each holding indigenous seeds seen as a way of reviving Gaza's devastated farming sector and preserving its agricultural heritage.

The seed bank in Deir el-Balah is rebuilding its stocks of Gaza's heirloom seeds that were destroyed during the Israel-Hamas war which erupted in October 2023.

Unlike hybrid varieties often sold commercially, heirloom seeds can be saved and used year after year and are often better adapted to their local environment.

“During the war, they were what helped us survive,” said Salem Muhanna, who manages the project which was founded in 2017 with support from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

“Heirloom seeds give continuity. They provide 80 to 90 percent of the same yield repeatedly. That is why we relied on heirloom seeds,”

he told AFP.

The bank holds seeds for wheat and barley; leafy crops such as Swiss chard, spinach and parsley, as well as some vegetables like courgette and okra.

The war that erupted following Hamas's attack on Israel in October 2023 took an immensely heavy toll.

The fighting “completely destroyed the bank and led to the loss of many seed varieties,” explained 27-year-old Hanadi Muhanna, Salem Muhanna's daughter who also manages the project.

“In addition, because we were repeatedly displaced, it was difficult to start over again,” she added.

“Eventually we settled in Deir el-Balah and managed, thankfully, to establish a small tent. We created something simple using basic means”.

A collection of large hessian sacks, plastic barrels, and smaller mismatched tubs now hold what remain of the stocks, each carefully labeled and protected from pests with plastic sheets.

- ‘Safety valve’ -

Like the rest of life in the coastal Palestinian territory, Gaza's agricultural sector was shattered by the conflict.

Despite a U.S.-backed ceasefire since October 2025, bloodshed has continued, with the Israeli military continuing to target Palestinians it says are militants.

Israel says it now controls more than 60 percent of the Gaza Strip, up from about half when the ceasefire took effect, and has refused to start withdrawing until Hamas fully disarms.

Before the war, agriculture including crop production, herding and fishing, accounted for approximately 10 percent of Gaza's economy, according to the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

Just three percent of the cropland in Gaza remains accessible and undamaged, the FAO said Tuesday. Tight Israeli controls on the entry of all goods into the territory has also compounded the woes of Gaza's farmers.

“There is no water, no fertilizer, no agricultural chemicals,” Salem Muhanna told AFP. “Nothing is available”. Before the war, Gaza was self-sufficient in fresh vegetables and used to export one-third of its production to external markets, according to Osama Al-Mukhalalati, an economic security officer with the ICRC. □



26 March 2026, Saxony-Anhalt, Dessau-Roßlau: View of the Bauhaus building in Dessau-Roßlau. The celebration of the 100th Bauhaus anniversary in Dessau reaches its climax with the opening of the two central exhibitions.

Manifesto defends Germany's iconic Bauhaus against ‘populist attacks’

Berlin, Germany

Germany's culture minister and a group of art and design institutions voiced support Thursday for the iconic Bauhaus art school, whose modernist legacy has come under attack from the far-right AfD.

Alternative for Germany (AfD) politicians have launched repeated attacks on the hugely influential school of art and design that was founded in 1919 but shut down a bit over a decade later by the Nazis.

Culture Minister Wolfram Weimar published a “Bauhaus Manifesto 2026” together with the leaders of artistic, religious, crafts and architectural institutions to defend the movement as well as the Bauhaus Foundation in Dessau. The manifesto argues that recent attacks from the political fringes echo some of the criticism leveled by the Nazis, who branded much Bauhaus-affiliated work as “degenerate art”.

“The Bauhaus and the hostility it faced from the Nazi regime reminds us that a culture of remembrance is not a nostalgic look at the past, but a prerequisite for understanding our history and our democracy,” the manifesto argues.

The movement was founded in the central German city of Weimar but was forced to move to Dessau -- in the state of Saxony-Anhalt -- in 1925 because of right-wing political pressure, moving into its iconic Dessau building in 1926. “Today, exactly 100 years later, we want to defend the Bauhaus against populist attacks,” the manifesto states. Regional elections for Saxony-Anhalt loom in September, with the AfD leading in the polls and looking to take an outright majority for the first time.

The AfD's election campaign decries the Bauhaus and its legacy, alleging that promoting the movement amounts to “denying German identity” and threatening to slash public funding for the Bauhaus Foundation.

The far-right party has instead advocated more “patriotic tourism” and education, sidelining the modernist Bauhaus in favor of figures like Martin Luther, Otto von Bismarck and Friedrich Nietzsche.

The manifesto champions Bauhaus and its UNESCO World Heritage listed sites for their “immense international influence” on modern design and architecture.

The Bauhaus, the manifesto contends, still serves as a model for “the courage to pursue bold visions, the belief in the freedom of artistic thought, and the conviction that only an open society possesses the strength for cultural renewal”. □

The Nigerian fishing community being eaten up by the Atlantic

Ayetoro, Nigeria

The beach shrinks every year in Ayetoro, in southern Nigeria, and what is left is peppered with the remains of homes swallowed by the ocean – some years ago, some just months prior.

“We are walking on people’s houses,” said 35-year-old Thompson Akingboye, moving along a narrow strip of sand only accessible by boat.

Nicknamed “The Happy Place,” Ayetoro home to around 10,000 people was founded in 1947 by a group of communist-inspired Christians seeking to create a society based on the communal sharing of assets.

But its days seem numbered, as the community becomes one of Nigeria’s most visible victims of coastal erosion. Families whose homes are destroyed are constantly rebuilding further inland, only for the water to strike them again.

Coastal erosion in Ayetoro has steadily increased since the early 2000s. The story is the same in 19 other communities in Ilaje district. Aided by climate change, the Atlantic Ocean is encroaching and sweeping away everything in its path.

The town’s coastline receded by an average of 15 meters (50 feet) every year between 1987 and 2022



A general view of the King's Palace surrounded by seawater following coastal erosion in Ayetoro, Ondo State, on August 7, 2026.

according to a study by spatial planning specialist Barnabas Ogirima James.

In 2024, the journal Scientific Reports estimated that the current rate of sea-level rise along west Africa’s Gulf of Guinea is approximately 3.9 millimeters per year—about 10.5 percent higher than the global average.

“I took this photo 14 years ago. Today, if you stand in the exact spot where I was, you’ll see there are no buildings left,” said Oluwambe Ojagbohunmi, the traditional king of Ayetoro, outside his palace.

In old photographs, a telecom tower stands sur-

rounded by houses. When AFP visited this month, the tower was still there now encircled by water and the remnants of swallowed-up buildings.

“My palace once had 100 rooms. Only about a dozen remain,” the king, dressed in a white tunic, told AFP. His bedroom is now in part of the building closest to the ocean. At night, the sound of waves crashing against the walls disturbs his sleep.

“This is our land. Where can we go? It’s complicated,” he said.

- ‘Refugee in my own com-

munity’ -

In April, a storm saw the sea levels swell, trapping the palace occupants indoors for a week.

“I’ve become a refugee in my own community. Since losing my father’s house in 2019 swallowed and destroyed by the ocean the only thing I managed to save was my university degree certificate,” said Akingboye Thompson, a fisherman and personal assistant to the king.

Some families have moved more than three times, he added, standing in Ayetoro’s streets, which are littered with plastic waste

brought in by waves.

The houses are built from wood and iron sheets, often connected by raised wooden walkways.

According to Oluwasegun Babatunde Esan, a landscape architecture researcher at the University of Lagos who collaborates with Harvard University, part of the problem lies in what happens on land.

In rapidly urbanising Nigeria, floodplains, swamps and coastal areas that take in ocean surges or floodwater are often cleared out for human settlement worsening erosion along the 850-kilometre (525 mile) coastline.

“There is growing demand for land, whether for housing or industrial activities,” Esan said but it needs to be strictly regulated. He also recommended developing more natural barriers by planting mangroves and coconut palms.

- **Fragile social services** -

Ayetoro occasionally receives relief materials from government agencies and NGOs, though the community considers it insufficient. The community’s sole health centre has been lost to the waves.

“Sometimes the water reaches window level, yet we have to keep working. We help women give birth under these conditions. □

Scorching summer triggers record rockfalls in Alps, scientist says

Chamonix, France

The exceptionally hot summer in the Alps has been marked by a record number of rockfalls, some of them fatal, with “a large

majority attributable to the climate crisis”, according to scientist Ludovic Ravel.

This year “will undoubtedly be a record year” both

in terms of the frequency of rockfalls and the sheer volume of rock breaking away from the mountains on an almost daily basis, the research director at CNRS, France’s national scientific research centre, told AFP.

The area around Mont Blanc nicknamed the “roof of Europe” has been particularly hard hit.

At the end of a summer punctuated by extreme heatwaves, the number of rockfalls recorded in the Mont Blanc massif alone is expected to reach 450, Ravel said.

“That is an absolutely staggering figure, given that just 10 or 20 years ago,

there were only a few dozen,” the geomorphologist added.

The previous record stood at 300 and was set in 2022, another year marked by heatwaves.

“A large majority (of the rockfalls) can be attributed to the climate crisis,” Ravel said, noting that rising temperatures are degrading and reducing the permafrost.

For several thousand years, “invisible” ice has been lodged in cracks in the rock, where it “acts as a kind of cement holding the mountains together”, he said.

With high temperatures,

the ice can melt and rocks break loose, causing rockfalls.

Rockfalls are also caused as glaciers melt, when the stabilising pressure they exert on rock walls eases as the glaciers “lose thickness”, he added.

Temperatures are expected to drop at high altitudes in coming days.

However, it doesn’t mean the return of stability, as “even if the surface freezes over again, the enormous amount of heat from the summer of 2026 will continue to penetrate the ground until November, December, or even as late as January”, Ravel said. □



A road is closed following a wildfire near L Argentiere la Bessee, Hautes Alpes, France, July 21, 2026.

Cas di Torto



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

oldest structures that are left standing in the country.

The technique probably came over from the Venezuelan Paraguaná Peninsula in the 18th century. Existing houses date back 150 years. Until 1925 many houses on Aruba were built

using this technique, afterwards it fell into disuse. In 2005 there were 62 cas di torto houses left, of which only four were in good condition.

The skeleton of the houses is made up of round wooden poles placed with



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

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

mixed with cement or cow dung.

The houses were usually divided into a kitchen, a living room, a porch and a bedroom. In the kitchen would be a wooden or metal barrel for storing water that was collected in small rain ponds. Around this barrel a thick loam wall would be erected. Often large families would live in these houses; people would sleep on mats on the floor.

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

Aruba's Nature is to be Cherished

The national park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the island's past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle



lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches during breeding season? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Bubali Magic

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Oversteegen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*) or 'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shallow muddy water while sweeping



its flattened bill from side to side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands).

The afore mentioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beaches but it is also worthwhile to go beyond this and get an idea of our entire island. Lately there is a discussion

going on about the effect certain activities have on our nature, for example the ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □

Don't forget to visit Aruba's famous "Red" Anchor

At the south east coast of the island, standing alone on a windswept and barren land stands a popular Aruba landmark – a large anchor. It overlooks the sea just beyond, watching over the shipping lanes. It stands there in memory and in honor of all seamen who have lost their life at sea. Usually a bright red color, the anchor was painted blue this year in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Aruba's flag and anthem.

Where to find the anchor?

The anchor is a "must see" landmark when you visit Aruba. It is among the most photographed historical landmarks for the island. You want to make sure you add this stop on your itinerary when you're visiting the south coast of Aruba. The bright red anchor against the backdrop of the deep blue Caribbean Sea and the azure blue skies, make a great backdrop for your vacation pictures.

The anchor is located at the entrance to Gate 6 to the former Lago Colony. It is on the outskirts of Seroe Colorado, on the south east point of the island at the "T" junction to Baby Beach.

Depending on where you are staying on the island, follow the signs that indicate the way to Baby Beach. Once you reach the T-junction, it will be right in front of you.

About the anchor

Size

It will be hard to miss the anchor, it's huge! The anchor that weighs 21,772 kilos is approximately 10 feet 6 inches wide and 15 feet, 6 inches tall.

On the anchor there are some numbers. The 4112 and 4115, which are believed to be the serial numbers that refer to the "fluke" or horizontal and vertical parts of the anchor, respectively. The number 21772K refers to the weight of the anchor in kilos.



This type of anchor was manufactured by Hoesch Dortmund Horde, at a foundry located in Germany.

Where did the anchor come from?

There are a number of stories as to the origins of the anchor, which one do you think it was? (Unfortunately the mystery has never been solved, so your imagination can pick which one you think it might be!)

Story 1:

"According to Mr. Manuel M. Curiel, an ex-Lago Tug Captain, a fully laden VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) was seeking a mooring at the 15-mile anchorage, known as Bara, on the southern part of the island. This is the usual shallow mooring location for ships awaiting orders, etc. The weather was rough with strong current. The normal procedure is that they would walk out three shackles (about 90 feet) until the anchor touches the bottom while the chain must rest on the bottom. Subsequently, they will walk out some extra shackles and when the ship starts to swing or lean on one side, the anchor is properly set. Because of the rough weather, unfortunately they did not get the time to walk out the extra tackles and because of the tension exerted on the winch, it broke, and they lost the anchor and its chain."

Story 2:

"Mr. Curiel also said that at one time a small tanker with a Korean

crew, while lifting their anchor also lifted another anchor near the inner harbor. When the ship asked for assistance, he went with his tugboat along with a barge, to help. But eventually they had to cut the chain and let the anchor go to the bottom because they could not untangle them."

How did the anchor become a landmark?

Sometime between 1980 and 1985, three gentlemen (Mr. Wim Martinus – the Harbormaster of Aruba; Mr. August Genser – the ex-Division Superintendent of Lago's Laboratory; and Mr. Willie Davis), were having a conversation with Mr. Charlie Brouns Jr., local businessman. Charlie, who was a visionary and had dreams for developing the San Nicolas area, told these gentlemen that he would like to come up with something innovative for the San Nicolas area to draw tourism to the area.

The "anchor", which at that time was being stored at the Oranjestad harbor, was suggested as an option. Charlie liked the idea! He then contacted the President of Lago for permission to acquire the anchor. He was granted permission and the anchor was then relocated to its present location and dedicated "To All Seamen" on the occasion of the closing of the Lago Oil Refinery on March 31, 1985.

Through the years

Through the years the Anchor was slowly weathering from the wind

and salt. As time passed, sadly the origin and purpose of the anchor slowly faded away from people's memories.

After Charles Brouns Jr. died on September 15, 2004, his friend Mr. Sam Speziale, requested assistance from the management of Valero Aruba Refinery to help maintain the monument. The Valero Aruba Refinery graciously sandblasted and painted the anchor and poured a concrete pad around it. On April 17, 2005, the anchor monument was rededicated "To All Seamen" in a formal ceremony in memory of Charles Brouns Jr.

Today, the anchor stands both as memorial to all seaman who have lost their lives at sea, but also as a silent reminder that Seroe Colorado is part of San Nicolas and that San Nicolas is still a vibrant and important part of the island of Aruba.

The best time to visit

When you're planning your visit to the south end of the island, you will want to include in your itinerary the many things to see and do there. The anchor will be just one of these stops, (keep an eye out for our future editions, we publish our recommendations!).

With that being said, I have to say, if you enjoy catching a sunrise, the anchor is one of the best places on the island to catch the sunrise. But in reality, anytime is a good time to visit, depending on your personal schedule. ☐

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



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

kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

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

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

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs – one on each side – is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

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

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

Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Light-house, is a good spot for learning and having fun – if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

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

Hadicurari

Here is where you will find



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

Malmok

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

Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!

(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.

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

opening through which the water would flow into the tiny beach.

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

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



Basic driving rules on Aruba: Roundabouts

(Oranjestad)—Have you ever felt confused when you're driving on the highways or backstreets of Aruba? Then we present a simple guide to some of the basic rules of Aruban traffic, along with some tips for things to look out for.

Speed limit

Legally, the speed limit on the four-lane highways is 80 km/h. This speed limit also counts for the main roads that are connected to the highways. The minimum speed is 50 km/h. Most people drive around 60 km/h on the main roads and about 70 km/h on the highways. There are also areas that indicate a speed limit on a sign; these are usually around populated and school areas.

The four-lane highways contain the left-lane, also known as the "fast" lane for each direction. Here is where vehicles can drive up to the maximum speed. However, legally it is not permitted to drive for long periods of time on the left lane. This lane is primarily designed for drivers to switch lanes before a roundabout, for example, if your exit on the roundabout is on your far left. The general lane to drive in—both at maximum and minimum speed—is on the right lane.

Roundabouts

Speaking of roundabouts, it is important to know where you have to enter and drive on the roundabout to make your exit. A good rule of thumb is to count the exits starting from your right



side. So, exit 1 would be on your right; exit 2 would be straight ahead; exit 3 would be on your far left and exit 4 would lead to the road paralleled to the one you're on, heading in the other direction.

Most roundabouts have these 4 exits, so they are relatively simple. When you're driving on the four-lane highway, it is important to know when to switch to the left lane to make your exit: if your exit is on your far left (exit 3), then you need to switch to the left lane on the high way before nearing the roundabout so you can take the path that leads you directly to your exit. If your exit is on your right or if you're going straight ahead, you can keep driving in the right lane of the highway.

It's also important to know that vehicles about to enter the roundabout must yield to those already on it. A good rule of thumb is to look out if someone is coming from your left side.

However, other roundabouts can be quite tricky to navigate...

Watty Vos Boulevard (the "paperclip" roundabout)

Probably the biggest roundabout on the island, the "paperclip" roundabout on the Watty Vos Boulevard is one of the trickier roundabouts that could—and has—caused confused among both tourists and locals. However, once you take a good look at it, it's fairly simple. The basis is just the same as a regular roundabout (left exit? left lane! etc.), but instead of having four different exits like on a regular roundabout, now you have two extra; one on the right and the other on the left side of the roundabout. The rules

don't change at all, you just have to keep an extra eye open.

Airport roundabout

Ah, yes. The infamous airport roundabout. The favorite roundabout amongst local, because of its easy (hard) lanes that never (always) cause confusion among drivers. Sarcasm aside, this roundabout can be tricky to enter, especially when you're driving from the direction of the airport heading. When you're driving away from the airport reaching the roundabout, you'll be faced with three

lanes. The far right lane is to take the exit 1 out heading east (right lane of highway). The middle exit is used for exit 1 (left lane of highway), 2 and 3. The far left exit is used to only exit on exit 3 (left lane of highway) and 4.

"Las Americas" roundabout

The Las Americas roundabout is located farther west from the airport roundabout. This roundabout may look like a regular roundabout—and for the most part, it is. However, when you are driving from the east going in the direction of town, please take note that there are two exits on your right.

When you're driving towards this roundabout, you'll notice that the road becomes wider, splitting into two lanes. The right lane is used to take the first and second exit on the right. If you want to exit straight ahead, you must drive on the left lane!

It's always scary to drive in new places where the traffic may look and work differently, but once you get it right once, you'll get the hang of it in no time. Additionally, all roundabouts and roads on Aruba have signs and arrows painted on the road to help guide you. So take your time, keep your eyes open and don't forget to wear a seat belt! □



Fun facts about the 'Lisinbein'

The 'Lisinbein' (*Scolopendra gigantea*), also known as the Giant Centipede, is one of the largest centipedes in the world and is found in Aruba. Its size and hunting prowess make it a fascinating, if often misunderstood, creature.

Despite its fearsome reputation, it plays a crucial ecological role that often goes unnoticed.

As an apex invertebrate predator, *Scolopendra gigantea* helps maintain balance in the ecosystem. Moreover, they themselves are a food source for birds such as the Crested Caracara (Warawara) and the Aruba burrowing owl (Shoco).

It controls populations of smaller invertebrates and even small vertebrates, en-

suring that no species overpopulates, which could disrupt local biodiversity.

Its presence can indicate a healthy, functioning ecosystem. Its sensitivity to environmental changes makes it a bioindicator of ecological balance.

It can reach an impressive length of up to 30 centimeters (approx. 12 inches) and live for around 5 to 10 years in the wild. Its size and longevity makes it a significant and long-term part of the ecosystem.

A mother's love

In *Scolopendra* species, the 'mother' typically exhibits maternal care by curling around her eggs and newly hatched young. She stays coiled around the clutch, protecting it from predators and fungi,

which are serious risks in the moist environments these centipedes often inhabit. The mother maintains a clean environment for the eggs by carefully grooming them, which helps prevent fungal growth that could endanger the brood. This behavior may continue until the young centipedes have undergone their first molt, making them more capable of independent survival.

This form of parental care is beneficial in increasing the survival rates of offspring, as the mother's protection provides a safe 'environment' during their vulnerable developmental stages. It's a fascinating adaptation because it shows a form of care that resembles more complex behaviors observed in vertebrates.



No bark, but all bite!

The lisinbein is known locally for having a really painful sting. While venomous, the Lisinbein is generally not aggressive toward humans unless provoked. Its role as a guardian of balance in the ecosystem helps pro-

tect the natural beauty of Aruba by keeping the ecosystem in harmony.

Editor's note: Information and pictures provided by Ms. Natasha Silva from the Aruba Conservation Foundation. □

The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history

(Oranjestad) — The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins is one of the most visited places by tourists on the island, as it lies along the northern coast line near the mini pool and on the way to the Natural Bridge. Despite its seemingly plain appearance, this ruin represents one of the most important histories of the island: The Aruban Gold Rush.



Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was

found by locals. The story of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first exploration for gold on the island was commissioned by the Dutch

West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some

gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was found.

At the same time, the Aruban government took immediate actions, and informed Curacao that

gold was found. At first, everyone could look for gold, as long as they sold it to the government. However, after some time, the government decided to implement stricter rules and banned local search parties.

Over the years, concession-holding had seen different companies from around the world, all of which used primitive methods to dig and carve out gold from the rocks. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was no different, but used a unique method that involved grinding the rocks and letting the dust be blown away by the strong northeast wind, leaving clumps of gold behind. The next step was melting the gold and letting it attach to quicksilver in order to obtain pure gold. All these processes were done at the Bushiribana Gold Mill.

The gold mill itself had a short life-span: only 10 years in service, but its structure remained relatively solid till this day, and is now a historical remnant. □

Sources: Etnia Nativa

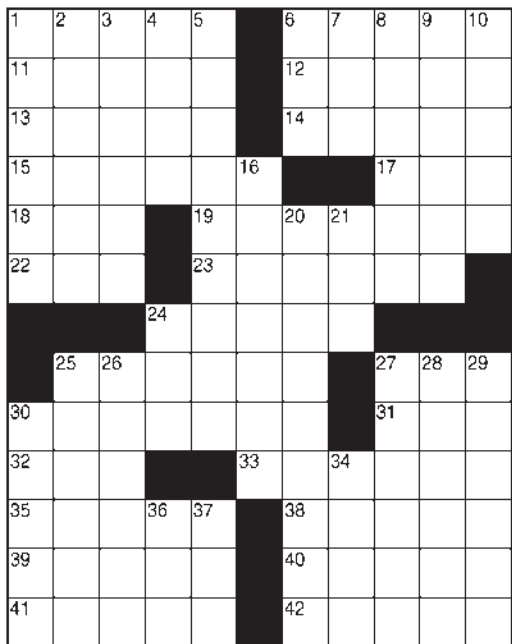


CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 40 Flower girl, often
1 Coffee additive
6 Banquet
11 Reddish dye
12 Un-occupied
13 Use, as advice
14 Car count
15 Eye part
17 Summer sign
18 Leave quickly
19 Signing, for short
22 Pub staple
23 Small drum
24 Like some online videos
25 Draw closer to
27 Hotel feature
30 Central American capital
31 Clumsy one
32 Tick off
33 Soviet tyrant
35 Border
38 Key
39 Wild
- DOWN**
- 1 Rhythmic dance
2 React with horror
3 Main dish
4 Erelong
5 Like ogres, in folklore
6 Nourished
7 Moody music
8 Twin of Artemis
9 Flow
10 Holyfield rival
16 Ready for romance
20 Issuing from a source
21 Cardinal cap letters
24 Through
25 Top story
26 Turkey's capital
27 Pavlova's field
28 For each
29 Leased
30 Ticks off
34 Nepal setting
36 Ruin
37 Moose's kin

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



4-29

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

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.

4-29 CRYPTOQUOTE

W I R B M K M O V M W G Q U D C M E M U

L M F Q . W I R B M K ' C Q U D C M

E O M K Z L M F Q . — H I U D

L D B I R O C

Cryptoquote: YOU CAN NEVER GET A CUP OF TEA LARGE ENOUGH OR A BOOK LONG ENOUGH TO SUIT ME. — C.S. LEWIS

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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

Electrical power

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

Drinking water



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



store.

Supermarket hours

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

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

Safety

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

CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

AUGUST

16 SUN	FREEWINDS DEPT. Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E
18 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
19 WED	FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: Berth: E
23 SUN	FREEWINDS DEPT. Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E
25 TUE	CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
26 WED	FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: Berth: E
30 SUN	FREEWINDS DEPT. Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E

ARUBA TODAY

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

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

Difficulty: ★★★★★

8/21

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

8/20

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Milky Way's fastest star discovered spinning around black hole

Paris, France

Astronomers have discovered the fastest star in the Milky Way zooming at 25,000 kilometers a second around the supermassive black hole at the centre of our galaxy.

The star, named S301, orbits so dangerously close to the black hole that scientists believe it can shed light on this unimaginably powerful cosmic monster and test out Albert Einstein's theory of relativity.

"Decades carefully tracking stars orbiting our galaxy's central black hole, Sagittarius A*, have led to this breakthrough discovery," Reinhard Genzel of the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Germany said in a statement.

"Because it orbits so close to Sagittarius A*, S301 opens a new window to the fundamental properties of spacetime in this extreme black-hole environment," added Genzel, who shared a 2020 physics Nobel prize for discovering the black hole.

To spot S301 which is two billion times fainter than the star Betelgeuse in our sky the team of astronomers used the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope in the Chilean desert.

They first noticed the star in 2023, and have been tracking its orbit since.

"What is special about this star is that it's orbiting Sagittarius A* on a very tight orbit, taking just 8.7 years to complete it," explained Felix Mang, a co-author of a new study describing the discovery.

The star gets roughly as close to the black hole as Saturn gets to our Sun, which is "unprecedented", the PhD student emphasized.

- Torn from its partner -

When the star gets closest to the immense suck of the black hole, it is travelling around 25,000 kilometers per second (15,500 miles per second).

That is 100,000 times faster



The Milky Way is seen from Lajitas, Texas, on August 15, 2026.

than a commercial airplane, or more than eight percent of the speed of light, making it the fastest star ever detected in our galaxy.

Scientists believe that S301 was once part of a binary star system that was torn apart by the almighty pull of the black hole.

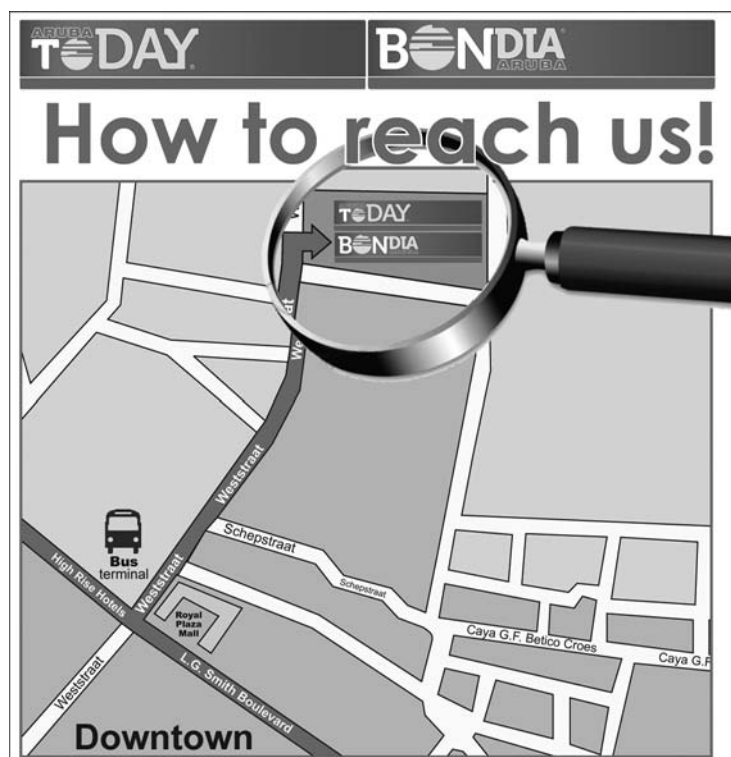
While S301 became trapped in the black hole's gravity, its partner star was blasted out with such force it likely left the galaxy entirely. The astronomers will get another good look at the star when it makes its next closest approach to the black hole in 2031.

The team hopes that data from two complete orbits will allow them to determine the star's trajectory with enough precision they can also directly measure the black hole's rotation.

Like most objects in the universe, black holes are thought to spin.

Einstein's theory of general relativity predicted that a spinning black hole would drag spacetime along with it, twisting it in a way that changes the orbits of the surrounding stars.

Within the next 10 years, the astronomers hope to use S301 to measure the black hole's spin for the first time. □



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Tel. 524 8833

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Oranjestad: Sta. Cruz
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San Nicolas: Centro Medico
Tel. 584 5794

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

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A1 Taxi Serv. 280 2828

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Against Domestic Violence(FCVR)
Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433
Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Some of Meta's safety tools were 'designed to fail': witness

Oakland, United States

A former employee testified on Wednesday that some of Meta's safety tools for Facebook and Instagram were "designed to fail," contradicting the company's defense strategy in a landmark trial in California. For a second day, Meta is fending off accusations by a coalition of US states that it deliberately designed its products to hook children and gather their data while misleading the public.

A loss for the social media giant could see it slapped with a \$200 billion penalty, force fundamental changes to its business model and send shockwaves through the industry.

Meta doesn't deny that some users, including teens, have negative experiences on its two core apps, but the company maintains it created features to reduce those risks.

"There can be no dispute that Meta has both recognized that people can struggle with their use of social media and tried to come up with tools to help them," Meta's lawyer, Paul



Former Meta engineer Arturo Bejar leaves the Ronald V. Dellums Federal Building & United States Courthouse as Meta is on trial over social media addiction in Oakland, California, on August 19, 2026.

Schmidt, said on Tuesday during opening statements.

However, Meta made some of those tools opt-in, meaning that users had to intentionally turn them on, including a feature launched in 2021 called "Take a Break," which lets users set reminders to take

breaks from scrolling on Instagram.

"In my experience, 'Take a Break' is a feature that's designed to fail," Arturo Bejar, a former Meta engineering director, testified on the second day of a trial that is expected to last around six weeks.

Bejar is the first witness to

take the stand and has argued that the company prioritized profits over safety by encouraging people to spend more and more time on Facebook and Instagram.

That strategy led to decisions like making safety features optional, including tools designed to combat

endless scrolling or limit enticing notifications.

"Notifications are built and designed in order to bring people back, so they spend more time and get more revenue. They're not designed for mental health... or the safety of the person," Bejar said on Wednesday. Days before the trial, Meta attempted to block Bejar from testifying, a move that the judge denied.

- 'Big tobacco moment' -

Many experts have called this trial social media's "big tobacco moment," referring to a blockbuster settlement between tobacco companies in the United States and dozens of states in the 1990s, which led to billions of dollars in penalties and changes to how products were marketed.

Similarly, dozens of states are once again intervening where "Congress failed to act," Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser said Tuesday afternoon.

The tobacco and social media cases both involve "public health, and in some cases, marketing to kids

that hurt kids," Weiser continued.

During opening statements on Tuesday, California prosecutor Megan O'Neill painted Meta's business model as one intended to "hook the users, hold them for as long as they can, harvest their data, and then hide the truth from the public."

Meta "exploited how kids' brains work," O'Neill said. Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Instagram head Adam Mosseri are among the star witnesses expected to testify, according to court documents.

However, during a press conference Tuesday afternoon, California Attorney General Rob Bonta declined to confirm whether Zuckerberg would be called to the stand.

Before the trial began, the company denied the allegations, insisting it had worked with parents, experts and law enforcement to incorporate safeguards for children. □

EU 'welcomes' Apple steps to comply with digital rules

Brussels, Belgium

The European Commission on Tuesday welcomed changes made by Apple to its rules for app developers to address charges of breaking the bloc's competition rules -- and avert the risk of new fines.

The commission slapped Apple with a fine of 500 million euros (\$586 million) in April 2025 after concluding

it violated E.U. rules by preventing developers from steering customers outside its App Store to access cheaper deals.

An E.U. statement said Apple has committed to offer "revised" terms to developers for both the iPhone and iPad, namely letting them choose between the App Store, third-party app stores or the web as distri-

bution channels.

"The Commission welcomes Apple's changes to their business terms," said a statement from the E.U. executive, saying the tech giant would implement the new terms in the bloc from October 2026.

The tech giant issued its own statement announcing the changes, which it said "resolve Apple's disagreements with the Commission over business terms and alternative distribution". After last year's fine which Apple has appealed the firm was told to make changes to comply with the E.U.'s Digital Markets Act (DMA), or face additional "periodic penalty payments" that could reach more than 50 million euros daily.

It submitted a first set of proposals the following June and has since been engaged in a to-and-fro with the commission over the final shape of its offer.

"At this stage the Commission is not considering periodic penalty payments, but is rather monitoring the announced measure," an E.U. spokesperson said, when asked whether Apple's undertaking lifted the threat of new penalties.

According to the commission, the new terms give developers "greater freedom" to steer App Store users towards alternative platforms and payment systems.

Apple also undertook to reduce and simplify its App Store fees, and E.U. users will be able to use alternative app distribution channels even when travelling outside the bloc, the commission said.

The E.U. reinforced its legal weaponry in recent years with major twin laws, the DMA and the Digital Services Act on content, which have been attacked by the U.S. administration as regulatory overreach. □



Apple iPhones are displayed for sale inside an Apple Premium Partner store operated by iTech, India's largest Apple authorized reseller, in Kolkata, India, on August 14, 2026.



Audrey Werro of Switzerland competes in the women's 800m during the Meeting of Paris, part of the Wanda Diamond League, at Stade Charlety in Paris, France, on June 28, 2026

Newly-crowned European champ Werro turns focus on 800m record

Lausanne, Switzerland

Newly-crowned European 800m champion Audrey Werro will turn her attention from her stunning triumph in Birmingham last week to athletics' oldest world record on home soil in Lausanne on Friday.

Werro outgunned Britain's Olympic champion Keely Hodgkinson for continental gold in a championship record of 1min 54.81sec.

The 22-year-old Swiss athlete has twice broken the 1:54 barrier this season, becoming the first woman to do so since 1983.

That was the year that Jarmila Kratochvilova of then-Czechoslovakia ran the two-lap race in 1:53.28. It remains the oldest world record in track and field, albeit one that is highly contested having come during a period when systemic doping of athletes was prevalent. Kratochvilova, however, never failed a doping test.

There is no Hodgkinson for the Diamond League meet in Lausanne, but Kenya's world champion Lilian Odira and Dutchwoman Femke Broeders-Bol, who won European bronze behind Werro and Hodgkinson in Birmingham, will offer some stiff competition.

"I want to win in front of the Lausanne crowd," said Werro.

Unlike the European champs, the Diamond League features wavelight technology, trackside lighting that enables runners to see at what pace they are running.

Werro will also have Myrte van der Schoot as her pacemaker.

"The first 400 metres in 55.5sec, that's what we had asked the pacemaker to do at the Diamond League in Paris, and I think that makes a lot of sense," she said.

"I don't want to put pressure on myself about it. It's my dream to get it one day, but above all, I want to run fast."

Werro's path to European gold was not straightforward as she was brought crashing to the ground in her semi-final after being clipped.

"I knew that I needed to finish the race in order to maybe be in the final, so I just decided to get up and finish the the race," she said.

"It was a little bit harder because of everything going on. So, for the drama, I just deleted all my social media, and yeah, it was a little bit hard being in the final without standard qualification.

"But I did some work with my mental coach for the

final, and then everything was just fine. It worked really well."

The fall and subsequent gold, Werro said, had been "really good for confidence. It was a hard fall, but it gave me energy".

- Beyond expectations -

Broeders-Bol continued her astonishing transition from the 400m hurdles, an event in which she is a two-time former world champion, with an 800m bronze.

"This year is going better than I could expect for the first year," she said.

"It's a lot faster and, technically, I'm already a lot better than we expected, so it's really fun, and I'm really happy."

Her podium run saw Broeders-Bol equal the Dutch national record of 1:55.54 set by Ellen van Langen in 1991. She also anchored the Dutch women's quartet to victory in the 4x400m relay.

"After Paris, I was very close, and I really didn't expect it that day," she said of that record.

"So then it started to be a bit in my head, like maybe I can do it this year. But at the beginning of the year, it wasn't at all on the cards to think about it.

"It's very special to equal it because Ellen is a legend in our country." □



Tour de France's five-time winner Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar celebrates as he wins the Tadej Pogacar's Criterium Elite Men's race in his hometown in Komenda, Slovenia on July 31, 2026.

Pogacar eyes 'missing' piece ahead of Vuelta return

Monaco, Principality of Monaco

Tadej Pogacar said on Thursday that winning the Vuelta a Espana would fulfil one of the few major ambitions left in his career as he prepares to start the race for the first time in seven years.

The Slovenian, a five-time Tour de France champion, will begin his bid for a first Vuelta title in Monaco on Saturday, with the opening 9.4-km individual time trial taking place in the city where he lives.

"I'm looking forward to it. It is one missing goal from my career, so I will give my best to try and win," said Pogacar.

"For me, to win all three Grand Tours has been a big goal and dream for a few years now."

Pogacar, 27, joined an elite group of riders last month when he claimed a fifth Tour de France title, matching the achievements of Jacques Anquetil, Eddy Merckx, Bernard Hinault and Miguel Indurain.

He also won the Giro d'Italia in 2024 but has not raced the Vuelta since his debut in 2019, when he finished third overall and won three stages.

The reigning world champion arrives in Spain less than four weeks after securing his latest Tour de France crown.

"It's been quite a short time after the Tour de France to come here, but I had enough time to recover," said Pogacar.

Victory in Granada on September 13 would make Pogacar only the ninth rider to win all three Grand Tours during his career.

Since the Vuelta was moved to its current slot after the Tour de France in 1995, only Chris Froome in 2017 has managed to win both races in the same season.

Despite suggestions that the Tour de France presents a tougher test, Pogacar expects fierce competition in Spain.

"Here there is a very stacked competition. Why say it's much tougher in the Tour, because here you also have amazing talents on the start line," he said.

"It's going to be a very tough race. Everybody that is here, I expect them to be in top shape and there are some very, very good riders here. It's never easy."

The UAE Team Emirates-XRG rider said he would gauge his condition during the opening week, mindful that the World Championships, European Championships and Il Lombardia still await later this season.

"I will have to see my shape in the first few stages and always think about the three big races afterwards," he said. □



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U.S. Open purse to top \$100 mn as Grand Slams form player council

New York, United States

The U.S. Open purse will top \$100 million for the first time, a 20% increase on last year's \$85 million that the U.S. Tennis Association no doubt hopes will quiet the kind of protests over player compensation that erupted at the French Open and Wimbledon.

The USTA said Thursday that the total player compensation package at this year's tournament would be a record \$108 million, with the men's and women's singles champions earning \$5.5 million each.

Players in the first round will receive \$140,000 via the purse increases spread across all rounds and competitions, including doubles and the wheelchair tournament.

The USTA's announcement coincided with a joint announcement by all four Grand Slams the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open

of the creation of a Grand Slam player advisory council "to serve as the forum for direct communication, feedback and collaboration between the Grand Slams and players".

Top players, including

world number ones Jannik Sinner and Aryna Sabalenka, limited their availability to media before the French Open and Wimbledon in protest of perceived low prize money.

The Grand Slams said the

new player council will launch after the U.S. Open.

"The Grand Slams are currently shaping the Council's initial composition, framework and operating structure with player in-

put," the statement said.

"Interested players will be invited to apply and those appointed to the Council will address the full range of Grand Slam sporting matters." USTA chairman Brian Vahaly said the new council will provide recommendations on how the U.S. federation, which organizes the U.S. Open, should design its new Player Support Program, which will be started with an initial \$2 million that is part of the announced U.S. Open compensation package.

The program will be aimed at complementing existing end of career pension funds as well as providing a range of benefits supporting players through "mid-career life events and retirement transitions".

"The U.S. Open has a long history of listening to players, and this player support program and Council builds on that commitment. □



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz reacts as he plays against Italy's Jannik Sinner during the Monte Carlo ATP Masters Series Tournament final tennis match on Court Rainier III at the Monte-Carlo Country Club in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, south-eastern France on April 12, 2026.