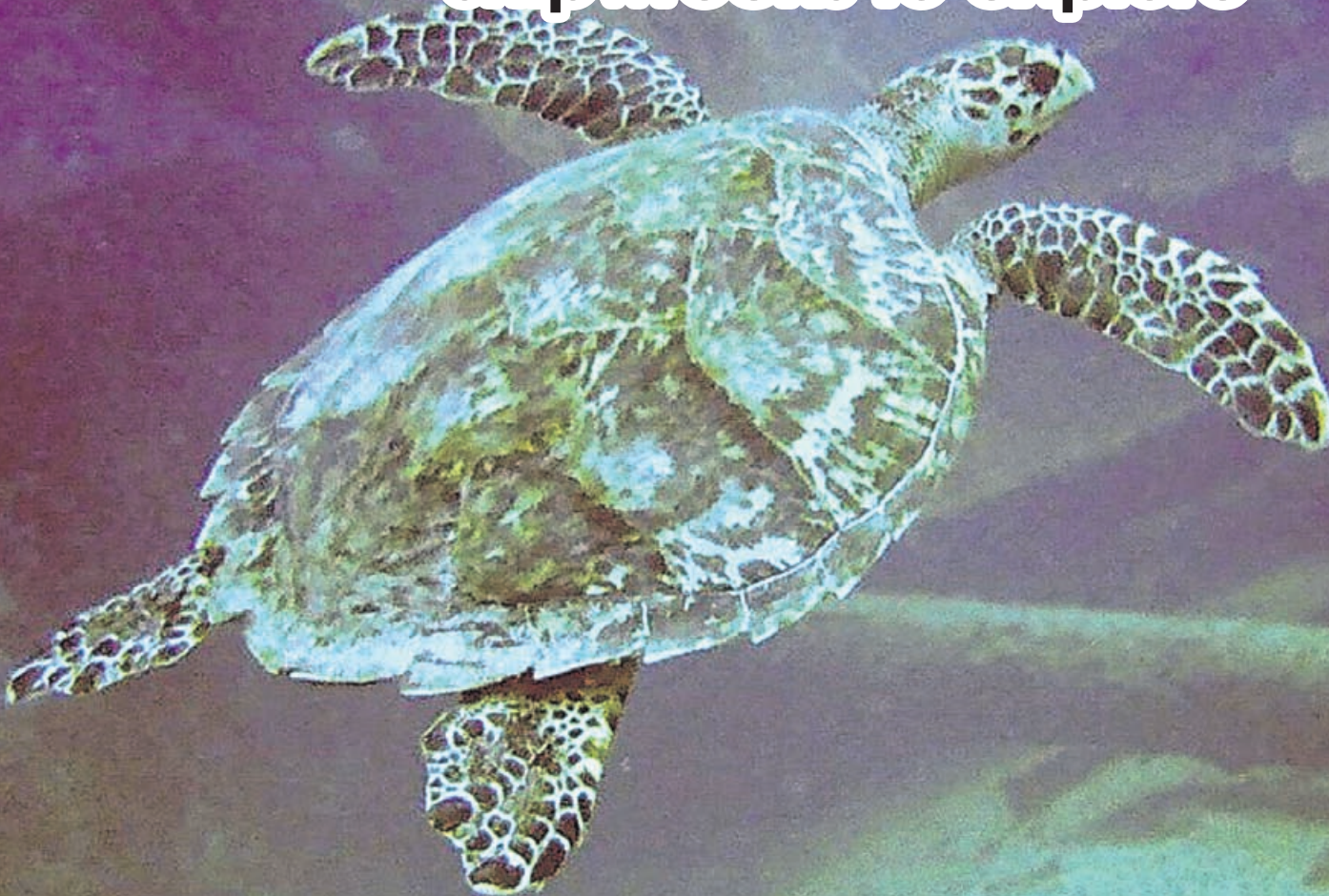




Aruba's ONLY English Vacation Newspaper

Up for a snorkeling adventure? Here are 3 shipwrecks to explore



Page 11

Credit: Serge Melki



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Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT) Chief Ibrahim Kalin, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, and U.S. Ambassador to Ankara and Special Representative for Syria and Iraq Tom Barrack attend the official welcoming ceremony held at the Presidential Complex, where Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (not seen) welcomes U.S. President Donald Trump (not seen), who arrived in Türkiye for an official visit ahead of the 36th NATO Summit of Heads of State and Government, in Ankara, Türkiye, on July 07, 2026.

U.S. removes Syria from state sponsor of terrorism list

Washington, United States

The United States on Monday removed Syria from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, rescinding a decades-old designation that came with severe economic restrictions and marking another step in warming ties between the countries.

The U.S. Department of State also revoked its designation of al-Nusra Front latterly known as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) as a global terrorist organization. The Treasury Department announced corresponding sanctions relief.

Rebels led by HTS overthrew long-time Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, with the group's leader Ahmed al-Sharaa taking over as president as the country rebuilds after more than 13 years of civil war. "Today's action will help foster additional investment in Syria to promote political and economic stability," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

Treasury said the moves were "in line with President (Donald) Trump's promise to deliver sanctions relief to Syria."

But the agency stressed that its removal of restric-

tions on Syria "does not change Treasury's posture with regards to countering global terrorism and our commitment to hold bad actors in Syria accountable."

- Warming ties -

HTS was earlier known as al-Nusra Front and was formerly the branch of Al-Qaeda in Syria. It broke ties with the jihadist group in 2016.

The United States had initially announced in July its intent to delist Syria as a state sponsor of terrorism, a move seen as a vote of confidence in Sharaa.

Trump met on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Turkey with the Syrian president, a former jihadist who has sought to recast himself as a unifying figure after the toppling of the Assad family, which ruled with an iron fist for a half-century.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Monday's delistings gave Syrians "a path to prosperity."

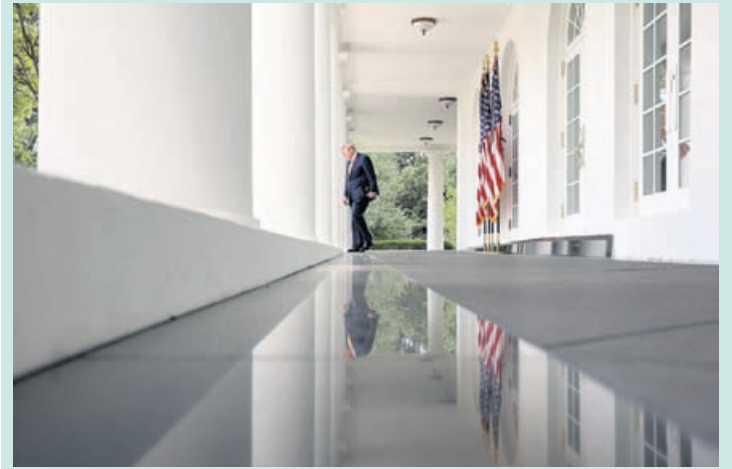
The action "eliminates the final major barriers for private sector investment in Syria and promotes Syria's economic recovery and reintegration into the global economy," he said in a statement.

Top officials in Damascus hailed the delisting as a major opportunity for the country, still economically devastated after more than a decade of war that rights groups say killed more than half a million people.

Syrian Foreign Minister Assad al-Shaibani described Washington's delisting as a "historic milestone" and said it reflected "the new Syrian state's commitment to international peace and security." Finance Minister Mohammed Barnieh described the move as a "success for Syrian diplomacy," according to the official news agency SANA.

It "opens a major and long-awaited door to strengthening Syria's integration into the global economic and financial system, attracting investment and modern technologies, and supporting development opportunities."

Central bank chief Safwat Raslan lauded the development, adding that his institution was "working to build a modern and reliable financial system capable of evolving with developments and taking advantage of all opportunities." □



U.S. President Donald Trump arrives for an event in the Rose Garden of the White House on August 24, 2026 in Washington, DC.

Trump govt proposes \$103k fee for skilled worker visa

Washington, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on Monday moved to impose a more than \$100,000 fee on employers hiring foreign workers through a highly-skilled visa program, after facing a legal setback in an earlier effort.

Curbing immigration both undocumented and lawful has been a key goal of the Republican leader and a persistent demand of his Make America Great Again (MAGA) base.

The \$103,265 fee for H-1B visas would serve as a "revenue mechanism" to recoup the costs of administering the lawful immigration system, the Department of Homeland Security said in its new proposed rule.

The Trump administration has argued the visa program has been exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers, and in September 2025 issued a presidential proclamation imposing a \$100,000 fee to combat what it called "systemic abuse."

But a federal judge in June blocked that order, siding with 20 Democratic-led states in a lawsuit that contended the fee constituted an unlawful tax that bypassed Congressional authority.

Another federal judge in December 2025 upheld the same action, finding the president had "broad statutory authority" to address "a problem he perceives to be a matter of economic and national security." That ruling is being appealed.

In the new proposal, the administration leans more heavily on cost-based arguments, saying it needs to make up the costs of its agencies including US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

However, it also acknowledges it would have what it calls an "indirect" benefit: "US employers, if required to pay an additional \$103,265 fee when filing an H-1B cap-subject petition, would be less likely to hire an H-1B worker over a qualified and highly-skilled American."

And it says the new proposed fee "would be in addition to any other applicable fees or payments," including the fee from the presidential proclamation under legal review -- however this is set to expire this September, unless it is extended.

There will be a 30-day public comments window before any rule can take effect. There are certain to be legal challenges based on a number of arguments, including the previously advanced theory that the new proposal is a de facto tax, and that it exceeds statutory authority. □

Trump says to double tariffs on Canada autos as trade fight heats up

Washington, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump vowed Monday to double tariffs on Canadian vehicles beginning next year, as the historically friendly neighbors spiral into an escalating trade war.

Trump's threat comes after the historic North American allies failed Friday to reach a deal to avert new 50-percent U.S. tariffs on select Canadian goods. The duties took effect Saturday, and Ottawa laid out plans for retaliation.

"On January First, 2027, Tariffs on all Cars, Trucks, both large and small, Automotive Parts, and Steel, will be increased to 50%," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform on Monday.

The current U.S. tariff impacting Canadian autos stands at 25 percent for non-U.S. content, while imported steel to the United States generally faces a 50-percent duty. U.S. automakers did not immediately comment on the matter. After rejecting what he called a "bad deal," Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced retaliatory tariffs effective September 8.

These will target U.S. steel and dairy, while also covering sectors like agricultural



Quebec's Prime Minister Christine Frechette (L) applauds during a press conference with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at the Davie Shipyard in Levis, Quebec, Canada on August 24, 2026.

equipment, pulp and paper, alongside electronics.

Carney said Monday that the goal of trade talks with Washington "has always been to get the best deal for Canadians, never a deal at any price or on any time frame."

"We learned that, during the negotiations, the Americans wanted to destroy our major industries including the automotive, steel, and aluminum sectors through

unfair negotiating terms. And that is one of the main reasons why we said no," he added.

He stressed that building domestically and diversifying trade abroad has been "plan A from the start."

Over the weekend, Carney added that US negotiators also sought last-minute restrictions on Canadian trade deals with other countries.

U.S. negotiators made unacceptable "threats" to

the French language and "Quebec culture" too, he said, referring to the French-speaking province in eastern Canada.

At a separate event Monday, however, U.S. Vice President JD Vance blamed Canada's "unreasonable last-minute demands" for the deal falling through.

The United States is by far Canada's biggest trading partner, with Canadian exports to its neighbor rep-

resenting 70 percent of its overall total.

Canada is the United States' second biggest trading partner in goods this year, behind Mexico, government data showed.

- 'We don't need Canada' -

Three in four Canadians support the Carney government's decision to walk away from trade talks, according to polling released Sunday by the Angus Reid Institute.

However, the research group noted that two in five have some fear about their jobs.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford criticized Trump's tariff threat on autos, telling Ottawa's Newstalk 580 CFRA that he could "kiss my ass."

"We're going to go at him full steam," Ford added.

Trump lashed out at Ford online, warning of "far worse" consequences if officials did not "fall in line."

The White House had alleged "discriminatory treatment" by Canada against US alcohol, automobile and dairy products in rolling out the 50-percent tariffs.

Trump delayed their implementation by three days last week as Washington and Ottawa intensified trade talks. □

Tens of thousands evacuated as fire bears down on U.S. city

Los Angeles, United States

Tens of thousands of people remained evacuated from their homes around the western US city of Reno on Monday as a wind-driven fire raced through the parched landscape.

Schools were shuttered as smoke swathed the city in western Nevada, near the California border, home to around 280,000 people.

Around 42,000 people have been forced to evacuate and an additional 45,000 have been told to get ready to leave, Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve told CNN.

The Hawk Fire began on Saturday and had grown to 15,051 acres (6,091 hectares) by Monday, showing "extreme fire behavior," according to InciWeb, a

US government website that tracks fire activity.

The fire was burning five miles (eight kilometers) northwest of the city.

No deaths have been reported, but at least six peo-

ple have been injured including three first responders with several mountaintop houses destroyed, according to local media. Officials said the fire was "human-caused," but did

not say how it started.

More than 700 firefighters were tackling the blaze, using fire engines, helicopters and bulldozers, in an effort to clear the tinder-dry brush.



Smoke billows in the high winds during the Hawk Fire on August 23, 2026 in Reno, Nevada. The wildfire spread from the Sierra foothills towards Reno, forcing thousands to evacuate their homes. Officials said the fire was human-caused.

"Over the next 12 hours, the fire is expected to continue making moderate- to high-intensity runs in pockets of dense fuels," said a statement from firefighters. "Over the next 24 hours, backing fire with periods of running fire behavior is possible where fuels, wind and topography align."

"Hot, dry and breezy conditions are expected to continue supporting active fire behavior over the next 48 hours. The fire has the potential to spread northeast and northwest,

and conditions remain dynamic and subject to rapid change."

Pictures posted on X by the fire service showed flames and towering smoke clouds over mountains overlooking the city.

Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo declared a state of emergency in Washoe County.

The Hawk Fire "is spreading quickly and threatening homes and structures," his order said.

Local fire chief Richard Edwards urged people to be ready to evacuate immediately when told to do so. "The Hawk Fire is a very dynamic incident for us as it's being driven by the winds. The wind-driven fires move very rapidly into our residential areas," he said. □

Inside the fireproof vault housing U.S. movie history

Culpeper, United States

Once upon a time in the golden days of Hollywood, the movies were bigger, the stars brighter and the celluloid they were filmed on was, well, explosive.

Which is why the US Library of Congress maintains a special, fireproof vault in Virginia, near Washington, DC.

There, the highly combustible nitrate film used from the dawn of cinema in the 1890s until the early 1950s has a permanent home, rarely accessed by the public but toured by AFP.

Lost movies on the volatile but durable medium are still being discovered and preserved in the facility. And thanks to digitization, the lost treasures can also be safely viewed for the first time in decades.

Some 145,000 film reels are stored in strictly fireproof conditions in a vast, chilly vault at the library's National Audio-Visual Conservation Center in Culpeper, Virginia.

It is crammed with cinematic treasures that rekindle



Nitrate Film vault Leader George Willeman explains how the different functions of the vault work at the Packard Campus of the Library of Congress's National Audio-Visual Conservation Center in Culpeper, Virginia, on April 2, 2026.

dle warm memories of an era when movies ruled.

The vault's leader, George Willeman, reeled off the names of classics with negatives there: "Casablanca," Frank Capra-directed films like "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," and the grand-daddy of all action movies, "The Great Train

Robbery" from 1903.

Down a spartan corridor so long it seemed to recede into the distance, he unlocked a series of cell-like steel doors.

Inside each of the 124 cells there's one dedicated just to the Disney archive were floor-to-ceiling cubbyholes. Each one held film canis-

ters containing negatives and prints, all arranged meticulously: packed tight to prevent canisters from opening, but far enough apart to prevent any fire from spreading.

Since being set up in 2007 in a former US Federal Reserve building in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains,

the vault has maintained a perfect no-fire record.

- Film nerds' delight -

Nitrate film is just part of the center's collection of more than six million items of moving images and recorded sound. They also have supporting scripts, posters and photos.

Willeman, who sports a button badge with the invocation to "Experience Nitrate," said the Library of Congress began preserving the medium when in the 1960s, "it was discovered that so much film was being lost" due to fires and defunct companies throwing negatives away.

With the American Film Institute, the library began collecting and copying nitrate film, including the holdings of big Hollywood studios – RKO, Warner Brothers, Universal, Columbia and Walt Disney.

They also tapped the personal collections of film icons like movie impresario and silent era star Mary Pickford and motion pictures inventor Thomas Edison, whose early studio produced

hundreds of films.

"We're 50 some years in, and it (the collection) just keeps growing," Willeman said.

With the arrival of digital media, the mission has expanded beyond preservation for purists and cinema historians who say movies just look better on nitrate footage to putting old films online.

"Now we can make them available for everybody, which to me, being the film nerd I've been since, like, third grade, is just amazing."

Nitrate film made by early artisans often preserves better than the later safety film, said Courtney Holschuh, nitrate archive technician.

At a workstation with no light bulbs or exposed batteries either of which could ignite dust or gas from vintage film Holschuh recounted how last September she carefully peeled apart a cache of 10 vintage reels donated by a retired schoolteacher. □

Empire State Building climbers kiss outside court after viral proposal

New York, United States

A couple who climbed to the top of the Empire State Building and got engaged appeared in a New York court Monday, before giving each other a lingering kiss in full view of the world's media.

Ivan Kuznetsov, 32, and Angelina Nikolau, 33, face several charges after their viral stunt on July 1 when they clambered up an antenna at the peak of the 1,454-foot (443-meter) landmark.

During the climb, the pair,

clad in black outfits with their faces covered, unfurled a banner that read: "When the power of love beats the love of power, the world knows peace."

On the top of the building, Kuznetsov went down on one knee and appeared to propose to Nikolau, before they kissed and embraced as news helicopters swirled around them. At Monday's brief hearing, the pair each wore black leather jackets with jeans and stood quietly holding hands behind their lawyers.

Outside the courthouse, they embraced one another with a deep, 10-second kiss in front of a pack of journalists and onlookers.

The couple have built a huge online following for their illegal climbing ex-

ploits and starred in the Netflix documentary "Skywalkers: A Love Story," which showed them scaling Malaysia's Merdeka 118 the world's second tallest building.

Facing U.S. charges including reckless endangerment, burglary and criminal mischief, they have defended their latest climb as "art" in a series of Instagram posts.

"Whatever happens in court, we will respect the process and accept the consequences of our choices," the pair, who have not entered a plea, wrote online.

A further hearing was scheduled for September 29.

The Empire State Building has an observation deck open to the public that offers stunning views of New York, but access to higher points is forbidden. □



Russian nationals Angela Nikolau (R) and Ivan Beerkus (L) (born Ivan Artemovich Kuznetsov), who scaled the Empire State Building's spire this past July for a stunt and marriage proposal, kiss after attending a court hearing to face charges on multiple felonies at Manhattan Criminal Court in New York on August 24, 2026.



A man reads a book as he enjoys a sunny morning on a beach on the Aegean Greek island of Ikaria, on August 21, 2026.

Odyssey effect: stars sell Greece to a new wave of U.S. tourists

Athens, Greece

The idyllic beaches of the Greek islands have long been a draw for European holidaymakers, but now a new wave of U.S. tourists is waking up to their charms, driven by stars like Madonna, Katy Perry and Justin Bieber.

Madonna celebrated her 68th birthday on Corfu, sharing a whirl of parties and boat trips against the backdrop of the island's landscape with her 20 million Instagram followers earning her rapturous thanks from Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. And experts say the huge popularity of Christopher Nolan blockbuster "The Odyssey" will only fuel the trend though holidaymakers will be hoping for an easier trip home than the one endured by Matt Damon's eponymous hero.

While Madonna partied in Corfu, singer Bieber took his family to the Peloponnese. Perry and her partner, Canada's former prime minister Justin Trudeau, sampled the delights of Mykonos. All of them chronicled their holidays on social media, giving the Greek tourism industry a massive hit of free advertising.

"Celebrities are voting for the Greek summer!" public broadcaster ERT said on

Friday, devoting a report to these stars from across the Atlantic.

The newspaper To Vima hailed this "new wave" which "helps raise the country's international profile". It cited British singer and actress Rita Ora, who shared her holidays with "her millions of followers" on social media.

Paris Tsartas, professor of tourism development at Harokopio University in Athens, told AFP the deluge of celebrity endorsements gave Greece a powerful boost as a summer destination particularly with the lucrative American market. After a decade of financial woes following the debt crisis of 2009, and the devastation of the Covid-19 pandemic, Greece has pumped money into the sector, which accounts for nearly 30 percent of GDP, according to the Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises (SETE).

Around 1.55 million Americans visited Greece in 2025. They represent the third-largest source of tourism income, behind Germans and Britons, according to SETE, with an average spend per tourist of 1,120 euros (\$1,300).

To answer growing demand, the main U.S. airlines

have significantly stepped up services, American Airlines increasing its total available seat capacity by 30 percent compared with summer 2025.

And this year Greece has had its highest-ever number of direct flights, with 103 connections a week between Athens and the United States.

- Set-jetting -

Some of the new enthusiasm is driven by the phenomenon of "set-jetting" people travelling to a destination after seeing it in a movie or TV series.

In a study for online travel giant Expedia, 13 percent of American travellers said they had booked a trip after seeing a destination on screen.

Greece is well acquainted with the trend, after hit musical "Mamma Mia", filmed on the island of Skopelos, triggered a jump in American visitors.

Professor Tsartas predicted "The Odyssey" would have a similar impact.

Key parts of Nolan's film, recounting the travails of Damon's Odysseus as he seeks to return home from the Trojan war to his wife Penelope, played by Anne Hathaway, were shot in the Peloponnese region of Greece. □



Dara from Bulgaria, winner of this year's Eurovision Song Contest, performs during Schlager Night in the Pride District at Slakthusområdet during Stockholm Pride in Stockholm, Sweden, on July 31, 2026.

Dutch say won't participate in 'no longer' neutral Eurovision

The Hague, Netherlands

The Netherlands will not participate in next year's Eurovision Song Contest, its broadcaster said Monday, saying the event can "no longer be considered neutral" given divisions over the Gaza war.

"It is undeniable that international conflicts are increasingly affecting the Contest, undermining its neutral character. The Eurovision Song Contest has therefore become a platform for division," said Taco Zimmerman, Director-General of AVROTROS in a statement from the broadcaster.

The contest has recently been hit by a wave of boycotts over Israel's participation.

Earlier this month, organisers announced they were excluding any country involved in an armed conflict from hosting the competition.

"However, the recently announced changes... do not provide sufficient confidence that the independent and neutral character of the Eurovision Song Contest has been restored," said the AVROTROS statement.

Israel came close to winning the competition in both 2025 and 2026, ultimately finishing second on each occasion.

Next year's event, the world's biggest live televised music event, will take place on May 15 in Bulgaria's Black Sea city of Burgas.

It will be the first time that the Balkan nation hosts the contest, coming after Bulgarian singer Darina Yotova, known as Dara, won this year's contest in the Austrian capital Vienna with the catchy floor-filler "Bangaranga". Since its launch in 1955, Eurovision has become the ultimate pop platform, catapulting Swedish icons ABBA to worldwide fame, as well as boosting the likes of Celine Dion, Cliff Richard and Olivia Newton-John.

The 2026 competition was watched by 131 million viewers, down 35 million on the year before after five countries boycotted it over Israel's participation.

The Netherlands, Iceland, Spain, Ireland and Slovenia all pulled out of the contest -- with the latter three refusing to broadcast the show at all.

- 'Painful' -

The Dutch took part in the very first Eurovision Song Contest back in 1956, and have won on five occasions.

The most recent winner was Duncan Laurence whose song Arcade won the contest in 2019, going on to top charts globally. It became the first Eurovision entry to reach one billion streams on Spotify, according to the Eurovision website. □

Kenyan farmers turn to bugs as organic demand grows

Kenya

Kenyan farmer George Muturi says the stinky wooden shack teeming with red-worms has helped rescue his land from the soil degradation caused by chemical fertilisers.

Agriculture is vital to east Africa's economy, but a 2025 soil report by the Heinrich Boll Foundation, a German think tank, found that more than 40 percent of the region's soils were degraded in part by overuse of chemical fertilisers costing more than \$65 billion a year in lost productivity.

Fertiliser prices have also increased this year due to the war in the Middle East, driving a search for alternatives.

In Kenya, 32 percent of cropland was classified as strongly acidic in the soil report. Changing climatic conditions and overly intensive farming practices are among the causes, but Muturi says moving away from chemical fertilisers has boosted his harvests at his farm in Lari, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) from the capital, Nairobi.

He switched to "vermicompost" using redworms that turn food and crop waste into a natural, nutrient-rich form of fertiliser.



A worker at a Black soldier fly (BSF) farm harvests mature pupae from troughs of organic food waste at a BSF farm in Njoro constituency, Nakuru county on July 30, 2026.

"Vermicomposting was a breakthrough for us... our soil is much better in a way that we can be able to plant and sustain the crop even during dry season," the 31-year-old farmer told AFP during a visit to his farm.

About 70 beds, each filled with at least 5,000 red-worms, hold layers of food and crop waste mixed with cow dung that the worms break down over six weeks, to create vermicompost.

Multiple studies have shown that vermicompost

can improve soil structure, organic matter and water retention.

Muturi acknowledges that it is some way off being used on an industrial scale, since very large quantities are needed to match the effects of synthetic fertilisers.

But he says he has seen positive results on his vegetables and has started selling the compost to other farmers around the country.

According to agroecologist Harun Warui, chemical

fertilisers address only one aspect of soil nutrition, while organic compost supports the soil's broader biology, with benefits becoming apparent over time.

"Vermicompost is providing a solution of farmers' dependency on synthetic input. It's saving our soils in terms of improving the health," Warui told AFP.

While adoption will take time, he said, "farmers are going to realise that year in, year out dependence on (chemical) fertiliser is not the solution."

- Circular agriculture -

About 200 kilometres away in Nakuru County, Robert Mwangi has taken a similar approach with the larvae of black soldier flies.

He collects waste from the city's main market and feeds it to the larvae, which break it down into frass, an organic fertiliser. The mature larvae are dried and used as animal feed.

In a nylon structure, a pungent smell hangs over drums of shredded food waste, which are emptied into plastic boxes where the larvae feed for about two weeks before the frass is harvested.

"With conventional fertilisers, the more you use it, the more the productivity of the soil goes down, because (it) creates an acidic environment which is not good for the microbes that are responsible for maintaining and improving the soil fertility," Mwangi said.

"The organic fertiliser is a very good soil amendment so farmers are able to experience increased productivity over time and improved soil fertility which reduces their cost of production," he said, adding that it also helps deal with food waste. □

Kenyans get creative to join manga cosplay craze

Nairobi, Kenya

Cosplay has taken hold in Kenya, where fans must often get creative to dress up as their fantasy heroes. Thousands attended the latest edition of the Otamatsuri anime and manga convention in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, this weekend -- one of the largest in Africa -- with many in extravagant costumes inspired by hits like "One Piece" and "Naruto".

Sourcing the materials can be a challenge, though. Julius Mokaya, a building caretaker who has twice won the event's costume competition, does not have money to import expensive costumes so relies on cardboard and other

material that he salvages from recycling bins.

His modest apartment is full of homemade weapons, masks and accessories,

and he spent months designing this year's costume, based on Enjin, from the manga "Gachiakuta", a story about an exile in a

dumping ground.

Fittingly, the message of the story is "that trash and things thrown out aren't really bad", he told AFP.

It can still be an expensive hobby, though: "I'm broke half the time, but... I love the creative aspect, the deep dive into research and understanding the character," he said.

This year's winner, 24-year-old Yvonne Chockey, dressed as Angewomon, an angel character from a Japanese franchise.

She, too, had to get her hands dirty, using a hot-sand technique to heat and bend PVC pipes that became the frame for eight massive white wings. "I had to cut each feather

one by one and then attach them to the base. That was the most difficult part," she said.

Even in a highly globalised country like Kenya, the hobby can still raise a few eyebrows.

"Relatives saw what I was doing on social media and asked my father if I had joined a cult," said Mokaya.

But the convention's organiser Jotham Micah, co-founder of the Movie Jabber company, said more than 4,000 people had attended this weekend's event, and that "the beauty of anime and manga has transcended the borders of culture".

"It gives you life. It gives you inspiration," he said. □



Cosplayer Yvonne Chockey creates content with a friend for her social media accounts while cosplaying as Angewomon, a character from the popular Digimon anime series, ahead of the Otamatsuri convention at the rooftop of her home in Kutus on August 17, 2026.

The Lionfish and its threat to our marine wild life

(Oranjestad)—Despite its colorful and striking appearance, the lionfish has become a Caribbean-wide problem for Atlantic sea life. The Aruban marine wild life is also affected by this beautiful dilemma, as it is foreign to our waters and has become a danger to our local fish and reefs.

Originating from the Indo-Pacific Ocean, the lionfish is a relatively small fish. It has no teeth, but it does protect itself against predators using its sharp, colorful spikes. It is said that the sting of a lionfish can be up to 100 times more painful than that of a bee's sting.

Its natural predators in the Indo-Pacific are sharks and barracudas, but in the Caribbean Sea, local fish do not recognize the lionfish as part of their diet. In other words, the lionfish has no predators in the Caribbean Sea. And this becomes a major problem for our local marine life; if there are no predators to stimulate population control of lionfish, these fish can continue to reproduce and expand to other parts of the Atlantic, become more invasive and dangerous for other types of fish.



For Aruba, the lionfish is a problem especially for our local coral reefs. According to Patrick van Brakel, lionfish expert and hunter from the Hunting Lionfish Aruba foundation, every reef has a "cleaning station"—tiny fish that eat algae and other types of waste on a reef, thus maintaining the reef's health and providing food to the fish population in the area. However, as the lionfish feeds off of these tiny fish, it becomes harder for the coral reef to maintain

its health.

Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlantic happened in Florida, where people would buy lionfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish were too much upkeep, they were let out into the ocean to roam free. From continental USA,

the lionfish travelled to and invaded the entire Carib-

bean area, from Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao up to New York. In Aruba, lionfish were discovered in 2009.

Controlling the lionfish population is challenge, as each female fish can lay up to 40,000 eggs a day. Luckily, we have people like van Brakel who dedicate their lives hunting and capturing these invasive species, using them for consumption and jewelry making.

They are caught with a hand spear, an object resembling a garbage picker with 4 sharp prongs. These spears are used like a sling shot to catch lionfish from a distance. These fish are then put into a collecting tube and taken out of the water. This way, he does his part in protecting the local wild life. □



Need a ride down town?

Now you can check taxi rates from you phone!

(Oranjestad)—If you were planning on taking a trip downtown but want to check how much a taxi ride costs, do we have great news for you. Now you can plan your trip ahead on taxi.aw. With just a few clicks, you'll know exactly how much it costs to take you to your destination.

Although an official fare list already existed, the previous version was very outdated and created confusion among both drivers and customers. The lack of updates and easy access to the official fares contributed to situations where some taxi drivers charged arbitrary or excessive prices, particularly in tourist areas.

The fare is calculated based on the distance and number of kilometers between different locations on the island. The digital system allows customers to use the same calculation to determine the official fare that the taxi driver must charge during a trip.

The website also incorporates different surcharges that officially form part of Aruba's taxi system. The system provides a range of different locations and zones to select. Be mindful that there are also conditions that apply to the rate of your trip, all of which are explicitly explained on the website's home page.

With an easy interface that's accesible to everyone, taxi.aw can make planning a trip easier, secure and reliable. □



Property Management

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Casago
Aruba

Quality Home Care



Our experienced property care team inspects your home after every stay.

Property



Our expert team and advanced systems ensure your vacation home is always perfectly prepared for every arrival.

Profits



We use advanced analytics to optimize pricing and maximize your earnings.

Casago Aruba: Redefining Island Stays with Full-Service Property Management



Casago Aruba was born from a shared passion for elevating the island's tourism experience. Built on a strong foundation of service, hospitality, and a keen eye for quality, the Casago team—backed by over 16 years of experience in the vacation rental and hospitality industry—is on a mission to redefine what luxury and convenience look like for travelers visiting Aruba.

But Casago is more than just a vacation rental platform. It is a **full-service property management company**, offering seamless experiences



for both guests and homeowners alike. While travelers benefit from handpicked accommodations and personalized service, homeowners gain a reliable partner dedicated to the care and performance of their property.

A Stay Tailored to You

Casago Aruba offers more than just stylish villas. Their curated portfolio includes a **wide variety of condos, homes, and villas** in different sizes to suit all types of travelers—from solo adventurers and couples to large families and groups. Every stay is backed by local expertise, with concierge support, 24/7 guest assistance, and an attention to detail that consistently exceeds expectations.

Whether you're here to relax on world-famous beaches, explore Aruba's cultural gems, or discover hidden corners of the island, Casago Aruba ensures your getaway is as smooth as it is memorable.

A Partner for Homeowners

Behind the scenes, Casago offers a robust suite of property management services designed to help homeowners

maximize rental income while minimizing stress. Services include:

- **Promotion** through Casago's professional booking platform and expert local marketing strategies
- **Complete management** of check-ins, guest communication, cleanings, landscaping, pool maintenance, and repairs
- **Transparent maintenance** reporting, real-time reservation tracking, and on-site security monitoring
- **Full handling** of tax filings for both local and state requirements
- **Monthly property inspections** and full utility bill management
- **Strategic planning** to help homeowners increase profitability and keep their properties in top condition

This full-service model ensures that every home is maintained to the highest standard while giving property owners full peace of mind.

Rooted in Community and Sustainability

What truly sets Casago Aruba apart is their commitment



to the local community and to sustainable practices. The team works closely with local businesses and artisans, promotes eco-conscious travel, and supports initiatives that contribute positively to the island's environment and economy.

As one of the fastest-growing vacation rental and property management companies on the island, Casago Aruba continues to expand its footprint—welcoming more travelers, partnering with more homeowners, and raising the standard of hospitality in Aruba. □

What Aruba means to Bruce!



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to give you a shout-out by inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island!

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

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

For today we received a lovely message from Bruce A. Bennett from Hawthorne, NJ. He wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me are gorgeous sunsets that always make me think of my wife, who passed away last September. For the past 30 years, Aruba was her favorite place on earth, so every night when I see a gorgeous sunset, I think of her and know she's out there somewhere." Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □



PO-KÉ ONO
By Urvin Croes

TRY OUR POKES, BAOS, SUSHI, AND MORE!

 Po-Ké Ono

 pokeonaruba

 Po-Ké Ono Azure
J.E. Irausquin Blvd 260.

 Po-Ké Ono Aruba

 www.pokeonoaruba.com

 Po-Ké Ono Marketplace
L.G. Smith Blvd 9, Unit 25.

Po-Ké Ono Brings Bold Asian Fusion to Aruba's Dining Scene

Innovative eatery blends island culture with modern Asian cuisine



Oranjestad, Aruba – In a culinary landscape known for its diversity and creativity, Po-Ké Ono stands out as a vibrant and contemporary addition to Aruba's restaurant scene. With locations at Azure in Palm Beach and the Renaissance Marketplace in Oranjestad, the concept introduces a refreshing take on Asian fusion dining—casual in style, yet refined in execution.

Established in 2020, Po-Ké Ono was envisioned as a space where flavor, culture, and creativity intersect. The menu features an array of signature dishes including poke bowls, steamed bao, and sushi, crafted with precision and a focus on freshness. Drawing on Asian influences, the restaurant delivers bold flavors in an approachable format, appealing to a broad audience of locals and visitors alike.

The ambiance is designed to be welcoming and relaxed, with a philosophy centered

around accessibility and enjoyment. Whether dining indoors or grabbing a quick bowl on the go, guests can expect a consistently high standard in both service and cuisine. With extensive menu options, including selections for vegan diners, Po-Ké Ono caters to a wide range of tastes and dietary preferences.

While the concept leans into fast-casual dining, the quality of ingredients and thoughtful



preparation reflect fine-dining roots. Many of the restaurant's core ingredients are sourced locally, emphasizing sustainability and support for Aruba's agricultural community. The result is a dining experience that honors both the island's spirit and the culinary traditions it draws inspiration from. Open daily from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM, Po-Ké Ono continues to gain recognition as one of the island's premier destinations for sushi, poke, and bao. Its growing popularity is a

testament to Aruba's evolving food culture—one that embraces global influence while staying rooted in community and craft.

For those seeking a modern taste of Asia in the heart of the Caribbean, Po-Ké Ono offers a flavorful and memorable experience worth exploring. □



Beautiful areas around Aruba

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

The hidden Natural Bridge

Here in Aruba we have three natural bridges and many see this one on thinking that it's the world famous one but it's not. The why is easy, it's way too dangerous to go down the cliff to reach this beauty and no tour companies will do that. Some people refuse to go down due fear of height. This bridge is located in San Nicolas, behind The Point Lighthouse along the east point coast.

Surfside Beach

This beach was very famous when we were kids and many locals love to swim at this beach. After some years the locals shifted to the more north-west beaches like Eagle, Boca Catalina and Arashi but after the government renovated the whole area it got a new face-lift and its back as a family beach and weekends are just amazing at this area.

Natural Bridge at Blackstone Beach

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



Cas Floria: The Decorated Houses of Aruba

(Oranjestad)—There may be as many as 200 to 300 houses in Aruba that have beautiful decorations, including curtains, stars, flowers, half-moons, etc., placed on the corners or the upper parts of the house.

These houses can be found everywhere, in nearly every district of Aruba. People always thought that these designs came from an Indigenous culture; possibly, the star design resembled the way it was shown, similar to the "God Sun" of the Indigenous people. However, the history of this decorative system does not go very far back in time.

In his book *Millefiori di Aruba*, Father Nooyen declares that the first house to receive this type of decoration was the home of Mr. Bernardo Eman Croes in Pos Chikito. Julien (Janchi) Christiaans and Gregorio (Goy) Semeleer built this house in 1920 and created the decorations on the upper corners of the house. Other people in Pos Chikito, who saw this beautiful work, also wanted their houses decorated in the same way.

Leoncio (Joonchi) Henricus of Pos Chikito learned the work from Janchi Christiaans and, together with his son Bonifacio (Bonny) Henricus, continued decorating houses in Pos Chikito and Sabana Basora.

Janchi Christiaans, Goy Semeleer, and others from Noord, such as Hilario Christiaans, Victor Tromp, Ge-



rardo Jacobs, and Cornelis Rosa, brought the same decoration to houses in Noord and Paradera. In 1927, Janchi Christiaans built a house for Julian Tromp in Buguruy.

This was the first house in Noord to receive this type of decoration. Later, those in Paradera, Santa Cruz, and Savaneta copied the house decorations. They practiced these systems up until 1944.

Even today, the patterns are well preserved and protected, but they are no longer used.

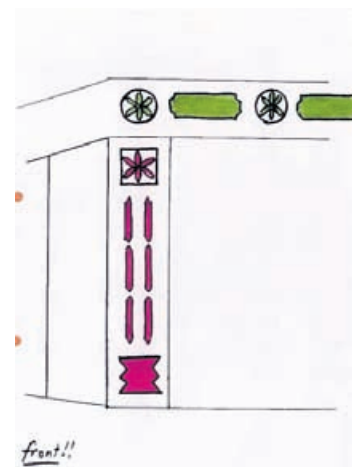
Janchi Christiaans began cutting the patterns out of zinc plates and cardboard. He also had his own creations and systems, while Leoncio and Bonifacio Henricus produced their own fantasies. This is what made these decorations popular: many people could turn their imagination into expressive art.

However, the decoration of houses was not originally Janchi Christiaans's idea. Janchi was a disciple of his father, Hose Christiaans, and of the Donati family, from Italian ancestors. They also made these decorations, though without using any patterns, simply designing and applying them with common plaster as the material.

Using Dr. Johan Hartog's Aruba, Breve Historia as reference, I noticed that he also writes that these designs are not indigenous

symbols, but only decorative fantasies. One point of disagreement is that he wrote that in 1820 someone from Curaçao began this type of decoration in Aruba.

This means that, according to Father Nooyen, who declared that it began in 1920, it would have actually started 100 years earlier. As part of his research, Ito Tromp also interviewed Mr. Julio Maduro of the Department of Labor at that time, who told him that around 1880 Johannes (Janchi) Wolff began with house decorations. And as Janchi himself said, he learned this



from his grandfather, who in earlier times had built the first lighthouse at California Point.

After comparing his information, Ito Tromp wrote that Hartog was right concerning the period when decorated houses began in Aruba in 1820. However, it was not people from Curaçao who started it. Victor Tromp, who was 87 years old at the time of writing, was a member of Janchi Wolff's family.

Julio Maduro said that in 1920 they began again with this type of decoration. In general, there is no specific year (up to now) when Arubans first began with this decorative artistic

expression. It is interesting to know that these decorations are a kind of symbol for several generations.

For example: Decorations that appear on the house of the Arends family could also be seen on the houses of the Bermudez or Croes families. This was because parents always gave a specific sign to their sons or daughters when they were getting married.

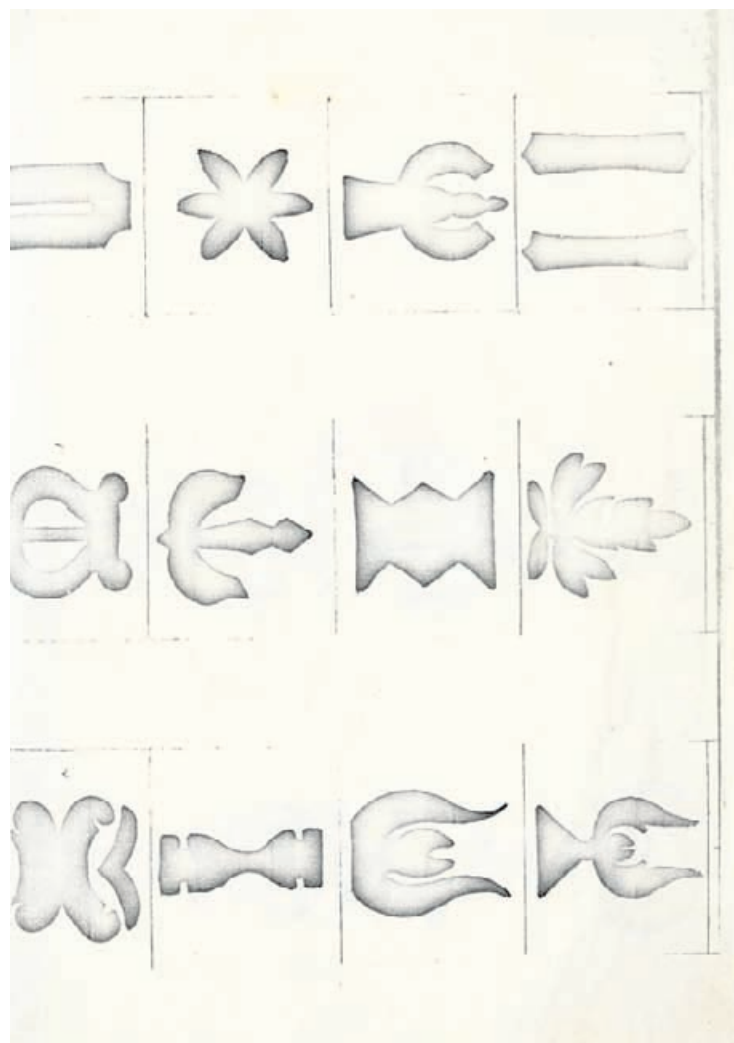
It was also said that these designs had a certain kind of voodoo purpose, to keep away the spirits of the Indigenous people who were buried in the neighborhoods where the houses now stand. However, this has almost completely disappeared.

As for the continuation of these designs from family to family, this is a cultural heritage that is no longer established. For this reason, in earlier times, every young man who married had to have his own house; otherwise, there would be no marriage.

The designs were created according to the individual's imagination. If he saw, for example, six pairs of birds on a tree, he would then paint six pairs of birds on a tree. If he wanted to express his love for his twin children, then he designed a twin.

Nowadays, if you want to use these designs for your house, don't worry—you can simply copy them and paint them. □

Source: *E casnan Decora na Aruba* (1976) by Ito Tromp.



Up for a snorkeling adventure? Here are 3 shipwrecks to explore

(ORANJESTAD) – Aruba is not only the perfect vacation destination to sit back and relax on the sandy beaches but also has great snorkeling spots for passionate adventurers to explore. On the coast of the island, there are various shipwrecks that have become fan-favorites over the years. Here are the top 3 shipwrecks you should explore.

SS Antilla

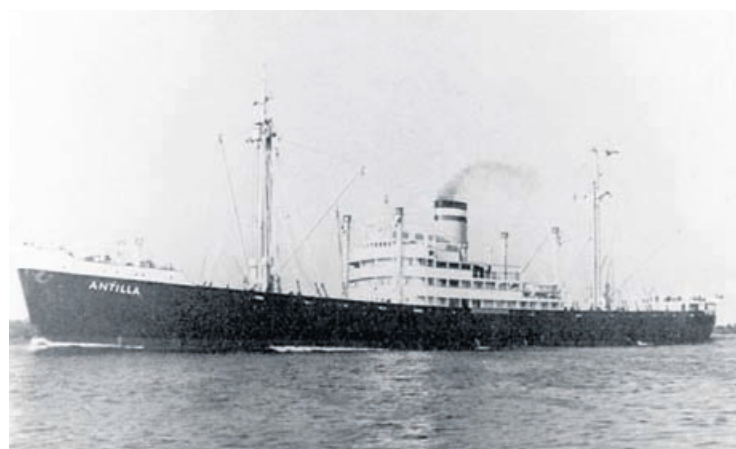
Dubbed “The Ghost Ship”, SS Antilla is the biggest and most visited shipwreck site off the coast of the island. Located in Malmok, this 400-foot ship's story is one of capture and sabotage during WWII.

After Germany invaded The Netherlands, Dutch authorities ordered the confinement of the ship's German crew, who were ported in Aruba because it needed to find a neutral port. The Dutch ordered the ship to be confiscated, but the German crew had other plans. Taking advantage of a delay caused by an anticipated armed resistance, the Germans started scuttling the ship, opening her sea-cock and setting her ablaze.

Eventually, the crew was arrested, but SS Antilla could



Turtle at Antilla Wreck Aruba
Credit: Serge Melli



The HANCO freighter Antilla

not be saved by the Dutch forces. The Dutch fired two rounds of their 35mm gun aboard the ‘Aruba’ at SS Antilla and left her to sink.

The shipwreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you'll be surrounded by

hundreds of tropical fishes, but the shipwreck alone is already impressive enough.

SS Pedernales

Like the Antilla, the story of SS Pedernales dates to WWII. Pedernales was used as a lake tanker between Venezuela and Aruba, and sailed under British Flag. At

this time, The US and Britain were using Aruba and Curacao as fuel stations for the war ships.

Under operation Neuland (disruption of British and American oil sources), Germany fleets bombed Pedernales. The ship was later cut into three sections, two of which were taken to the US for reconstruction. The remaining part stayed in Aruba and was used as target practice. Eventually, the ship became a snorkeling site that has attracted many visitors throughout the years.

Pedernales lies on the northwest coast of Aruba, and is no more than 10 feet under water, making it an ideal site for snorkelers and divers of all levels.

Jane Sea Wreck

The Jane Sea Wreck lies near Palm Island at 100 feet underwater. Jane's story is heavily speculated, making her origin a tale of legends.

Launched in 1959, the 190-foot ship was initially called “Blackthorn”. Her last owner, S&D Shipping Ltd. named her Jane Sea. Jane was a cement freighter between Venezuela and Aruba.

The story goes that the Jane

Sea arrived one day at the Barcadera Harbor, where Aruban customs discovered several tons of cocaine. The ship was confiscated and petitioned went out for her owner to claim her. However, several years went by and no one came forward to claim the ship, so dive operators decided to sink her as an artificial reef. This happened in 1988. Jane Sea earned the nick name Jane C, because of the illicit white powder discovered on board.

Jane is now beautifully overgrown with coral and is home to a diverse set of marine life, like turtles, octopus, crabs and sometimes even nurse sharks.

The stories behind these shipwrecks enriches their exploration and offers snorkelers and divers a glance into the past, as well as the beautiful marine life that have molded these wrecks into their home. So, grab your equipment and discover another side of what Aruba has to offer!

We highly recommend you embark on your adventure with the guide of a professional and be sure to take of yourself and Aruba's precious nature. □

A quick snack for the road Learn how to make the Aruban Pastechi!

(Oranjestad)—If you ever been to Aruba before, you probably heard of (and even tried) the Aruban Pastechi. Beloved by young and old, this tasty treat is a staple for party snacks, a quick lunch or even breakfast!

Here's how to make the Pastechi dough.

Ingredients:

- 4 cups of wheat flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder (if using self-rising flour, omit baking powder)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 0.5 cup of melted butter
- 1 cup water
- 1 egg

Directions:

Sift your flour into a bowl and add all the dry ingredients before giving it a quick mix. Next add the butter, water and egg and mix until thoroughly combined. At this point, your dough will start to get sticky; time for an arm workout. Knead your dough into the bowl you

are using or on a clean surface with some flour lightly dusted until its surface is smooth. You'll know your dough is ready when it doesn't stick to your hands or the surface on which you're kneading it. Let your dough rest covered for 15-20 minutes.

After resting, divide your dough into approximately 100 gram balls and roll it flat with a rolling pin. The thickness of the pastechi depends on your taste, but the average thinness would be around 1/4 inch or so.

Filling for the pastechis varies according to your taste. The easiest and most common filling you'll find in Aruba is a simple cheese filling. For this, we usually use shredded Gouda, but feel free to use any cheese that melts well when frying the pastry.

Place the filling on your rolled out piece of dough, fold it in half and pinch the sides shut with a fork. If you have a folding tool, feel free to use it for this process. Your pastechi is ready for the fryer!



If you want to store some pastechis for later use, you can freeze them. A good tip is to place a piece of wax paper in between each pastechi if you are to store them on top of one another. This way the pastechis don't stick to each other when defrosting.

Here in Aruba we enjoy pastechi at any time of the day, but it has become almost tradition to eat pastechis for breakfast on the way to work. Many roadside snack trucks sell pastechi from early morning to noon, and offer a variety of fillings like cheese; ham and cheese; ground beef and pulled chicken to name a few. □

CROSSWORD

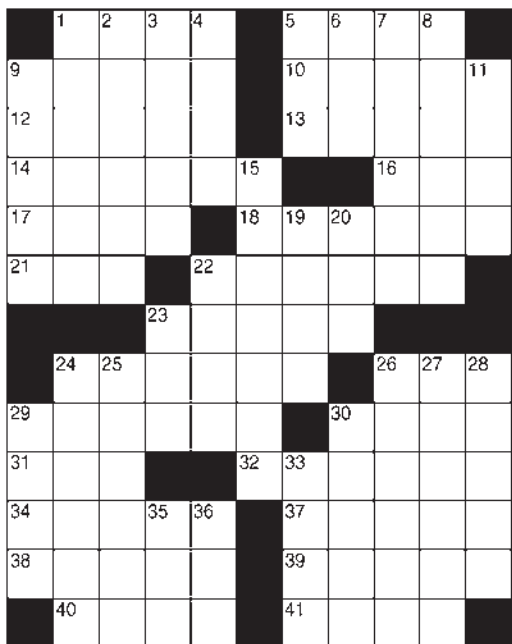
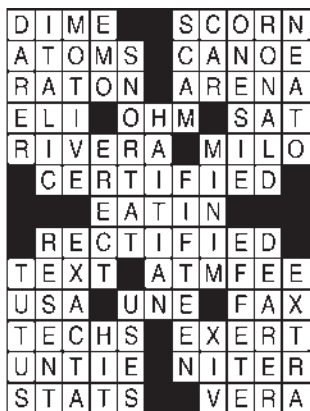
By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

ACROSS

- 38 Danger
1 Comic Kaplan on the
5 Twosome Rhône
9 Monopoly 40 Risqué
buy 41 Russian
10 Joust denial
wear
12 Grill waste
13 "Robinson Crusoe" writer
14 Housetop laborer
16 Mamie's husband
17 Avenue trees
18 Had its premiere
21 Bartender on "The Simpsons"
22 Shutter part
23 Social class
24 Shows surprise, for example
26 Stroller user
29 Bald spot cover
30 Prefix with sphere
31 Curtain holder
32 Boarding-house tenant
34 Molecule makeup
37 Syrup choice

DOWN

- 1 Leave the band
2 Not out
3 Com-plaints
4 Different
5 Small tablet
6 "Roses — red"
7 "It's just a scratch"
8 Michael of "Guard-ians of the Galaxy"
9 Women's quarters
11 Clarinet part
15 Farm crower
19 Places
20 Eden resident
22 Valentine trim
23 Upper limit
24 Fan singer's need
25 Author Welty
26 House of worship
27 Egg dish
28 Grows weary
29 Snare
30 Trite
33 Yemen neighbor
35 Karaoke singer's need
36 Willy



5-8

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

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

5-8 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

P F G T A U H S L T K N K F P Z T H

B F R D G L T P F B H S P T J L F R P J

Z R H H S U J X T S X S P A V T H W T U P

V F B T H. — K J N J J X O T D F R

Cryptoquote: THERE ARE FEW HOURS IN LIFE MORE AGREEABLE THAN THE HOUR DEDICATED TO THE CEREMONY KNOWN AS AFTERNOON TEA. — HENRY JAMES

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	
AUGUST SCHEDULE	
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

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

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

Difficulty: ★★

8/25

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★

8/24

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Blowing in the wind, humble balloon gets green makeover

London, United Kingdom

A global symbol of parties and celebrations but an environmental headache, the humble balloon is undergoing a green revolution thanks to UK researchers.

Researchers at Imperial College London say they have developed the first fully biodegradable balloon and hope to bring it to market within two years.

"So there was hundreds of trials. We had many, many failures," said Juliana Cumming, a PhD student at the university and co-creator of the "Bioloan", a 100-per-cent biodegradable balloon.

In a university laboratory, the 29-year-old proudly showed AFP a flask containing a precious yellow liquid.

Once solidified, it becomes a soft, elastic material with a texture comparable to that of a conventional balloon.

But there is one crucial difference it breaks down completely within nine months unlike traditional balloons, Cumming said.

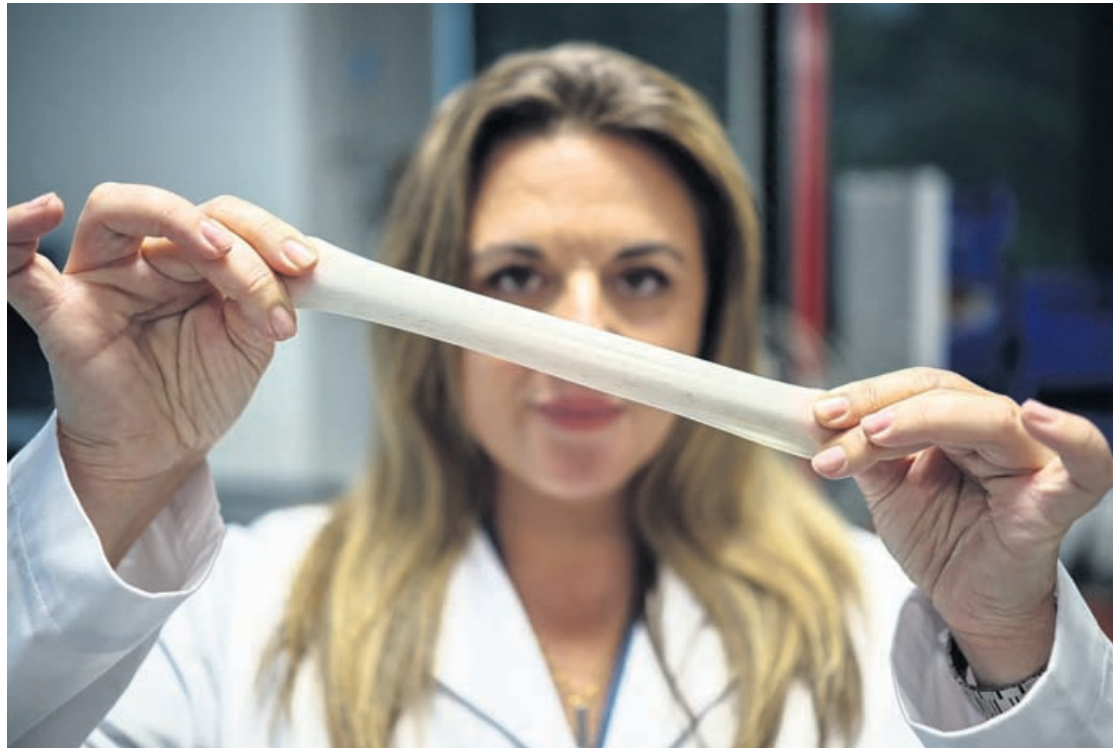
The Bioloan is the result of a public-private partnership launched by Charlotte Melia, an events entrepreneur, who describes herself as environmentally minded.

"I was a party planner for over 10 years and ... I was very sustainably focused. The final stumbling block for me was the balloon waste," she told AFP.

"We were putting out thousands of party balloons every single week," she said, but they were only there "for a matter of hours simply to be popped and thrown in the trash".

The final straw came when she realised "balloons were non-biodegradable" even though the packaging said they would say break up "at the rate of an oak leaf". Convinced that a sustainable alternative was possible, Melia decided with an associate to put up some £30,000 (\$41,000) to part fund Cumming's doctoral research.

- Ecological risk -



Bioloan CEO Charlotte Melia holds a sample of biodegradable rubber at a laboratory at Imperial College in London, on August 19, 2026.

The environmental impact of traditional balloons, which despite their advertising do not degrade, is largely unknown to the general public.

But a number of studies have documented the dangers posed by balloons once they end up in nature, particularly for marine life and birds.

A 2019 study by the University of Tasmania, published in Scientific Reports, found balloons were "the highest-risk plastic debris item" for seabirds, carrying a mortality risk 32 times higher than ingesting hard plastics.

Imperial College's department of chemical engi-

neering estimates that between 20 and 25 billion balloons are purchased worldwide every year.

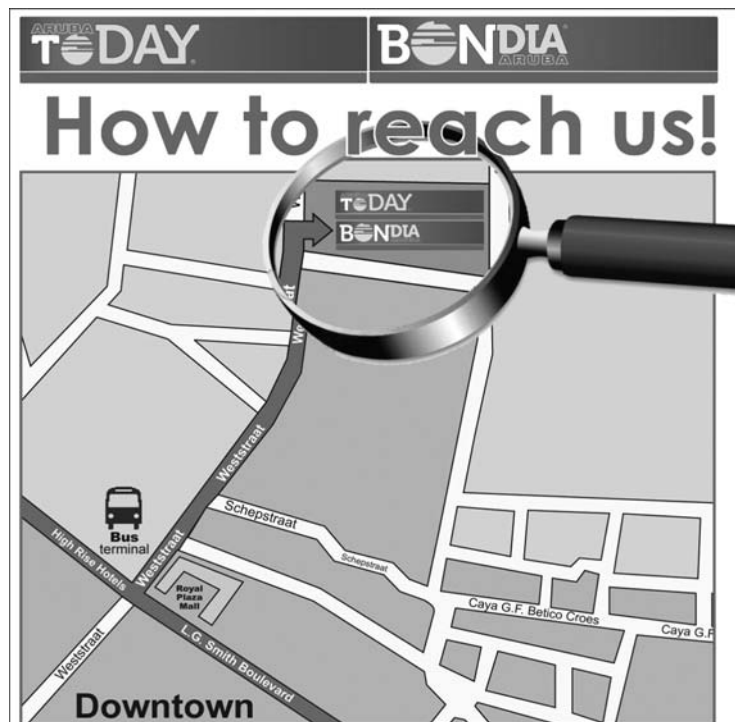
Cumming spent three years developing her formula.

The starting point is the same as for an ordinary balloon: natural latex derived from the sap of the rubber tree, native to the Amazon, and has changed little since the balloon was invented in 1824.

"In order to turn the natural latex into something that we refer to as rubber it goes through this process called sulphur vulcanization," she explained.

That involves adding "sulphur accelerators, antioxi-

dants, and activators into the material" which "prevents the biodegradation of balloons" and also leaks "toxic chemicals into the environment". □



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HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad Hospital
7:00 pm/10:00pm
Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas IMSAN
24 HOURS
Tel. 524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad: Sta. Cruz
Tel. 585 8028

San Nicolas: Centro Medico
Tel. 584 5794

OTHER

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

EMERGENCY

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

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas 587 5900
Prof. Taxi 588 0035
Taxi D.T.S. 587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba 583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv. 280 2828

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
Tel. 588 0002
FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051
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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Phone Directory Tel. 118

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Austrian mountain town finds niche in AI boom

Leoben, Austria

Nestled in the wooded hills of Austria's Styria region, the town of Leoben oozes tradition with its pastel-colored buildings and quaint central square boasting a 13th-century church.

But on the edge of town, engineers peer through giant magnifying glasses while robotic arms manipulate sheets of copper to develop components used in some of the world's most advanced AI systems.

AT&S, an electronics company based in Leoben, makes integrated circuit (IC) substrates, the boards that connect chips to computer memory and power supplies a crucial component in the race to develop AI and high-speed data processing.

The company's shares have surged more than 450 percent this year, making it one of the most striking beneficiaries in Europe of the AI boom.

For chief executive Michael Mertin, this success shows that Europe can still "occupy important niches" in the AI race, even if it cannot compete with US rivals



An employees works inside a cleanroom at the AT&S production facilities in Leoben, Styria, Austria, on August 11, 2026.

on chip innovation, or with Asian firms in terms of production scale.

"We will not be the leading nation or the leading region... (but) there are some outstanding technologies where we are world leaders in Europe," Mertin said. Founded in 1987, AT&S initially made printed circuit boards before entering the IC substrate business in 2016, when it began serial

production at a new plant in Chongqing, China.

The company opened a second factory to produce IC substrates in Malaysia in 2024. The Leoben site, known as the Hinterberg plant, serves as the global headquarters and houses its research and development operations.

After investing more than 500 million euros (\$576 million) in a research and pro-

duction centre opened last year, it has also become Europe's only major commercial manufacturer of advanced IC substrates.

- 'Industrial revolution' -

Malcolm Penn, chairman of the semiconductor consultancy Future Horizons, said AT&S was one of few European companies directly benefiting from booming demand for AI hardware.

"They're riding the AI boom... They're not driving the wave, they're riding the wave," he said.

IC substrates are "critical" in the AI ecosystem "because they're one of the key aspects of reducing power consumption, reducing noise, increasing speed," he added.

Europe's strengths in AI-related hardware tend to lie in specialized parts of the semiconductor supply chain, with companies such as Dutch lithography giant ASML and British chip designer Arm occupying leading positions.

AT&S cannot claim to be in the same league as them, but the growth of AI has led to a big increase in demand over the past few months, said Barbara Decker-Schloegl, its senior director of operations.

"You can see it across all areas customer inquiries keep rising and rising," she said.

"The issue of artificial intelligence, including the high demand for the corresponding computing modules, will not foreseeably slump," Mertin added.

"From my point of view, this

is an industrial revolution, almost like the introduction of engines or, back then, the steam engine," he said.

- Local heft, global workforce -

Around 2,200 people from more than 70 countries work at the site in Leoben, a former iron mining centre of 28,000 people in the mountainous southern state of Styria.

Mario Alroy, 36, from India, has been an account manager at AT&S for four years and travels to work daily from Graz, the nearest big city.

"Styria is really a wonderful place to be. You have mountains, you have lakes, if you're interested in wine you can go wine tasting... The quality of life is very good," he said.

But around 60 percent of the staff are Austrian, and "AT&S is one of the largest employers in this region", Decker-Schloegl said. □

Tesla teases imminent launch of Cybercab 'robotaxi'

New York, United States

Electric vehicle-maker Tesla is teasing the upcoming debut of its self-driving robotaxi, dubbed "Cybercab," to compete with the likes of Uber and Waymo. The Elon Musk-founded company shared a pro-

motional image on social media late Friday promising "exclusive access" to Cybercabs at a September 3 event in Austin, Texas, where Tesla is headquartered.

"We're celebrating the launch of our Cybercab

robotaxi with an exclusive event in Austin -- and you could be there," the company said on its website, promoting a sweepstakes to win a chance to attend the event.

First unveiled in October 2024, the gold-colored vehicle can carry two passengers and marks the first Tesla car with no steering wheel or pedals.

At the time, Musk said the company was planning to begin production of the self-driving cars before 2027 and sell them to private buyers for under \$30,000.

U.S. tech industry publication The Information reported this week that Tesla staffers have been told the rollout will begin with Cybercab rides for employees on public roads,

followed by the vehicle being incorporated into the ranks of its Robotaxi service in Austin.

Tesla enthusiasts have in recent weeks reported seeing parking lots filled with Cybercabs, sparking rumors of an impending launch.

Last year Tesla debuted its self-driving cars in Austin using its Model Y SUV vehicles, with the "Robotaxi" service gradually expanding to several other cities in Texas, Florida and California.

However, state laws require many of the vehicles to have a human supervisor or driver ready to take over control if necessary. Waymo, the self-driving vehicle subsidiary of Google parent company Alphabet, offers its services in 11 U.S. cities. □



The Tesla Cybercab autonomous robotaxi is unveiled in a striking gold finish during the Media Preview of the 2026 Chicago Auto Show at McCormick Place on February 6, 2026, in Chicago, Illinois.



Coco Gauff of the United States celebrates with the Rookwood Cup after defeating Jessica Pegula of the United States during the Women's Final on day twelve of the Cincinnati Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center on August 23, 2026 in Mason, Ohio.

Gauff powers past Pegula to win U.S. Open warm-up in Cincinnati

Cincinnati, United States

Coco Gauff made a statement Sunday with the US Open approaching, dominating Jessica Pegula 6-2, 6-4 to win her first title of 2026 at the WTA 1000 in Cincinnati.

World number four Gauff claimed her first WTA title since last October in Wuhan, having come up short in finals in Miami and Rome this year.

Her victory over third-ranked Pegula gave her a second Cincinnati crown. Gauff earned her first in 2023, going on to claim the first of her two Grand Slam titles at the U.S. Open that year.

The first all-American WTA final in Cincinnati since Rosie Casals beat Nancy Richey in 1970 was a lopsided affair.

Gauff insisted it shouldn't be considered a barometer for the U.S. Open, but admitted it was a welcome confidence boost.

"I don't think that this is an indicator that I'm going to do well in New York or anything like that to be honest," Gauff said, but added: "(I'm going in) knowing that I can figure out these matches (even if) I'm not playing my best, but also knowing that I can play

that great tennis that I felt I was playing this week.

"Hopefully I can use the experience here in New York."

Gauff polished off an impressive tournament with victory in 75 minutes and will head to New York riding a wave of confidence for the start of the U.S. Open next Sunday.

It's a far cry from an early exit in Cincinnati last year, which Gauff said left her "in the parking lot in tears" after she coughed up 16 double-faults in defeat.

"It's a big difference, what a year can make," added Gauff, who was so bothered by her service struggles this time last year that she hired a new coach days before the U.S. Open. "Last year I was just frustrated with my game, and I felt like I was declining," she said. "It's not something any player wants to feel. You always want to feel like you're getting better, at the worst, like just plateauing."

- 'Amazing momentum' -

This time around Gauff was rock-solid on serve and Pegula, coming off a hard-fought win over defending champion Iga Swiatek, had no answer for Gauff's

speed and aggression.

Gauff broke Pegula twice for a 4-0 lead and was up 5-0 before Pegula got on the scoreboard, holding serve and clawing back a break.

It was a brief reprieve as Gauff broke again to pocket the opening set after 34 minutes.

The second set was more of the same, Gauff breaking on the way to a 3-0 lead and Pegula playing catch-up. Gauff sealed victory on her first match point to conclude 12 days of tennis at the sprawling Midwest venue.

Gauff's win squared the career series between the two at five wins each. Gauff won her second match this season against Pegula after defeating her compatriot in a Wimbledon quarter-final.

Pegula was not displeased with her own performance heading into the final Grand Slam of the season. "I don't think I played bad but you played a very high level, it was not fun to play against," she told Gauff during the trophy ceremony.

"You have amazing momentum heading into the U.S. Open." □



People leave after a heavy hailstorm hit the finish area of the third stage of the Vuelta a Espana 2026, a 174 km race between Guisson and Font-Romeu on August 24, 2026.

Vuelta stage three abandoned in dangerous weather conditions

Font-Romeu, France

Stage three of the Vuelta a Espana was abandoned inside the final few kilometres because of a dangerous hailstorm on Monday.

Riders, including red jersey-wearing race leader Tadej Pogacar, pulled off the road to take shelter in a hotel amid the severe weather conditions in the Pyrenees. Mats Wenzel and Lorenzo Fortunato had been leading ahead of the peloton when the decision was made. Riders were reaching the top of the penultimate climb on the way to the Font Romeu finish line at the end of the 174-kilometre course from Guisson.

"It's been a good call from the riders and organization to step off the bike," said Visma-Lease A Bike sports director Maarten Wynants.

"It's the safest for everyone to cancel the race because the weather conditions were simply too dangerous to continue."

Conditions had been fine at the start, with six riders attacking early on, including Soudal Quick-Step's Ethan Hayter, who was pipped by Pogacar in the opening stage individual time-trial.

The breakaway extended their advantage to more than two-and-a-half minutes but the peloton gradually reeled the escapees back in, with Pogacar's UAE Team Emirates-XRG squad working hard to keep the gap under control.

Crosswinds split the peloton on the exposed roads, with general classification contender Felix Gall suffering, but the Austrian managed to recover.

With around 60km remaining, riders could see the dark clouds and rainy conditions awaiting them ahead, and which ultimately forced the stage to be abandoned.

Rain and then hail lashed down with around 25km remaining as UAE picked up the pace to close down three riders still out in front.

- Pogacar makes call -

Wenzel was soon the last man standing from the breakaway as he kept plugging away despite the inclement weather, and he was joined by Fortunato.

Some riders in the bunch pulled to the side of the road to take shelter from the hailstones, while Pogacar called for the peloton to turn off route and head into a nearby hotel.

Race organizers then confirmed the stage had been abandoned because of the weather. □

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Ingebrigtsen buoyed by fourth in Diamond League comeback

Chorzów, Poland

Jakob Ingebrigtsen's return to Diamond League action resulted in a fourth-placed finish in a loaded 1,500m, but the Norwegian was left satisfied with the result.

In his first appearance on the elite one-day track and field circuit in two years, Ingebrigtsen clocked 3min 33.19sec in a race in Silesia won by unheralded American Ethan Strand in 3:30.77. Ingebrigtsen had touched

down in Poland direct from Birmingham where he consolidated his place as the most successful male athlete in European history after winning the 5,000m for his seventh individual continental gold.

Ingebrigtsen is now unbeaten at the European championships since he won the 1,500/5,000m double at the 2018 champs in Berlin when he was just 17.

He repeated that double

at both the Munich championships in 2022 and Rome two years ago.

But Ingebrigtsen opted to only race the 5,000m in Birmingham, having not competed up until that point because of an Achilles tendon injury that required surgery.

That followed a disappointing world championships in Tokyo in 2025 when he was knocked out in the heats of



Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen competes in the men's 1500 m event of the Silesia Diamond League athletics meeting in Katowice, Poland, on August 23, 2026.

the 1,500m and could only finish 10th in the 5,000m his last competitive race before heading to Birmingham.

"I was forced to do more 5,000m specific training for the European championships," he said after the 1,500m in Silesia.

"So I have been preparing for the 1,500m for the last 10 days only. I felt a little rusty at the beginning, then a little better as the race went on."

Ingebrigtsen, with a remarkable 20 Diamond League victories under his belt between 2020-24, had surged to the front of the pack through the bell.

- Milestone in the journey -

But he was reeled in heading for the home straight, passed by American Cole Hocker, Kenya's Phnuel Kipkosgei Koech and Strand. "My rivals gave me a choice with 500-600 metres to go either stay in lane 2 or get to the front," Ingebrigtsen said.

"Of course I decided to take the lead! The race was a little messy, but in the end I was simply not strong enough to defend my position.

"I am focusing on the Diamond League race in Zur-

ich now. I believe with every day now I will be more ready to race over 1,500m, so give me four days and I should be stronger."

American winner Strand is a relative unknown on the European circuit, and all pre-race eyes had been on his compatriot and Olympic champion Hocker.

"Beating these great runners here is incredible," said Strand.

"But I ran it the hard way, I used too much energy running in outside lanes. It is still a lack of practice.

"I am so comfortable at the back of the races. I found myself right behind Jakob and the moment I saw him move, I knew it was time to go. I am proud of this race." Strand said racing meetings on the Diamond League were a "big milestone in my journey. This is a step in the right direction".

"This victory is a surprise for everyone, me included. The speed was there, but before I struggled with running the race pace," said the Alabama native in his first year as a professional athlete.

Strand broke the NCAA mile record last season, a year after also setting a record in the 3,000m. □



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