

The Pega-Pega



[credit Carel de Haseth]

Page 9

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

SUNDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

MONDAY:

ANDERSON BAHAMON
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

TUESDAY:

JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

WEDNESDAY:

MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

THURSDAY:

MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.

FRIDAY:

MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST
7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.

SATURDAY:

RICKY THOMAS
GUITAR
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.



Happy Hour
12-1 / 4-6 / 9-10

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Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei looks on as he takes part in a session on AI during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 23, 2025.

U.S. court sides with Pentagon in Anthropic AI ban

Washington, United States

A U.S. appeals court upheld on Friday the Pentagon's decision to exclude Anthropic from its supply chain, a decision taken when the AI startup refused to remove certain safeguards on its Claude model.

The conflict began in February when Anthropic refused Pentagon Secretary Pete Hegseth's demand to remove restrictions on the use of Claude for fully autonomous lethal weapons and mass domestic surveillance of Americans.

The supply chain risk designation, formally made in March, canceled Anthropic's military contracts and barred other Pentagon contractors from using its technology.

The military had been using Claude across a range of classified and sensitive systems. According to the decision, an Anthropic executive had questioned the use of Claude by a Pentagon contractor, Palantir, during the military operation that captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on January 3.

This objection "led to alarm" and "raised material doubts as to whether they would cause their software to stop working or cause some other disastrous action that would put

our warfighters['] lives in danger," according to Under Secretary of Defense Emil Michael, as quoted in the opinion.

Anthropic insists it cannot modify its models once delivered to the military. But the company determines the behavior of each new version, and the military must keep up to date on the latest offerings, the Washington appeals court found.

In his opinion Judge Gregory Katsas, writing for two of the three appellate judges, said "in our Republic, it is the President and the Secretary of War who must determine how best to balance" risks.

- 'Hammer of justice' -

The designation against Anthropic marked a highly unusual application of the authority against a US company.

The Pentagon immediately turned to its competitors. Its major rival OpenAI, creator of ChatGPT, signed an agreement on the same day as Anthropic's ban, while xAI, Elon Musk's company that develops Grok, signed in February and Google and Microsoft a few months later.

Anthropic has since become a pariah at the White House, even as it plays a major role in the highly cru-

cial AI sector and, valued at nearly one trillion dollars, heads for a blockbuster IPO expected in weeks.

The White House has also bristled at Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei's repeated warnings about the dangers of AI with US President Donald Trump calling them a hoax.

Michael celebrated the ruling on X, writing: "The hammer of justice has smashed Anthropic arguments."

"Warfighters will sleep better knowing that no private company will insert their opinions in the chain of command."

The appeals court decision conflicted with a separate federal court decision in California that found last month that a broader ban imposed by the Trump administration against Anthropic was illegal.

The Pentagon decision upheld on Friday was based on public procurement regulations and now remains in effect.

"We respectfully disagree with the court's decision. Another federal court has already held the government's parallel designation unlawful. We remain confident in our position and are considering all options, including further review," an Anthropic spokesperson said in a statement to U.S. media. □



Voters check in on the second day of early voting ahead of the midterm elections, at a polling place at DuPage Event Center and Fairgrounds in Wheaton, Illinois, on September 25, 2026.

Top court grants Trump bid to use federal database to verify voter rolls

Washington, United States

The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday granted a Trump administration request to allow the use of a federal database to weed out potential non-citizens from the voter rolls.

A majority of the nine justices on the top court joined the unsigned opinion, providing a victory to President Donald Trump ahead of the November mid-term elections. The three liberal justices on the conservative-dominated court dissented.

Trump has baselessly claimed for years that many non-citizens vote in US elections and that mail-in ballots are vulnerable to fraud.

Friday's Supreme Court decision lifted a lower court order that had blocked the use of a Department of Homeland Security program known as Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) to verify the citizenship of individuals on the voter rolls.

SAVE is used to identify citizenship status to determine whether someone is eligible for benefits.

Ruling against the Trump administration in June, the lower court said, "States have partnered with the federal government to access the database and are actively removing United States citizens from voter rolls based on inaccurate information."

"All in all, the federal government has knowingly trampled on the privacy rights of American citizens in a manner that threatens the sacred right to vote," the court said.

In its ruling, the Supreme Court said the federal government "has an obligation to respond to requests from state and local election officials seeking to verify the citizenship of voters."

The lower court order blocking the use of SAVE "prevents the Federal Government from using the program it believes is best suited to the task."

Attorney General Todd Blanche welcomed the Supreme Court ruling as a "huge victory for election integrity," saying it will "allow states to clear the voter rolls of illegal voters."

Election experts, however, said the ruling is unlikely to have a major impact on the November elections because most U.S. states ban purges of voters 90 days ahead of an election. "Both the majority and dissent agree that this case is likely to have limited impact on the midterms," Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, said in a blog post. "Compared to the recent mail-in voting case, this one is not very important substantively." □

Trump hails their 'great friendship'. Does Xi feel the same?

Washington, United States

As President Donald Trump showed off everything from his new helipad to a portrait mocking his predecessor, it was clear he wanted to look like best friends with Xi Jinping.

The question is whether China's leader feels the same way.

Trump launched a major charm offensive during Xi's state visit to the White House, repeatedly touching the Chinese leader on the arm and hailing their "truly great friendship."

At times, Xi seemed to play along.

"Trump, and then Trump and this is the autopen," Trump said as he showed Xi the presidential portraits in the White House Colonnade, where former president Joe Biden's photo was replaced with an image of an automated signing device.

As Xi laughed, Trump patted the Chinese leader on the arm to emphasize the point, according to a video posted by a Trump aide. In another video, Trump points to a photo on the wall of the West Wing show-



U.S. President Donald Trump stands with China's President Xi Jinping as they arrive to visit the National Archives in Washington, DC on September 25, 2026.

ing a previous meeting with Xi.

"Who is that? I don't recognize him!" Trump joked, again patting Xi's arm, before adding: "We have a lot of respect for you."

- 'He likes granite' -

A day earlier Trump had set the tone when he personally went to greet Xi at the airport the first time a U.S. president has ever done so

for a Chinese leader, and a courtesy that Xi did not afford him for his Beijing state visit in May.

On Thursday, Trump's bid to consummate their bromance climaxed when he took Xi to see the giant landing pad he's built on the South Lawn of the White House.

For the piece de resistance, Trump even took him inside the US presidential helicop-

ter, Marine One, for a tour of one of the most sensitive aircraft in the world.

Afterwards the pair ignored questions from reporters about issues from Iran to Taiwan and AI. Trump talked about stone instead.

"He likes granite," Trump said, pointing to Xi. "He's an expert on stone, aside from many other things, and he loves good granite."

Xi who had sat stone-

faced through much of the formal pageantry earlier in the day briefly chuckled.

Such was Trump's fervor that he even praised Chinese reporters in the Oval Office for being the friendliest press corps days after he banned three US media outlets from the White House.

- 'Personal chemistry' -

Trump has a long history of reaching out to authoritarian leaders -- and expressing admiration for their power.

But he has seemed particularly keen to foster a friendship with Xi since his return to the White House.

It's a remarkable turnaround for a leader who spent much of his first term raging against China over trade and the Covid pandemic.

Ryan Hass who served as former president Barack Obama's top China advisor and is now an expert at the Brookings Institution said it was "striking" that an already limited schedule had been further trimmed to allow a helipad tour. □

Millions in U.S. Northeast brace for powerful storm

New York, United States

More than 40 million people in the northeastern United States braced Friday

for heavy rain and strong winds as an unusually powerful storm for the season

was forecast to crash into the region.

New York, Boston and Philadelphia were all in the firing line of the "Nor'easter" so labeled for its northeasterly winds as authorities warned of potential flooding, downed trees and damaged power lines.

British pop singer Ed Sheeran's weekend concerts near Boston were canceled due to the looming storm, which could whip up gusts of over 60 mph (100 kmh) along the east coast.

Several outdoor festivals, including Global Citizen Festival in New York and Oceans Calling in Maryland, were also axed over safety concerns.

The Federal Aviation Administration advised airplane passengers to check its website for travel updates, telling AFP there is

"always a chance for restrictions depending on the weather."

Three major airlines Jet-Blue, United and American issued travel alerts allowing passengers to change their flights without incurring fees.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani told New York residents to "look out for your neighbors" after updated forecasts showed the storm shifting closer to the city than first predicted.

"If you're traveling this weekend, give yourself extra time. Check your train, ferry, or flight before you leave, and avoid low-lying coastal roads around high tide," Mamdani said on X. The United Nations, where world leaders gathered this week for the General Assembly, urged media outlets covering the event to clear broadcasting equipment from outside the New

York headquarters due to strong winds.

Meanwhile, up to 13 centimeters (about 5 inches) of rain was forecast in areas of Massachusetts including Boston the equivalent of more than a month's worth of rainfall.

"Strong Nor'easter off the mid-Atlantic and northeast will bring coastal flooding, rip currents, strong wind gusts, and heavy rain to the region this weekend," the National Weather Service said on its website.

Some coastal areas of North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey have already seen flooding this week.

Nor'easters can occur throughout the year but are more frequent between fall and early spring. They are almost always accompanied by heavy rain or snowfall, as well as strong wind gusts. □



This handout satellite image obtained from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and their Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES) shows a storm system over the Atlantic Ocean along the East Coast of the United States and Canada on September 25, 2026, at 13:26 UTC.

China's robot dancers limber up for America's Got Talent final

Beijing, China

Chinese street dancer Wu Yufei has spent most of his 13-year career performing solo, but this year, he found some new partners -- a crew of robots with sleek moves.

The 27-year-old Sichuan native, together with his fellow robot performers, has made it to the final of "America's Got Talent" (AGT), a stage he had been hoping to reach for years.

A longstanding science-fiction fan, Wu told AFP from Pasadena, California, that dancing with robots in the group Homies gave him a "very magical feeling".

After months of training with them, his robot dancers now feel like more than just "cold, lifeless machines", he said.

"It almost feels as if there's a kind of team spirit there," Wu told AFP, as he and the dance crew of humanoids made by Chinese robotics group Unitree prepared for the AGT final this week.

Robot dancing has become a huge craze in China after Unitree robots performed in a breakout performance at China's annual Spring Festival gala



Chinese street dancer Wu Yufei performs alongside Unitree Robotics humanoid robots during a demonstration in Pasadena, California, on September 17, 2026, ahead of their performance in the Season 21 finals of "America's Got Talent" on September 22.

performance, the country's most-watched television extravaganza.

Businesses and event planners across the country have since rushed to hire robots to perform and attract visitors.

Training robots to dance involves capturing intricate human movements, running computer simulations, and then transferring results to the robots, said industry insiders.

For Fang Zhenghua, the

art director behind Wu and Unitree's AGT performances, training a robot to dance resembles "creating a soul".

"The impact of AI on dance performances, or the impact of robots on dancing I was quite against it all at the beginning," he told AFP from Shanghai.

But over time, working with the skilled engineers who he describes as the "mothers" of the robots changed his perspective.

- Scripted choreography -

Training robots requires input from human dancers and relies heavily on engineers to troubleshoot problems, particularly in real-time during performances. "It takes a lot of fine-tuning," Liu Zhiquan, commercialisation lead at robotics motion-capture firm BridgeDP, told AFP.

A 30-second dance routine could take days, sometimes weeks, to perfect,

he added, and performers need to be willing to compromise.

"If the dancers are not tech-savvy, there will be a lot of re-takes," he said.

Wegers Wei, from Shanghai-based dance studio Limit Crew, said that when he designs routines for robots, he avoids movements that he knows will be difficult for them.

"If we find that some routines don't look good for robots or if they look like the robots are making mistakes, we would change them," said Wei, whose robots won first and second places for street dance at this year's World Humanoid Robot Games.

Robots are good at rotating moves, or what street dancers call power moves, Wei said, as it is "just a matter of adjusting the motor power and the torque of the arms".

However, routines that require body flexibility are extremely difficult for robots, he said.

Another blind spot is musicality.

Robot dancing is mostly scripted playback.

Unlike humans, the machines cannot improvise or "make on-the-spot adjustments" if the music changes suddenly, Wu Yufei added.

- Beyond entertainment -

While the general public in China mostly sees robot dancing as entertainment, industry insiders see it as a chance to show off robotic designs, capabilities and reliability.

"That's why everyone is keen to perform these kinds of high-skill dances," said Guo Renjie, founder and CEO of robotics engineering company Zeroth. A recent Morgan Stanley report forecast that China's humanoid robotics market could reach \$2 billion in value this year.

Accounting for more than 97 percent of humanoid robot shipments in the first half of 2026 globally, the Chinese industry also faces increasing scrutiny from investors and policymakers. □

California celebrates Dolly Parton day on 9/25

Los Angeles, United States

California celebrated its inaugural Dolly Parton Day on Friday 9/25 a date that recalls one of the late country icon's most beloved hits.

Parton died last month at the age of 80, plunging her fans into mourning for a singer-songwriter, philan-

thropist and businesswoman whom many saw as a unifying figure in a divided America.

This week, California Governor Gavin Newsom said he was establishing the day to encourage citizens to take inspiration from the "9 to 5" singer, who starred in the film of the same

name with Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin.

The song has become a workplace anthem.

"We could all afford to live a little more like Dolly. Be kind, be humble, and have some fun...Be a diamond in a rhinestone world," Newsom said.

"With this bill, we are not just establishing a day to celebrate Dolly Parton, we are creating an annual reminder to us, every year, to live the way she did -- joyfully, graciously, and with a whole lot of heart."

Events around the Golden State were to include musical performances and giveaways in downtown Los Angeles.

At sunset, Santa Monica was to light up its 90-foot (30 meter) -tall Pacific Wheel on the pier in pink,

with "DOLLY" and "WE WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU!" displayed along with pink hearts, stars and spiral animations.

Los Angeles County Library was planning to hold a series of activities in honor of a woman whose literacy drive brought books to millions of underprivileged children.

Parton rose from grinding poverty to become a rhinestone-studded legend with hits like "Jolene" and "I Will Always Love You."

She also starred in multiple films and donated millions of dollars to charities as she built a vast business empire that includes her popular Dollywood theme park in Tennessee, cosmetics, pet apparel, baking mixes and even a truck stop. □



American singer, songwriter, actress, businesswoman, and philanthropist Dolly Parton arrives at the 2019 MusiCares Person Of The Year Honoring Dolly Parton held at the Los Angeles Convention Center on February 8, 2019 in Los Angeles, California, United States.



General view from the Soul viewpoint in Santo Antonio, in Príncipe Island in São Tomé and Príncipe, on July 31, 2026.

Cash for nature protection: hotelier's offer to Príncipe islanders

Santo Antonio, Sao Tome and Principe

On the paradise island of Principe, a lush jungle haven in the turquoise waters of the Gulf of Guinea, a South African multimillionaire is offering locals a financial dividend to preserve the natural beauty on which his luxury tourism business depends.

The initiative is the brainchild of tech entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth, who for over a decade has been promoting a model of exclusive ecotourism aimed at an ultra-wealthy foreign clientele.

The dividend scheme, which Shuttleworth's charitable organisation pays out individually to locals, aims to encourage them to preserve their natural environment -- a mountainous volcanic island, bordered by pristine beaches and whose tropical forest is home to a wealth of endemic species.

In return for agreeing in writing not to engage in environmentally damaging activities like sand extraction or unregulated logging, adults can receive up to 6,250 dobras (\$290) per quarter the equivalent of around \$3.20 a day.

It represents a bonus in a tiny country where 45 per cent of the population lives on less than \$3.60 a day, according to the latest World Bank data from 2017.

But some critics say the initiative is a missed opportunity to work with the government to address the island's economic and social needs.

"I've just received the first quarterly payment. At 900 dobras it's definitely not a salary but it'll help," grinned 23-year-old technician Ermelindo Mendes, talking to AFP from his village of Monte Alegre in the lush hills.

The whole of Principe, part of the archipelago of Sao Tome and Principe, is an internationally recognised UNESCO biosphere reserve.

Staying in one of Shuttleworth's four hotels on the archipelago can cost up to \$1,700 a night.

The hotelier promises his guests most of whom are European a luxury experience discovering a "hidden west African paradise".

- Nature's guardians -

His business model depends on preserving Principe's pristine natural envi-

ronment.

So in February, to enlist the support of the island's 10,000 inhabitants, Shuttleworth began offering them a small nature dividend via his charitable organisation, the Faya Foundation.

The locals are "nature's principal guardians. We need them on our side", said Vik Michau, a sociologist with the Foundation.

None have yet earned the maximum dividend of \$290 per quarter.

"Data monitoring shows the natural environment isn't in an optimal state yet," Michau said.

To earn more, locals need to reforest the island and make what she described as "better choices regarding the natural environment".

Every year, 15,000 tourists visit the 140-square-kilometre (54-square-mile) island.

Many book the luxury package offered by Shuttleworth's HBD (Here Be Dragons) group. "Most visitors are looking for nature, tranquillity and peace everything the region has to offer," said Wander Dias de Sousa Pires, the head of the Principe tourist board. □



IAEA Deputy Director General Najat Mokhtar, FAO Deputy Director-General Godfrey Magwenzi, Liberia's Minister of Agriculture J. Alexander Nuetah, Turkish Permanent Representative to the UN Office in Vienna, Ambassador Mustafa Kibaroglu, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Raja Ali Raza Anwar, attend the 'Atoms4Food: Shaping Country-Led Roadmaps for Food and Nutrition Security' panel during the 70th IAEA General Conference in Vienna, Austria, on September 17, 2026.

World ignoring UN request for El Nino disaster fund: FAO

Nairobi, Kenya

The UN has received just one-fifth of the \$202 million requested to prepare for food crises caused by El Nino in 22 high-risk countries, a top official told AFP on Friday. The natural El Nino warming phenomenon, due to peak between October and December, is on course to be the strongest on record, amplifying the effects of human-induced climate change.

The expected droughts and flooding are likely to hit hardest in many countries already struggling with severe food insecurity.

More than half of the 22 highest-risk countries are in Africa, but others are spread across Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The United Nations said this week that millions of people in Somalia alone already face high levels of hunger, with acute malnutrition among children set to worsen as El Nino hits.

The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) requested \$202 million in June to support nearly nine million people in these countries.

But they have received only around \$40 million, Rein Paulsen, director of emergencies and resilience at the FAO, told AFP in Nairobi.

"We have early warnings. We understand what's required... (but) funding is a very real challenge that's limiting our ability to do what we know can mitigate and minimise the impact of either flooding or droughts," he said.

It was all the more regrettable, he said, since the sum is low by international standards.

"It avoids the need for a much more expensive humanitarian response if the full disaster impacts unfold," he added.

Scientific projections on Wednesday forecast that the current El Nino event could lead to an additional 451,000 deaths worldwide by February as temperatures soar.

"Africa, without a doubt, will be hit hard by this El Nino phenomenon," Paulsen said, as it will worsen already catastrophic situations in several African countries caused by conflict, displacement and high levels of malnutrition. □

Swedes spend night in bunker to prepare for air raids

Grums, Sweden

In a concrete bunker in western Sweden, almost 40 people take turns to turn a green crank to secure their oxygen supply in a simulation of a night spent in an air raid shelter.

Sweden has been stepping up battle readiness after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and this week the municipality of Grums organized the country's first overnight air-raid shelter exercise.

Thirty-seven Swedes including a firefighter, a pensioner and a secretary showed up outside the Grums nursing home carrying sleeping bags on Thursday evening. Some were anxious before entering the underground shelter.

"Will the armored door be completely closed?", "How will the oxygen level be measured?" were some of the questions they asked, and project manager Therese Rosenblad patiently replied their queries.

The aim of the exercise is to observe the participants' behavior underground and draw lessons to make a stay in the enclosed shelter "more comfortable," should the need arise.



People are seen in a civil defense shelter in Grums, Sweden during an overnight exercise on September 25, 2026.

"We want to know how people react if you keep 40 people here, what is the temperature like, what is the CO2 level," Rosenblad told AFP.

She said the war in Ukraine "has absolutely made Sweden more aware of what could happen," and "really increased our willingness to get prepared."

- 'Unsecure future' -

The organizer divides the volunteers into 10 groups, which head for the bunker where a group meets their first challenge: getting a man in a wheelchair down a very steep grey staircase.

The man in his fifties is taken out of his chair, then strapped onto an orange stretcher that two men

carefully carry down.

Grums has deliberately chosen varied profiles to test the difficulties that could arise in the event of an actual crisis.

That prompted secretary, and new mother, Kally Frojd to volunteer.

"You know something like this can happen," she told AFP holding her six-month-old son Knut in

her arms, adding that it's important to know how "to take care of a child in this kind of area."

"We have an unsecure future," the 29-year-old said as she finished inflating her mattress, noting that Russia is a "big threat right now". Patrik Jordansson, a carpenter in his fifties, was also "concerned about all the problems in Europe and Ukraine".

That prompted him to join Sweden's Home Guard, even though he thinks the prospect of war in Sweden is "not so probable".

"Maybe they can drop bombs in Stockholm, or disturb the infrastructure, the electricity," he said.

- Fainting -

Once they are settled in, the participants form a circle and introduce themselves one by one to break the ice.

Then one of them suddenly fainted. The air in the shelter, built nearly 60 years ago, is heavy.

Throughout the night, volunteers took turns to turn a green crank to pump oxygen into the space, where a trash can serves as an improvised toilet. □

Hopping mad: New health warning stirs up Belgian brewers

Brussels, Belgium

In a country famed worldwide for its beer, a proposed tweak to health warnings on adverts for alcoholic drinks has shaken Belgian brewers.

The change stirring up their discontent comes down

to cutting just one crucial word. The government wants to alter the current warning from "the abuse of alcohol is harmful to your health" to "alcohol is harmful for your health".

For Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke, the

move announced in spring which is still being debated in parliament is justified by the need to better protect minors and inform adults over the risks of drinking.

"Alcohol is harmful. Everyone is free to decide how much they drink, but as public authorities, we want to provide young people and adults with accurate information," he said in a statement to AFP.

"That is the aim of this new warning."

But brewers have railed against a push they say threatens to stigmatise a key sector of Belgium's economy.

Leading the charge has been AB InBev, the world's biggest beer-maker, which produces local classics such as Stella Artois, Leffe and Hoegaarden.

Together with other indus-

try players it has launched a campaign to sway public opinion in the Belgian press.

In August, the group took out a full-page ad in local newspapers showing a smiling couple sharing a beer.

"What's wrong with these moments?" read the strapline.

An accompanying text took direct aim at the new warning, slamming it for not distinguishing between alcohol abuse and "responsible" drinking.

"Belgium has chosen to take aim at its own traditions, which are a source of national pride," it said.

- 'Paternalistic' -

The man behind the industry pushback is Krishan Maudgal, the boss of the Belgian Brewers associa-

tion representing about 130 producers.

Speaking to AFP, he decried the government's "paternalistic" approach, saying that Belgians were able to moderate their consumption without government interference.

"Market trends show this," he said. "Over the last 25 to 30 years, beer consumption in Belgium has fallen by almost 40 percent."

But for some health experts in the country, the government's latest move doesn't go far enough.

Belgium's Superior Health Council, which gives independent advice to the authorities, has been calling for years for a total ban on alcohol advertising.

It also wants to see health warnings on bottles and cans, accusing the government of being too timid. □



This photograph taken on October 7, 2020, shows beers and a EPT (Electronic Payment Terminal) on the eve of the mandatory closure of bars in Brussels, to stop the spread of Covid-19.

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today loves to share parts of the Aruban culture with our readers, diving into (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this article, we'll look at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is 'placa'. Cents are called 'cen' (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called 'Dos Placa'; 10-cent coins were called



'Debchi'; 25-cent coins were called 'Diez Placa' and the 50-cent coin was once called 'Yotin' (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of

paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Tortuga blanco

(white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Can-greu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawaraboth local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

The word "florin" is supposedly named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies. □

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba (BNA).



Weekly Free Slot or Table Play for all qualified Club members.

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(Oranjestad)—Yesterday, the Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF) announced that it had released two Aruban cottontails of the species *Sylvilagus floridanus nigro-nuchalis* back into the wild back in 2025. The release followed the rescue operation of these rabbits after they were discovered on private property.

The announcement was made on the foundation's

ACF shares how they released two Aruban Cottontails after rescue mission in 2025

social media platforms in connection with World Rabbit Day. ACF explained that last year a resident discovered the two rabbits while clearing vegetation on his property. He immediately stopped his work and contacted ACF, which took the two younglings into its care with the help of a volunteer.

For two months, the volunteer took on the important responsibility of raising the two rabbits. After this period, ACF determined that they were ready to return to the wild.

In its post, Roger Solagnier, Biodiversity Conservation

Ranger at ACF, explained that the release was highly successful. Before releasing the two animals, the team checked the area for boas to ensure that they would not pose a risk to the rabbits. Coincidentally, one boa was found, but it was immediately dealt with and the release site was cleared.

When the cage was opened to allow the rabbits to leave freely, the team noticed that while one was active and immediately hopped out, the other was somewhat more hesitant and took a little longer to emerge. According to Solagnier, this is nor-

mal, as every animal takes its own time to adjust to a new environment.

The ranger went on to explain that after the release, food and water were initially placed in the area so the rabbits would have a backup food source, consisting of hay and familiar herbs, while they readjusted to life in the wild.

ACF is currently no longer monitoring the two rabbits directly, but told Bon Dia Aruba that several rabbits can be seen enjoying their natural habitat in Arikok National Park.

As a spokesperson for the

foundation explained, sunrise and sunset are the times when rabbits and rattlesnakes are most active in Arikok. In the past, there have been several cases in which these animals became victims of road kill. However, since ACF began enforcing the park's operating hours more strictly, a decline in such incidents has been observed.

At the same time, the spokesperson emphasized that the rabbit population remains small and that further research is needed to gain a clearer understanding of how many Aruban cottontails are currently living on the island. □

Rock stacking and its harmful effects

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

As known, "rock stacking" is not illegal in Aruba, but its impact on nature is harmful as the stones form part of the natural habitat of small animal species living in Aruba's wilderness. Experts warn that "rock stacking" could even lead certain species to extinction.

In Aruba, much of the "rock stacking" also occurs near Arikok National Park. Although this activity is not illegal in Aruba, it may be time for park authorities to impose stricter regulations on this activity.

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

Aruba Birdlife Conservation's post not only raises alarms about the activity but also now that this phenomenon has reached Baby Beach, some of the stacked stone towers are up to 1.7 meters high, which can be very dangerous, especially for children. □



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The Pega-Pega

ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit.

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. The Pega-Pega, for instance, is an exception.



Turnip-tailed gecko

The turnip-tailed gecko is known locally as the Pega-Pega, meaning sticky-sticky, due to the way it sticks to walls using the suction in its little fingers. They are found inside houses, and are mostly a nocturnal animal.

According to Etnia Nativa, the local Pega Pega is immediately recognizable by its large size, with a body length of up to 12 cm, and its large, swollen tail, approximately the same length or slightly shorter

than its body; females are larger and more robust than males. It has short, robust legs with flattened toes and extensive basal webbing. The undersides of its toes are covered in lamellae, which are used as friction pads to cling to smooth vertical surfaces. Some can even walk around completely upside down. Its toes are covered with ridges, which are peppered with millions of microscopic bristle-like structures called setae that attach and detach when the animal wills them to, and they never get gunked up.

They are variable in coloration, from a mottled dark gray to orange-brown, and are capable of changing color depending on their mood and surround-

ings. Mottled and banded markings aid in camouflage against tree bark. They are harmless and fragile; you can hold one in your hands as long as you are VERY gentle.

Never put pressure on its tail because it will surely drop as a measure to try to distract the predator, and they are different from other lizards because they're long-lived, talkative, lack eyelids, and their small scales are situated next to each other like cobblestones rather than overlapping as is the case in most other lizards.

Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which

makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4-5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

The Pega-pegas Phyllodactylus Julieni is also a protected species in Aruba, by law. It is illegal to kill them! □

Images: Image from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.

How to plan the most relaxing vacation on Aruba because sometimes we all just need a minute...

(Oranjestad)—Taking a trip to a Caribbean island can be very exciting, especially if it's a completely different environment to what you're used to. While Aruba is known to have many attractions to fill up your itinerary, the island is also a great vacation destination to just sit back and disconnect from everyday life. Here's how to plan the perfect "chillcation" on Aruba.

Step 1: Commit to unplugging

We live in a highly digital world where everyone has a smart phone. We are constantly engaged with the online world through text messages, emails and

social media content. It can be addicting for some, which is why the first step to taking the most relaxing vacation is a commitment to unplugging from the online world. We recommend you set an auto-reply for emails and phone calls, as well as silencing non-urgent group-chat conversations and social media notifications. In Aruba you should be kicking your feet up with a cold, refreshing drink in hand not your work laptop!

Step 2: Choose a quieter resort

These are usually the smaller ones like Aruba Beach Club. Some hotels even offer an all-inclusive experience so

you don't have to worry about cooking. But if you want a taste of authentic Aruban cuisine, of course there are many spots you can go to get a hearty stew, fresh fried fish and funchi (polenta) just ask a local! While Aruba remains a family-friendly destination, there are some hotels exclusive for adults. For singles and couples, 'adults-only' resorts like Bucuti & Tara could be a better option for a quieter vacation.

Step 3: Plan an itinerary with relaxation as top priority

Of course while you're here, you're not going to want to miss out on what Aruba has to offer the sites, the trips,

the activities. So, do some research before hand and plan your itinerary with some of the things you REALLY want to experience. At the same time, leave a couple days empty; this is where you'll be taking your sweet time just enjoying your vacation. Sleep in, have a long breakfast by the beach or have a refreshing dip in the ocean just kick back, relax and enjoy the moment! You could also try going to some spa centers, like the Purun Spa in Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, the eforea spa at Hilton Aruba Caribbean Resort and Casino, The Spa at Tierra del Sol or A Taste of Heaven at the Costa Linda Beach resort!

Step 4: Take a breath

While you're taking it easy, take a moment to reflect on yourself too. Life gets busy sometimes and we all lose track once in a while, but it's important to always come back to you! And sometimes this means getting away for a few days from your every day work and obligations. With that cool drink in hand and your feet in the sand, remember how beautiful life is and how lucky we all are to have people in our lives to share our most special moments with.

For us, we could only hope that Aruba is a part of those special moments too! □



The Aruban way of life: Creating community with Cas di Torto

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban people understand that a happy life is spent in great ambience with your loved ones. Passed down from one generation to the other, building community has been a key aspect in forging our traditions and customs. The Cas di Torto (mud house) played a big role in cultivating community, bridging families together and forming close bonds with your neighbors something we highly value today.

Cas di Torto: History and construction

The origin of the Cas di Torto is said to date back to the early 19th century in the Paraguana Peninsula in Venezuela. Refugees who sought sanctuary on Aruba introduced this building method to the island.

The uprights of the walls were made with sturdy and straight wayaca or kwihi wood, or from thin mangrove struts. Then, the wattle walls were weaved in using branches and twigs from the warero and sisal plant, daubed with a mix-



ture of grass and mud. Finally, the walls got a coat of white plaster to seal everything in.

For roofing, corn stalks, palm fronds and straws were used, allowing air to flow freely through the house. This method of roofing was known throughout the ABC islands (Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire), but the use of cornstalks in Aruba eventually got replaced with use of mud and white plas-

ter for the roofs. The white plaster all around made the houses look like cake, hence the name "Torto" (Spanish for "cake").

Building community

Building Torto houses was often a community effort. Young couples who were about to get married had to have their house built before they could tie the knot and start their own family. This is where the help of the community comes into

play.

Neighbors, extended family and friends would all help in the construction of a Torto House. And everyone had a role: The men oversaw the building of the house, and the women were tasked with collecting wood and straws, cooking and taking care of the little ones.

The couple's family were primarily responsible for

feeding everyone who helped build the house. Before construction, someone usually had the task to prepare the meal; going fishing or slaughter farm animals like goats, chicken or sheep. Even the older kids had their tasks; the older children of the family usually helped with collecting water and mixing the mud.

The average duration of constructing a Cas di Torto was 4 months.

At the end of a long day of work, everyone would gather around and enjoy a feast of hearty food. This type of help from friends and family became a tradition and was called "paga lomba": You help me today; I'll help you tomorrow.

Nowadays, traditional Cas di Torto are rare, especially those that are still inhabited. Houses that do exist probably date back more than a century. □

Picture credits: Aruba National Library (BNA) and the Monumentbureau archive on Coleccion.aw

Place names in San Nicolas and their origins

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

Sero Colorado

On your way to Baby or Roger's Beach, you'll pass by the famous Red Anchor at what was once the entrance to the Colony residential community and be greeted with red soiled hills by the coast. This is Sero Colorado. Named after the 30-meter, deep red, limestone hill, "Sero

Colorado" translates to "Colored Hill". Sero Colorado has deep historical ties with the once-thriving phosphate industry in the area. Matter of fact, there are still underground shafts and passages deep in Sero Colorado from the time of phosphate mining. In 1958, the refinery at the time, Lago, adopted this name for the residential section of its employees.

Vader Piet

Another well visited area,

Vader Piet is located in the Arikok National Park. Recognizable sites within this area include the Wind Mills and the Quadirikiri Cave. The origin of this name is part historical and speculation, as there are slight deviations from what actually happened.

In 1829, Pieter Lampe was a planter and the person responsible for governing this remote area. As the story goes, Pieter was well known and beloved for his kindness and good

treatment of his employees, and was therefore also called Vader Piet (Father Piet). However, he was tragically murdered—some speculate at the hands of a slave. For his work and good heart, the area was named after him.

San Nicolas

Of course we can't forget San Nicolas itself. Much like Vader Piet, the origin of the name San Nicolas has so far two different accounts. In the literal sense,

"San Nicolas" translates to "Saint Nicolas", leading many to believe that this district was named after a Spanish saint. Though one account does support this with the theory that the district was named after the saint by Spanish colonizers, the other account is much less divine, but does refer to an influential figure in the area.

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

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



The stories of “Compa Nanzi”

(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curacao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a medium for relief during the harsh treatment to which they were subjected to.

It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king

One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast

asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked back for a moment then walk right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold.

“Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by? “Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed,

there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder.

The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said. “Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick second.” The herder opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi.

Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again. “Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”

“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what; there are so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king.

“What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!” The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be



placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's thrown and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belong-

ings, and lived the rest of his life as king. □

Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

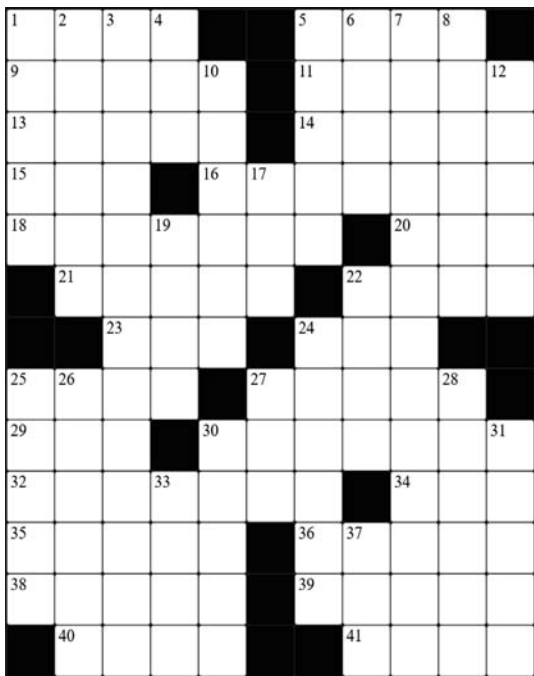
1. Baylor setting
5. Fighting females
9. Clickable pix
11. Honolulu hello
13. Hunker down
14. Where Joan of Arc was tried
15. Groan inducer
16. Turned red, perhaps
18. Tot watchers
20. Due follower
21. Car quartet
22. Snake sound
23. Pay stub line
24. Frank holder
25. Sty group
27. Small dents
29. Crunch targets
30. Humiliating failures
32. Puts back on the payroll
34. Wish undone
35. Dancer
36. Skip the ceremony
38. Long attack
39. Conclude successfully
40. Mimics
41. African serpents

DOWN

1. Bits of smoke
2. Find not guilty
3. Sleep aid, of a sort
4. Words before tear or dare
5. Becomes twisted
6. Soothing stuff
7. "Mr. Jones" band
8. Translucent curtains
10. Block border
12. Llama's land
17. Form 1040 org.
19. "-- bien!"
22. Attila's men
24. Judicial
25. Louvre location
26. European peninsula
27. Conk out
28. Enhance, as an engine
30. Lets loose
31. Oozes
33. "Picnic" playwright
37. Pasture



Yesterday's answer



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for 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.

9-25

CRYPTOQUOTE

D W N H B G Y F F Z I Q F F , C Y
E Q D N Y H D G N D W Q F F , Q H O
D P M D Z I N H O D W Y L Z Z O N H
Q F F . --- X K W Q X X Q O Q F N

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: IMAGINATION
ALLOWS YOU TO BEND THE RULES OF THE
TEMPORAL WORLD. --- AMY SHERALD

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 Tele-



graph, 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.

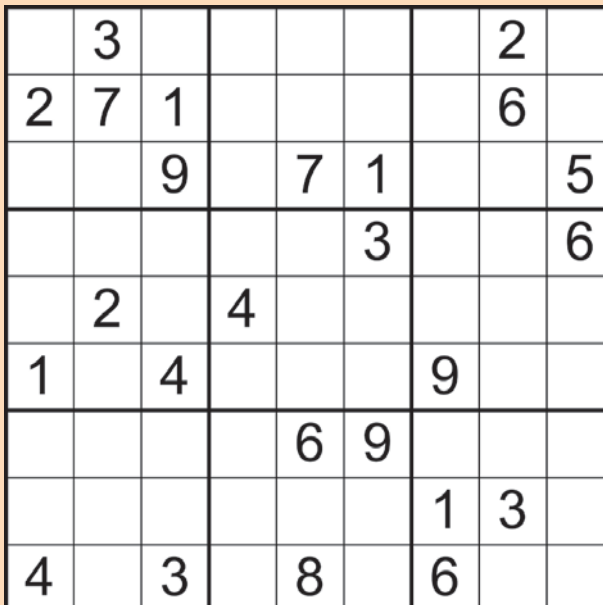
CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

15 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CELEBRITY REFLECTION Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
16 WED	FREEDOM OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: C
22 TUE	CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
23 WED	CARNIVAL GLORY Arrival: 13:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
27 SUN	FREEDOM OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
29 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CELEBRITY REFLECTION Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: 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



Difficulty: ★★★★★

9/26

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★★★

9/25

U.S. study tests psilocybin to fight cancer side effects

Washington, United States

Here's a novel idea for countering the painful side effects of chemotherapy: beforehand, take the hallucinogenic drug found in magic mushrooms.

The study published Thursday in the journal Science involved tests on rats and certain human tissues as researchers looked at using psilocybin to fight a condition called peripheral neuropathy, which affects millions of people around the world.

It is a nerve ailment that hits about three quarters of all people who undergo chemo and commonly causes numbness and tingling, Patrick Dougherty, a co-author of the study, said in a call with reporters. But a third of that group will develop non-stop, burning pain, said Dougherty, a pain treatment specialist at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. The symptoms can lead to trouble walking and other debilitating complications that can last after a person finishes chemotherapy, and even remain with them for life.

And it is not just a quality-of-life issue. This complication also affects a cancer patient's chances of survival because sometimes the side effects are so bad they force doctors to cut back on chemo or stop it altogether.

- Protecting nerves -

It was almost by accident that these researchers found that psilocybin can help cancer patients.

The team was initially studying how the disease manages to hijack nerve cells in order to grow.

And the researchers were surprised to see the mushroom ingredient -- it was being used to study a brain pathway regeneration concept called neuroplasticity -- actually prevented the emergence of peripheral neuropathy.

Later experiments highlighted psilocybin's role in protecting nerve cells and stimulating inside them the transport of mitochondria, often referred to as a cell's powerhouse.



Psilocybin. Also known as magic mushrooms, shrooms. A natural hallucinogen found in certain mushrooms, altering perception and mood.

This is key because chemo destroys the microscopic railroads that allow mitochondria to send energy all the way to the tips of people's hands and feet, killing off nerve endings there.

Psilocybin also seems to act on the brain, preserving electrical activity that chemotherapy thwarts. In rodents, taking two doses of psilocybin before chemo was enough to prevent the appearance of painful hypersensitivity during as many as six rounds of treatment. And it did this without affecting the animal's immune system or hindering the cancer-fighting action.

- Careful with self-medicating -

"This is a highly promis-

ing finding," said Kristy Townsend, a professor of neurobiology at The Ohio State University who was not involved in the study.

And psilocybin's nerve-protecting quality does not seem to be linked to its hallucinogenic effects because a non-hallucinogenic analogue had the same effect in a lab test, she added.

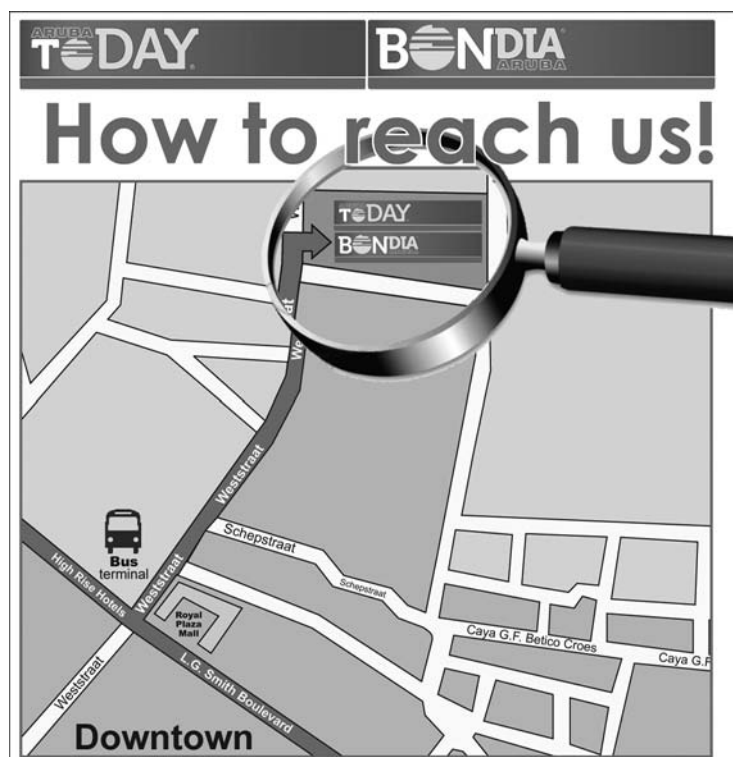
Before the treatment can be made standard for people, testing will be needed to see if it is safe and effective, said Townsend.

This will be a long, slow process though it should be eased by a boom in medical research on psychedelic substances and a Trump administration executive order in April to speed up research and regulatory reviews, these

scientists say.

The MD Anderson Cancer Center plans to launch clinical tests with psilocybin on cancer patients later this year.

Meanwhile it is important for cancer patients to avoid using magic mushrooms on their own as treatment, the researchers warned. □



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. Anna
Tel. 586 8181

San Nicolas: Seroe Preto
Tel. 584 4833

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
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Spotting AI writing: how reliable are the detectors?

Paris, France

Claims that Canadian-Haitian writer Thelyson Orelie used AI tools to write his best-selling debut novel are rocking the French literary world and posing questions about how AI can be detected.

An X account with a handful of followers sparked the controversy by claiming that the AI-detecting program Pangram had concluded the tale of a Haitian migrant travelling to Canada had been largely written by a text-generator such as Claude or ChatGPT.

Orelie, 38, denies the allegations and has said he will prove that he wrote the book, which has been sold to publishers in more than 20 countries.

"I didn't write this novel with my head, but with my guts and my heart," he told AFP recently.

AFP ran excerpts of the book through various AI detection tools and came up with a variety of results from it being "very likely" to have been written by a human to "100 percent" AI generated.

- How do AI detectors



Haitian-born Quebecois writer, poet, and novelist Thelyson Orelie, poses for pictures during a photo session, in Paris on September 8, 2026.

work? -

Dozens of tools are now available online to detect AI generated text many of them designed for use in education or publishing.

They generally have large troves of AI-generated text alongside content written by humans and compare the two.

Their performance has improved significantly in recent years.

In a paper published in October 2025 called "Artificial

Writing and Automated Detection", researchers at the University of Chicago found Pangram "achieving near-zero error rates" on medium-to-long extracts.

- What are the clues? -

Thierry Poibeau, a researcher at France's national CNRS research institute and specialist in natural language processing, said the programs look for "linguistic tics".

"The classic example is tri-

adic phrasing (using three clauses), or em dashes," Poibeau explained.

These telltale signs used to be common in generated texts because the tools had been trained on American scientific writing or American novels, he said. Pangram claims it is able to "detect AI text by analysing and understanding subtle cues in the writing". Some words or phrases show up regularly, while

monotonous sentence structures are also a warning sign.

- Are the tools reliable? -

Many tools publish percentage figures about their accuracy, but the figures are impossible to verify and do not take into account the risk of a false positive.

Pangram CEO and co-founder Max Spero stressed to the American outlet The Atlantic that the tool should not be the ultimate arbiter, but rather a starting point for a more in-depth investigation.

According to Thierry Poibeau, these detection systems also run up against a "moving target problem" because AI programs are "constantly evolving".

The expert also points to a potential problem when it comes to detecting the use of AI in novels.

"The tool may pick up something particular in the writing, something repetitive, but that might be exactly what constitutes a writer's style," he said.

Orelie claimed this week his style was based on Haitian and Caribbean traditions, telling Liberation newspaper the software was "used to the French literary tradition and classical authors".

Microsoft integrates Word, Excel deeper into Copilot

San Francisco, United States

Microsoft on Friday unveiled a new vision for how it will integrate Word, Excel and Powerpoint into its AI-powered assistant Copilot, in an effort to make AI the entry point for its famous suite of productivity software.

In the coming weeks, individual Microsoft 365 subscribers and businesses enrolled in its testing program will be able to create, edit and share files in Copilot without switching from one application to another.

"Many people have put simplified document view-

ers into their products over the course of the last year. But this is full-blown Office," Jacob Andreou, an executive vice president in charge of Copilot, told AFP. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, and Claude-maker Anthropic each launched their own document creation tools in recent months.

The two San Francisco-based AI labs are also key suppliers for Microsoft, since Copilot runs primarily on their models.

Microsoft unveiled a slate of in-house models in June, but for now they only power a few products, such as GitHub's Copilot coding tool, Andreou said.

A low-cost model for routine tasks was also announced in June but has not launched yet.

Copilot now also includes Autopilot, software capa-

ble of handling automated tasks continuously on its own.

Previously called Scout, Microsoft described it in June as the company's first "always-on" AI assistant which can run online even when a computer is turned off.

It remains limited to a handful of clients.

CEO Satya Nadella on Wednesday compared the arrival of these AI tools in the workplace to the advent of the personal computer, when an Excel spreadsheet sent by email gradually replaced typed internal memos sent by fax.

One of the key challenges, he said, is allowing a company to move from one AI model to another without losing its data or its know-how in the process. □

- What do the experts say?

Benoit Raphael, an entrepreneur and writer specialised in AI, published his own research using Pangram to test Orelie's work and the results were also positive for AI.

"The fact that it rated at around 100 percent AI, or even 90 percent, is a pretty telling sign," he told *Nouvel Obs* magazine.

And although the book was widely praised by critics and was flying off shelves in France before the scandal, some doubts had been raised.

Lea Bory on her podcast *Torchon* was possibly the first to say publicly earlier this month that she thought it had been written by IA because of the repetitive nature of the sentences and the over-use of analogies that are hallmarks of IA. □



The Copilot logo is displayed on a smartphone screen with a laptop displaying an artificial intelligence logo in the background in Creteil, France, on September 15, 2026.



Claus-Henning Schulke, known as 'Bottle Claus', poses for photos with his bicycle and water bottle in front of Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate on September 22, 2026.

'Bottle Claus': Kipchoge's 'hero' helping runners chase Berlin marathon glory

Berlin, Germany

Hours after helping Eliud Kipchoge break the marathon world record in Berlin in 2018, bottle carrier Claus-Henning Schulke received a phone call from the Kenyan icon.

"He asked me to come to the hotel and he gave me his starting number," the 60-year-old Schulke, better known as 'Bottle Claus', told AFP in Berlin.

"It said 'Dear Claus, without you I would have never broken this record'.

"I was extremely proud. It's absolutely incredible. I still have it on my desk."

Schulke helped Kipchoge to four victories in Berlin from 2017 to 2023, including setting the world mark in 2018 and 2022.

Kipchoge reserved special praise for Schulke, calling him "still my hero up until now" in 2022.

After Kipchoge's final Berlin run, Schulke was headhunted by his heir apparent Sebastian Sawe.

Sawe won on his Berlin debut in 2025. Seven months later, he ran 1:59:30 in London, becoming the first man to break through the mythical two-hour barrier. The 31-year-old wanted to better that mark in Berlin this Sunday but was forced to pull out.

"Sawe's injury (withdrawal) was really shocking and

sad for the race," Schulke said.

Without Sawe, Schulke will be assigned to another contender before Sunday's race in one of the most even fields in recent memory.

- 'Sleepless nights' -

Having done the same thing for 30 years, Schulke was "absolutely surprised" when videos of him celebrating his handoffs before cycling manically to the next water station went viral and a US publication nicknamed him 'Bottle Claus'.

"It took on a life of its own... I was mountain bike racing in Kyrgyzstan and someone from Australia passed by and said 'hey, you're Bottle Claus'.

"It's absolutely funny. I enjoy it very much."

In the 1990s, Schulke helped start the Berlin marathon's elite support team, the first and for a long time only one of the majors to offer a bottle service.

A perfectly executed handover can save runners around two to three seconds. With 13 handovers, that can be the difference between a world record or a near miss.

"Most important is to get eye contact and audio contact," Schulke says, adding "you have just one

chance to shout as loud as you can."

Schulke holds the bottle from the bottom so the runners do not need to slow down from their 22km/h pace to grab it.

After his trademark double fist-pump celebration, Schulke cycles towards the next water station, overtaking a swarm of runners, media and officials in cars and on motorbikes, before doing it all over again.

"You have two minutes to prepare for the next transfer. You have to grab your bike, take care you don't touch the runners..."

"You have to concentrate at a high-level because you don't want to cause an accident."

Despite his stellar record, Schulke admits to "sleepless nights" before the big race: "I'm extremely nervous hoping that everything will go well."

- 'Kipchoge an inspiration' -

Away from the track, the Hamburg-born Schulke is a civil engineer who helped oversee the construction of Berlin's 680 million euro (\$775 million) Humbolt Forum.

But his love of extreme sports runs deep. Schulke ran a 2:34 marathon PB aged just 19 and has since completed the Hawaii Iron Man six times. □



Italy's Jannik Sinner reacts to beating Germany's Alexander Zverev during their men's singles final tennis match on the fourteenth day of the 2026 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, south-west London on July 12, 2026.

World No.1 Sinner delays return with China Open withdrawal

Paris, France

World No.1 Jannik Sinner delayed his return to the courts when he withdrew from next week's China Open in Beijing on Friday having been out of action since his Wimbledon title in July due to a right knee injury.

"I won't be able to play in Beijing this year. My knee is not there where I would like it to be and I'm not ready to compete yet but I will do everything possible to be there as soon as I can," the Italian defending champion said on X.

The five-time Grand Slam winner has not played since winning Wimbledon on July 12, pulling out of the US Open last month.

Sinner, 25, had been dominating the 2026 season with an impressive record of 44 wins against three losses and six titles won, including Wimbledon.

However, he suffered a major disappointment at the French Open, where he arrived as the overwhelming favourite but crashed out in the second round after suffering in a heatwave.

The absence of the tour's top player in Beijing increases the chances for his closest rival, Alexander Zverev, to move to the top of the ATP rankings for the first time by the end of the season.

At the moment, 1,810 points separate the world's top two players. But that gap will shrink by at least 440 points in the next ATP rankings.

Sinner also has significantly more points to defend than the German between now and the end of the season, since in 2025 he won the ATP 500 events in Beijing and Vienna, the Paris Masters 1000 and the ATP Finals in Turin, which award 1,500 points to the winner.

Zverev, 29, was far less effective at the end of last season and will therefore be able to rack up more points than Sinner in the year's final tournaments.

Having won the first two Grand Slam titles of his career in 2026, at Roland Garros and the US Open, Zverev reached the semi-finals of the Australian Open and the final at Wimbledon, the German is enjoying the best season of his career.

He is entered in tournaments in Beijing, Shanghai and Vienna over the coming weeks. □

Chicago teams, Guardians and Padres all book MLB playoff berths

Los Angeles, United States

Chicago's White Sox and Cubs both grabbed post-season berths with wins Thursday, as did the Cleveland Guardians and San Diego Padres, as the Major League Baseball playoff brackets began to take their final shape.

Within minutes of one another, the Windy City rivals became the seventh and eighth teams to book October baseball. The Guardians and Padres each followed suit a few hours later, leaving just two spots up for grabs.

The White Sox crowned an extraordinary turnaround season, securing at least a wild card spot after losing more than 100 games in each of their previous three seasons.

They routed the Kansas City Royals 9-1. The White Sox scored three runs in each of their first two innings, before a Kyle Teel home run in the fourth left little doubt.

Chicago shortstop Colson Montgomery equaled the unwanted record for the most strikeouts in an MLB season, with his 223rd tying the Arizona Diamondbacks' Mark Reynolds in 2009.

Still, the White Sox will make their first post-season appearance since 2021.



Angel Martinez #1 of the Cleveland Guardians celebrates with his teammates following the win over the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park on September 24, 2026 in Boston, Massachusetts.

"You know how the past couple seasons have been with us. We always envisioned this," said Montgomery.

"Deep down and everything like that, we all believed in ourselves, believed in each other. For this to come to fruition, it's awesome."

Their divisional rival Cleveland Guardians also booked playoff progress with a 1-0 win over the Boston Red Sox.

The Guardians led in the second inning thanks to an Angel Martinez homer to right field. It proved the game's only run.

With both through, the White Sox and Guardians will now duke it out for the divisional title and a first-round bye.

- 'Get in Chicago' -

In the National League, the Cubs edged the Miami Marlins 2-1 to claim their own wild card spot.

A stolen base in the first inning by Pete Crow-Armstrong made him the seventh player with 40 homers and 40 stolen bases in a season.

Miami opened the scoring in the third inning, but a Seiya Suzuki homer in the fifth got the Cubs back on track. Ian Happ scored from a Nico Hoerner single the next inning and the Cubs held out.

"GET IN CHICAGO, WE'RE GOING TO THE POSTSEA-

SON," posted the Cubs' X account.

The Padres clinched with a 4-2 win over the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Ethan Salas scored from Dustin Harris's sacrifice fly in the sixth inning. The Padres added three more runs in the seventh to seal another wild card spot, despite two late Dodgers runs.

Six MLB teams had already clinched before Thursday—the Dodgers, Red Sox, Milwaukee Brewers, New York Yankees, Tampa Bay Rays and Atlanta Braves.

The Philadelphia Phillies still need to fend off the late-charging Arizona Diamondbacks for the National League's final spot.

The Phillies lost to the Brewers, who reached 100 wins in a regular season for the first time ever.

Thanks to the Dodgers' loss the Brewers also clinched the National League's top seed and home-field advantage throughout the postseason.

The remaining American League berth will go to the winner of the under-performing Western division a race between the Houston Astros and Texas Rangers, who both currently have losing records. □

Bijan Robinson destroys Packers in 35-14 win for Falcons

Los Angeles, United States

Star running back Bijan Robinson rushed for an explosive 194 yards and two touchdowns as the Atlanta Falcons thrashed the Green Bay Packers 35-14 on Thursday.

Robinson's destructive per-

formance gave Atlanta its first win of the NFL season, while a shellshocked Lambeau Field booed as the Packers slipped to 1-2 with their first loss in a home opener since 2012.

Prior to Thursday, the Falcons had only managed

16 points across two defeats in which they did not have a single snap in the red zone.

But they were boosted by the return from injury of quarterback Michael Penix Jr, who brushed off an early interception to complete 256 passing yards and a touchdown.

"I've been fighting and scratching for a long time to get back to where I'm at today," said Penix, who underwent surgery last November for a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL).

Penix hailed Robinson's "unreal" performance, calling it "a blessing to be able to have somebody like that on your team."

By contrast Packers quarterback Jordan Love man-

aged 312 passing yards, but was let down by a lack of running options.

Atlanta's Robinson, selected eighth overall in the 2023 NFL draft, signed a new three-year, \$75 million contract with the Falcons in August that briefly made him the top-paid running back in NFL history.

The 24-year-old proved his worth on Thursday night, comfortably out-rushing the entire Packers team, who ran for a paltry 17 yards total.

After the Packers scored first via a Love touchdown pass to Christian Watson, Robinson made a superb, weaving 55-yard run to the red zone, before rushing for a touchdown on the next play.

He was again at the heart

of the next Falcons touchdown, with four rushes in a drive that ended with Penix's touchdown pass to tight end Austin Hooper.

In the second half, Bijan Robinson made another stunning, 31-yard run down the right flank, before the Falcons' other Robinson running back Brian Robinson Jr took the ball into the end zone for a 20-point lead. The Packers attempted a comeback in the fourth quarter with Love's 15-yard touchdown pass to Matthew Golden.

But it was Bijan Robinson again who put the game to bed, bursting through the Packers' defense for a touchdown before a successful two-point conversion made it 35-14. □



Bijan Robinson #7 of the Atlanta Falcons scores a touchdown against the Green Bay Packers during the first quarter of the game at Lambeau Field on September 24, 2026 in Green Bay, Wisconsin.