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Outside Washington clinic, bitter U.S. abortion fight plays out

Washington, United States
Just steps from the coffee shops of Union Market, one of the U.S. capital's trendiest neighborhoods, two Americas faced off on a stretch of sidewalk.
On one side, volunteers escorted patients to a clinic that performs abortions. On the other, conservative activists tried to persuade them to turn back.
The sidewalk standoff represents a microcosm of America's bitter battle over abortion, which has only heightened since the Supreme Court's 2022 decision overturning the nationwide right to the procedure.
On this chilly November afternoon, Robyn Swirling, 40, scanned the street leading to the Carol Whitehill Moses Planned Parenthood clinic. Her orange vest read: "clinic escort."
"Patients often arrive anxious, sometimes after a long drive," said Swirling, her knit hat pulled down over her ears and a thermos in hand. "Our role is to provide a peaceful and reassuring presence and help them safely enter healthcare clinics without being delayed, intimidated or harassed by anti-choice protesters."
The organization, which has around 70 volunteers, works at the request of clinics outside seven facilities in Washington, Maryland and Virginia. Similar groups exist across the country.



A pro-abortion rights clinic escort stands in front of a Planned Parenthood clinic while a group of anti-abortion activists pray across the street from the clinic in Washington, DC on November 14, 2026.

Since the Supreme Court struck down buffer zones protecting the areas around clinics on free speech grounds in 2014, the two sides have stood shoulder to shoulder, even in the famously liberal US capital.
Joseph, a 40-year-old who only provided a first name, came from Virginia specifically to protest against abortion.
"There's still time to change your mind!" he yelled from the sidewalk toward a partly open clinic window.

- Shoulder to shoulder -
A young woman suddenly stepped out of a car, her scarf pulled up to her nose.
"May I pray for you?" called out William Campbell, a 24-year-old Christian missionary holding an anti-abortion leaflet.
"You're killing a child!" shouted a woman in her 30s, as around 20 activists sang mournful hymns, rosaries in hand.
"Stay behind me. I'll walk with you," a volunteer said quietly, immediately stepping in to shield her.
Without a word, her eyes glistening, the young woman disappeared through the clinic's glass doors. Everyone returned to their place, waiting for the next patient.
Such interactions generally last only a few seconds, but can be harrowing for both the women and volunteers.
Richard Huffman, an abortion advocate who has been volunteering for 16 years, said he had a vivid memory a young woman who "came out and was crying and said, 'I can't do this.' And that was her decision."
"I didn't know what questions to ask. I tried to help her as best I could... I mean, I was in tears too after she left," he said.

Huffman said he had given up debating with abortion opponents after hearing the same arguments for years.
His organization advises members to avoid confrontation, but tensions regularly mount between the two opposing camps.
Swirling said she had seen applications flood in when the Supreme Court ended federal protections for abortion rights in 2022, leaving the decision to each state.
"For two years, we had more volunteers than we needed," she said.
'"In a city like Washington, it's important to be boots on the ground and in direct contact with the people these policies actually concern," she added.

Standing outside the clinic door, Nora, 35, said she hoped sweeping Democratic victories in the November midterm elections will translate into more protections for abortion rights.
Her mother escorted patients outside clinics in North Carolina in the 1980s.
"It's been 40 years and we're doing the same volunteer job, and not much has changed," she said.❑

New York postpones Thanksgiving parade as storm hits U.S. East Coast


A float of a turkey from the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, in the Manhattan borough of New York City on November 26, 2026.

New York, United States
New York postponed the iconic Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade to Saturday due to a major storm, a first in the event's 100-year history, as extreme weather lashing the U.S. East Coast caused power outages and travel delays.
The "Nor'easter" storm, which brought torrential rain and strong winds on Thursday, disrupted one of the country's busiest travel seasons for millions of people hitting the road and flying around during the holiday.
Power outages were affecting more than 400,000 people -- across a number of states including Virginia, North Carolina, and New Jersey, according to poweroutage.us, a platform that tracks outage data.
Thousands of flights have been delayed, with hundreds of others cancelled, according to data from the site FlightAware.
"With severe weather expected on Thanksgiving Day, and out of an abundance of caution, in partnership with the City the 100th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will be postponed," Macy's told AFP in a statement.
The date change has prompted questions about the thousands of parade participants, including musicians and technical staff, who had made arrangements for a Thursday parade.
"Our team is now working through the complex operational logistics required to bring the Parade to life on Saturday," the company said. The annual parade sees brightly colored balloons travel some 2.5 miles (four kilometers) through the heart of Manhattan to Macy's Herald Square flagship store on 34th Street.
Millions of people typically gather to catch a glimpse of the festivities.
It is the first time in the event's history that it has been postponed. It was canceled for three years, 1942, 1943 and 1944, during World War II.

- 'Heartbroken' -
"This will be a heavy storm. We are expecting sustained winds between 30 and 40 miles per hour" on Thursday, Mayor Zohran Mamdani told a safety briefing.
"Winds will be strong enough to down tree limbs and power lines."
The worst of the storm will strike later Thursday when strong winds, heavy rain and the evening high tide will coincide, the city warned in a travel advisory.
Governor Mikie Sherrill of New Jersey declared a state of emergency on Wednesday, anticipating that the storm will bring "damaging winds, heavy rain, coastal flooding, and potentially prolonged power outages."❑

Trump urges Putin to end 'military aggression' in Europe

West Palm Beach, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday he had asked Vladimir Putin to "pull back all military aggression" against Europe, in a fresh shift in tone towards the Russian leader he called his friend just last week.

Trump said he had made the request to Putin when they met in China last week, adding that he thought it would help lead to a deal to end Moscow's grinding war in Ukraine.

Trump's comments come a day after he hosted NATO chief Mark Rutte in Florida, after which the two leaders issued a joint statement calling on Russia not to expand the Ukraine war.

"During my conversations in China with President Vladimir Putin, of Russia, I spent a lot of time talking about the fact that I would like to see President Putin pull back all Military aggression against territories throughout Europe,"Trump said on his Truth Social network.

Trump said he had done so "in the hopes that a Deal can be made between Russia and Ukraine, and made quickly."

"I really believe this is a strong possibility -- Thousands of people are being killed each and every month, A COMPLETE BLOODBATH -- and will be a Great Tribute to everyone!"



In this pool photograph distributed by the Russian state agency Sputnik, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump shake hands as leaders take a group photo during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Shenzhen, in

The statement did not specify which territories Trump meant -- and did not specifically include Ukraine, which Russia invaded in February 2022, kicking off the largest war in Europe since World War II.

But European nations have been increasingly concerned by what they regard as Russian provocations, including three Russian cruise missiles landing in Poland last week.

In their joint statement on Wednesday, Trump and NATO's Rutte said they "discussed the importance of Russia avoiding any actions that intentionally, or unintentionally, expand the war."

Trump, who is spending the US Thanksgiving holiday at his Mar-a-Lago resort, reposted the joint statement with Rutte on Truth Social shortly before his new comments on Putin.

In a notable contrast with Trump's recent criticisms of Ukraine for striking targets deep inside Russia, the US leader made no call for Kyiv to show similar restraint.

- 'Deadlock' -

Trump's tone appeared markedly different to when Trump met Putin in the Chinese city of Shenzhen last week, both face-to-face and together with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

On that occasion, a smiling Trump welcomed Putin by saying "Who is he? He's my friend," before warmly shaking hands with the Russian leader.

The "friend" comment in particular renewed concerns in Kyiv and European capitals that Trump was once again pivoting towards the Russian leader he has long been close to.

Trump has often appeared more willing to blame Ukraine for Russia's invasion, and has had tense relations with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky since their televised blow-up in the Oval Office in February 2025.

The U.S. envoys on the Ukraine war, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and business friend Steve Witkoff, have been accused of a similar willingness to take Moscow's side.

In an interview with the German MD Meets Podcast on Wednesday, Kushner said that Putin had "showed restraint" because he had "agreed not to use nuclear weapons."

Kushner also described the Russian leader, whom he has met several times, as a "grandmaster of politics" -- while calling the Ukraine conflict "a proxy war where Europe is funding and arming Ukraine against Russia."

But he acknowledged that the issue of territory in eastern Ukraine claimed by Moscow remained a sticking point with Putin.

"What Steve and I have deciphered from having many, many hours with President Putin and from the Russian team, is that you know the territorial issue is right now a little bit of a deadlock," he said.

And he warned against any downward spiral in the Ukraine war, saying it "it won't take a lot of miscalculation for this thing to escalate massively."❑

Court halts U.S. regulator's review of ABC broadcast license

Washington, United States

A U.S. federal judge on Wednesday ordered the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to halt its review of ABC's broadcast license, saying the move was likely unconstitutional retaliation.

ABC and its parent company Disney filed suit against the FCC in mid-August, arguing that the early review of its license -- which doesn't expire until 2028 -- was retaliation for content that angered President Donald Trump.

The early review was spearheaded by FCC chair Brendan Carr, a close ally of Trump who has overseen a steep politicization of the once-independent regulatory body.

District Judge Loren AliKhan, in her 45-page ruling, said it was "not a close case," and that Carr had appeared to take his "marching orders" from Trump's rhetoric.

Trump has repeatedly lashed out at ABC, particularly the network's late night host Jimmy Kimmel.

"No one doubts that the Commission may enforce the law in the manner it sees fit. But in doing so, Defendants may not retaliate against or punish Plaintiffs and other broadcast license holders for disfavored speech," she wrote.

She said that the review, as well as threatening comments from Trump and Carr, had already led to ABC making changes to its editorial decision-making and guest booking.

Anna Gomez, the FCC's sole Democratic commissioner, hailed the decision as bringing "badly needed accountability to a Commission and an administration that have politicized the machinery of government in a sustained campaign of censorship and control."

"Every broadcaster facing this pressure should take note and choose courage over capitulation because...the First Amendment is on their side," she said in a statement, referring to the US constitutional protection for free speech.



(L-R) Jimmy Kimmel and Molly McNearney attend the 2026 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at Peacock Theater on November 14, 2026 in Los Angeles, California.

The FCC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.❑

Syria group rejects planned film about 'Caesar' civil war whistleblower

Damascus, Syria

A Syrian organization has criticized plans for a film about a whistleblower known as "Caesar", who smuggled out pictures during the country's civil war depicting the tortured bodies of detainees under longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad. Plans for the feature film were announced over the weekend as part of the Doha Film Festival.

Farid al-Madhan, a former Syrian army photographer who defected in 2013, revealed his identity as Caesar early last year, after Assad was ousted in December 2024 following more than 13 years of civil war.

In 2014, he revealed 55,000 photos which gave a glimpse of the abuses being committed in Syrian jails after the war erupted three years earlier with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.

The photos of 11,000 dead detainees, smuggled in a flash drive and later authenticated by experts, show corpses tortured and starved to death.



This handout picture released by the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) shows Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa (L) meeting with Syrian businessman Farid al-Madhan, also known as "Caesar" in Paris, on the sidelines of his official visit on May 7, 2025.

They became a key part of international efforts to seek accountability for civil war atrocities.

A statement from the Caesar Families Association demanded a freeze on the film project "pending consultations with representatives of the families" and urging guarantees that images in the Caesar files would not be included.

"Nobody has the right to use their stories and identities on behalf of the victims' families," it said, adding that "turning this ongoing tragedy into a work expected to gain commercial profits before justice has been served... raises profound moral objections" and harms victims' relatives.

A statement released during the festival said the film would trace Madhan's journey "from a man secretly documenting atrocities... to an international witness whose evidence would have far-reaching consequences for global policy and accountability".

Madhan had testified to a U.S. Congress committee and his photographs inspired a 2020 U.S. law which imposed economic sanctions on Syria and judicial proceedings in Europe against Assad's entourage.

At the Doha event, Madhan said the decision "to tell this story through cinema" was to "give a voice to the human beings who suffered".

While the Caesar Families Association acknowledged Madhan's "historic role", it said the leaked photos "cannot be considered part of his personal biography".

The group earlier this year criticized a television series titled "Caesar, no time, no place", saying that "justice is sought in court, not in film studios."

More than half a million people were killed in Syria's war, while tens of thousands disappeared, many into the country's brutal prison system. Scores of prisoners walked free when Assad was overthrown, while other families converged on detention facilities, desperately searching for missing loved ones who never emerged.

Syria's new Islamist authorities have vowed to provide justice and accountability for crimes committed under Assad's rule.❑

GTA gone soft? Fans fume over game's romantic streak

Washington, United States

Out with sex workers, in with buying your girlfriend flowers: the great romance at the heart of Grand Theft Auto VI has enraged some fans, who accuse the franchise of betraying its roots and bowing to "feminist slop."

A new honor system that rewards good deeds and discourages wanton violence -- along with an emphasis on healthy living and household chores -- marks a sharp departure from earlier games in the series, which were rife with killing sprees and politically incorrect humor.

"Game is garbage, CUCK Simulator," wrote one user on X, using a term prevalent in the so-called manosphere, online communities organized around male grievance.

"Press X to put the toilet seat down," quipped another beneath a video that dubbed the game "feminist slop," a phrase repeated many times over.

Online conservative critics are further incensed by the game's lampooning of hypermasculine influencers and right-wing anxiety over transgender people, even as zealous animal rights activists aren't spared from mockery, with some mauled to death by a polar bear they free.

To be sure, GTA VI, which launched last week and earned its publisher Rockstar Games a record $3.8 billion on its first day, remains at its core a violent video game.

It follows Jason and Lucia, a modern Bonnie and Clyde, as they embark on a life of crime in and around Vice City, based on Miami, to secure a better future for themselves and their infant son.

- Acts of kindness -

But where past installments reveled in mayhem, the latest game is more morally complex.

In the original GTA, launched in 1997, running down pedestrians and wrecking vehicles earned applause and a sports-commentary-like shout of "Kill Frenzy!"

Now, players are nudged toward carrying out actions that will strengthen their romantic relationship -- from fixing up the house to buying flowers and jewelry.

Actions have consequences. Keeping a strong relationship and "professional" criminal profile, as opposed to "violent," "psycho" or "irredeemable," is necessary in order to unlock the happiest ending, according to reports in the video game press.

Working out to stay in shape keeps players fit for criminal capers, while acts of kindness toward strangers, or even basic civic virtue like not littering, earn focus and behavior points.

And for the first time since they were introduced in GTA III, the series' first 3D game, sex workers are absent.

Where past games allowed paid sexual encounters, "GTA VI is a game about a couple in a bind, lovers on the run," Rockstar said in a statement sent to the media.

"While we have taken a lot forward from previous GTA titles, everything we have implemented in VI has been done to support the spirit of the story we wanted to tell."

- 'Morally gray' -

Andrew Przybylski, a professor of human behavior and technology at the Oxford Internet Institute, told AFP: "I wouldn't call it wholesome, but it's kind of a complete story that people can interact with in a way that's deeper and in some ways more thoughtful and more reflective."

He added that the video game industry had evolved since GTA's early days, with a more equitable gender balance, but disputed the idea the game was no longer "transgressive."

"Miami Police Department, they're not going to be happy!" he laughed.

Douglas Gentile, a distinguished professor of psychology at Iowa State University who has studied the impact of violent video games on children, agreed the new game was more nuanced.

He was previously director of research at the National Institute on Media and the Family, which criticized GTA III.

"This might be a much more interesting game where it sits in that morally gray area where most of us actually live," Gentile said.❑

Syria mulls law that could give nationality to children of foreign fighters

Al-Bab, Syria

In northern Syria, Umm Mohammed, 22, is hoping authorities will make legal changes to allow her two young daughters, born to Iraqi and Chinese Islamic State group fighters, to have Syrian nationality.

Thousands of Syrian women married foreigners including jihadists during Syria's more than 13-year-long civil war, but many unions were not officially registered in the chaos.

Now, with many foreign fighters killed or missing, their children are in limbo without official documents or access to government services, nearly two years after the war ended when Islamists overthrew longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad.

"Hundreds or even thousands of children born to Syrian mothers and foreign fighters" face barriers to legal identity and "are at great risk of statelessness", a recent report from the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria warned.

Social Affairs Minister Hind Kabawat this month said a ministerial committee had been studying a proposal to amend legislation from 1969 in order to grant Syrian nationality to children of women married to non-Syrians under certain circumstances.

Rights activists have called the reform long overdue.

But questions remain about who exactly would be affected, particularly in the case of children of jihadists from foreign countries refusing to take their citizens back and who are only entitled to hold their father's nationality under current Syrian law.



A Syrian woman who lacks official documentation takes part in a social reintegration session organised by the 'Khtawat' social development organization in al-Bab, northeast of Aleppo on November 11, 2026.

Some two dozen states worldwide do not allow women to pass their nationality to their children, according to the UN refugee agency.

Syria only allows women to do so in exceptional circumstances, such as if their husband is stateless.

- Married at 13 -

Umm Mohammed fought back tears as she told AFP she had been married off at 13 to an Iraqi jihadist and later had her first daughter, now aged seven.

Requesting to be identified by a pseudonym, she said that after her husband was killed in eastern Syria, an area where IS established its strongholds during the war, she was married to a Chinese jihadist with whom she had her second daughter.

"The hardest thing to face today is the difficulty in registering the girls at school or for (health) services," Umm Mohammed said, wearing a niqab, at the centre of NGO Syria Steps in Al-Bab, in the country's north.

"The lawyer told us that they can't get identity documents because they were born" to foreign fighters, she added.

Umm Mohammed said neither husband got to see their daughter before they were killed.

Contact with her Iraqi husband's family was in vain, and she doesn't know who her Chinese husband's family are.

Syria's social affairs ministry and interior ministry did not respond to an AFP request for comment on who would be eligible to obtain Syrian nationality under the proposed amendments, which will eventually require parliamentary approval.

But lawyers and rights activists told AFP that the beneficiaries would mostly be children born to Syrian women married to Arab nationals, including Palestinians, Jordanians and Iraqis, as well as those wed to non-Arab foreign citizens.

- 'Just a photo' -

Syria requires marriages to be officially registered in order to record births and issue certificates.

That means even some children born to Syrian fathers lack documentation due to the war.

The UN commission's report said some 8,837 previously unregistered Syrian children obtained birth certificates last year.

The process is even more complicated when proving marriage and paternity from a foreign father is difficult.

The UN commission urged Syrian authorities to reform the nationality law and "consider provisional legal measures allowing all Syrian women to register the children in their own name" and to pass on their nationality while proceedings on proving the father's identity are pending.

In Al-Bab, Syria Steps is trying to help around 100 struggling wives of foreign jihadists, including Umm Mohammed.

"We have cases where the wife doesn't even know her husband's (real) name... or maybe has just a photo of a document sent by his family," said activities coordinator Hiam Haj Ali.

Others don't know their husbands' fate, she told AFP.

Social Affairs Minister Kabawat said of the draft law that "no child in Syria should be deprived of citizenship because their father was killed, went missing or is a foreign national".❑

Spain's Pablo Hernandez de Cos to succeed Lagarde as ECB chief

Brussels, Belgium

Spain's Pablo Hernandez de Cos will be the next head of the European Central Bank, taking over from Christine Lagarde, diplomats told AFP on Thursday.

His nomination comes at a time of tension on European bond markets and before a series of high-stakes elections in Europe next year including in France.

Hernandez de Cos, 55, has been head of the Swiss-based Bank for International Settlements (BIS) since last year, and previously led the Bank of Spain from 2018 to 2024.

The ECB is the central bank for the 21 countries that use the euro, setting interest rates that influence borrowing costs across the economy, from mortgages to credit-card repayments.

"The Netherlands will support the consensus for the three nominations for the ECB board," an EU diplomat said.

That diplomat and a second confirmed it meant Hernandez de Cos won the support of euro area countries over Klaas Knot, former head of the Dutch central bank.

In addition to the ECB top job, France's Laurence Boone and Germany's Markus Brunnermeier were the sole candidates to fill two vacant seats on the bank's executive board.

Thanks to a grand bargain on the package between France and Germany, Hernandez de Cos was chosen in a decision that came after EU leaders' talks in Brussels.❑



An undated, unlocated handout photo obtained on November 9, 2026 from BIS shows Pablo Hernandez de Cos, head of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).

Kuala Lumpur otters raise river revival hopes



This picture taken on October 19, 2026, shows smooth-coated otters playing along the bank of the Klang River in Kuala Lumpur.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Beneath a tangle of highway in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur, a family of otters rolls around in a patch of riverside sand, delighting the few passersby who notice them.

Small groups of otters are now being seen regularly in parts of the city, including along the once heavily polluted Klang River.

Theories vary on whether the smooth-coated otters, classed as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, have returned to the city or were hiding in plain sight all along.

But their presence has raised hopes that efforts to clean up the Klang may be bearing fruit, and could inspire further improvement.

The Klang was once one of the world's dirtiest waterways, designated a Class 5 severely polluted river under Malaysia's rankings.

Years of work improved it to Class 3, or moderately polluted, which seems to have encouraged the otters to move in, said Malaysian wildlife ecologist Woo Chee Yoong.

"Wherever there are otters, there are fish. Wherever there are fish it means the whole river system... (is) clean, it's healthy for all the communities around. So that's one of the importance of otters," he said.

In recent years, the animals have been filmed sunbathing on the river's concrete banks and swimming in front of elevated metro stations, winning viral fame.

Retired soldier Hasan Ujang, who lives in a riverside apartment, enjoys watching their antics.

"We feel really happy when we watch them playing and playing, like kids swimming," he said.

- 'They have to survive' -

But unlike otters in neighboring Singapore, which are closely monitored by a network of citizen scientists, little is known about Kuala Lumpur's otters.

Woo learned about them from local media reports on sightings in 2019 and the following year co-founded the Malaysian Otter Network (MON) conservation group.

"We don't know how many groups are there, we don't know how actually the otters are moving around," he said.

Even the question of whether the otters have returned to the capital or were simply in less visible city environments before remains a "mystery."

MON hopes to set up a citizen science system for people to report sightings.

Otters have been spotted elsewhere in the city, including at the Tropicana Golf & Country Resort, a high-end housing estate where they are less welcome visitors.

They are accused of raiding at least 12 houses in the past year. Their target: fish ponds.

Resident Yee Sze Mun, 89, said otters killed the beloved —- and expensive —- arowana fish he had nurtured for 15 years.

"They are a nuisance, but I can't blame them, because they are just like us, they have to survive," he said.

Residents say the incursions began last year after a company began clearing forest next door for a new development.

"We have an issue because they're losing their habitat," said residents' association president Joy Appukuttan, who called the otter attacks a "grave concern."

Tropicana's security team believes there are around 25 otters in the forest and the estate brought in Woo to teach residents how to deal with them.

The species is protected in Malaysia, so Woo urges residents to block entry points to their yards and install fences or netting over ponds.

- 'An asset' -

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, a former Kuala Lumpur mayor and now advisor to the city on sustainable urbanization, call the otters an "asset."

"Otters are one of the benchmarks for clean cities," she said.

Like others, she hopes a growing awareness of the Klang River otters can be harnessed to help improve the river further.❑

Mexico bristles at U.S. hotline for tips about cartels



Mexican Army and National Guard personnel escort an armored tactical vehicle transporting alleged cartel leader Fausto Isidro Meza Flores, alias "El Chapo Isidro," into the El Altiplano maximum-security federal prison on November 23, 2026 in Almoloya de Juarez, Mexico.

Mexico City, Mexico

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum on Thursday denounced Washington's creation of a hotline for reporting the activities of a brutal drug cartel, calling it interference.

The head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Terry Cole, said Wednesday that the agency would open channels for Mexican citizens to anonymously report individuals, public officials, and money laundering networks linked to the Sinaloa cartel.

The United States has designated the cartel as a terrorist organization.

"It's clearly an act of interference," Sheinbaum said at her daily press conference.

Imagine, she mused, if Mexico "opened a WhatsApp service for reporting corruption in the United States. How would the U.S. government view that?"

"The DEA has a lot to do in its own country," she added, reading aloud from an Associated Press report which claimed the agency permitted the trafficking of over one million fentanyl pills into the United States between August 2024 and April 2025.

President Donald Trump's administration has put Sheinbaum under intense pressure to crack down on her country's drug gangs.

Sheinbaum, who is eager to extend a free-trade deal with the United States and Canada, has been showing a large degree of willingness to cooperate, while at the same time asserting her country's sovereignty over its own security.

Last week Mexico's military captured one of the FBI's most-wanted fugitives, a druglord named Fausto Isidro Meza, alias Chapo Isidro.

Sheinbaum's left-wing government insists that he must face justice at home before it considers a US extradition request.❑

Basic driving rules on Aruba: Traffic signs

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

Speed limit in certain areas
As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

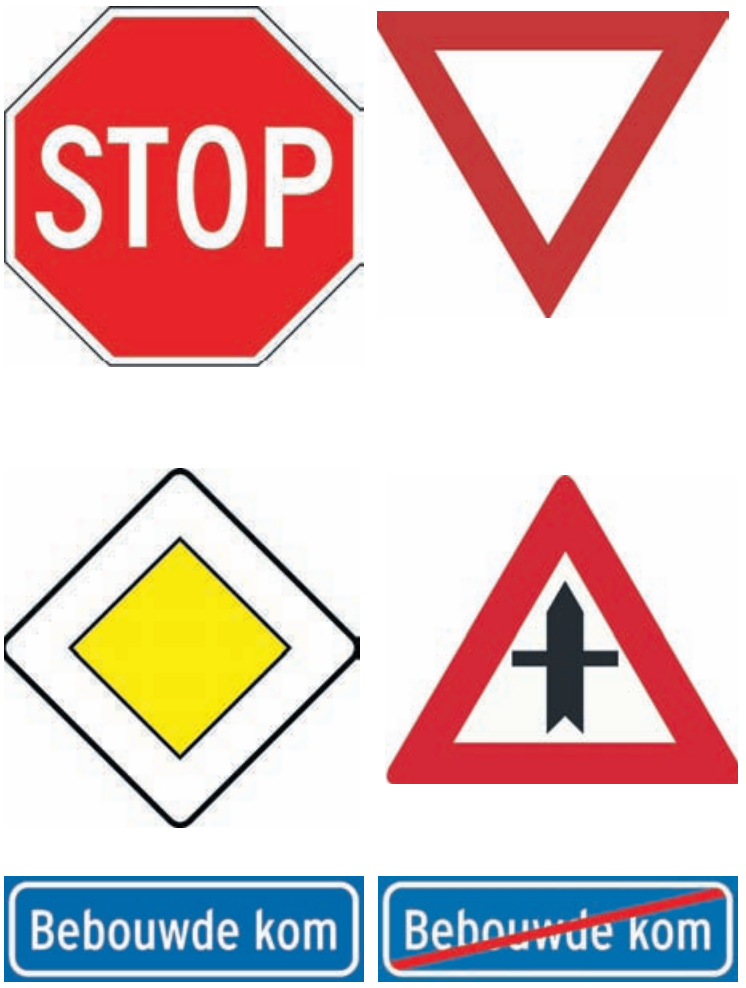
Besides the "50" sign, you may also encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom sings are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h.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

Priority signs
On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

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

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

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

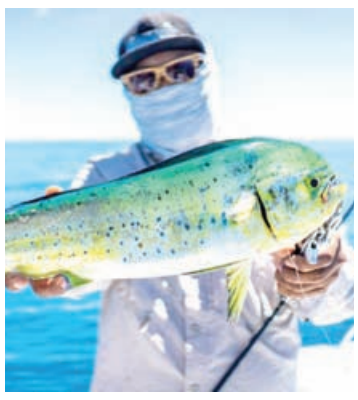


Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our "Dorado"

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Dorado", a common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Dorado.

Dorado has many different names it can be referred to. Dral, Dorao, Drals, Drado, are some of them in Papiamento. In English, it is also called Mahi Mahi, Dolphinfish, or Dorado. It's a good example to reflect on why there can be many names. The same fish becomes known by different common names, why? Common names come only when a group of people, to understand each other, assign a name to a fish. Mahi Mahi, for example, comes from Hawaii and means "very strong". Dorado is based on Spanish and refers to the golden yellow color that the fish shines with under the sun. Why it's called Dolphinfish in English is not well defined and while there are several stories around this, none have been confirmed.



Dorado is found in all tropical to subtropical oceans around the world. Dorado is very popular both for recreational fishing and for consumption. It is known among fishermen as an exciting catch and a fish that puts up a good fight. Its meat is very good for consumption and it is also commercially fished for that reason. They grow very fast, up to 2.7 inches (almost 7 cm) per week. They can live up to a maximum of 5 years although very few reach that age. Most become adults within 1 year but many become reproductive after just 5 or 6 months and reproduce very quickly too.
They live in open water on the surface most of the time. Many fish seek them around sushi lines or floating objects on the sea. Often you will find a group landing together and if you keep a male on the line, often the others will stay close or can keep the group interested by giving shrimp or squid.

Description:
Dorado has a distinctive body. It has a large tail and its long, flat body ends in a large blunt head. Its color of yellow and green or blue makes it immediately recognizable, even with small variations in these colors.
Dorado has clear differences between adult females and males. The male is larger and can easily reach 50 to 80 pounds and has a much flatter head compared to the female. Therefore, male Dorados are also called "bull Dorado".

Dorado can be found in our waters around the island all year round, but there are periods when it is easier to find than others.

Source: The Department of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries (Santa Rosa).



ARUBA TODAY

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.

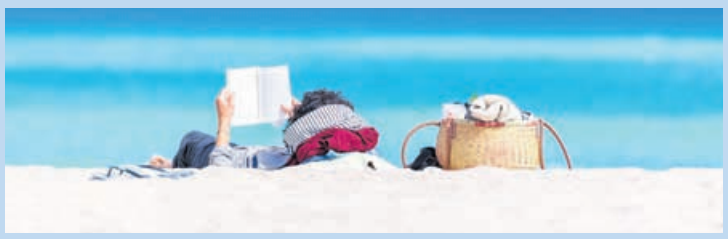


Step 1: Commit to unplugging

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 groupchat 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. 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!❑



Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's City Center Street Car – or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad' – is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.



Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the down town area with a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high- end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25 minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00 pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center – it is free for all!❑

1,200,000 Christmas Point Giveaway Every Friday, Saturday & Sunday

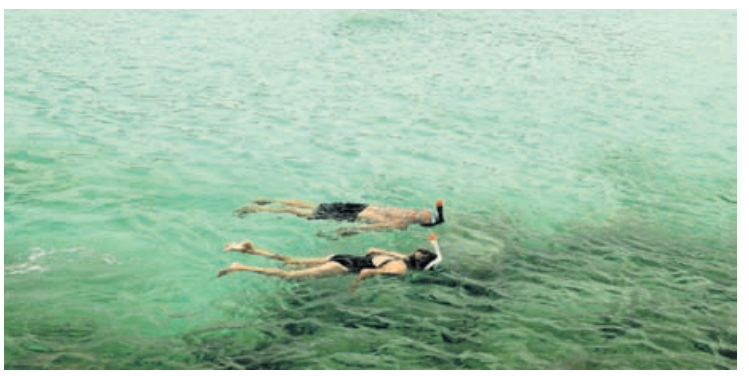
50/30 Friday!

We're giving away $50 Free Slot Play to lucky slot and table game players every 30 minutes from 7pm to Midnight!

THE SHOPS AT ALHAMBRA CASINO
Auntie Anne's Pretzels | Aruba Aloe | Baskin-Robbins
Juan Valdez Café | Hungry Piranha - Pizza, Wings & More
The Brownstone Ribs and Seafood | The Market
Shalom Body & Soul Spa | Moments & Memories Jewelry
Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | The Lazy Lizard
Shalom Hair & Nails Bar | Twist of Flavors | Dunkin Donuts
Treasure Cove | El Patio Tacos & Tequila | M8 Boutique
Fusion Restaurant, Tapas, Wine & Piano Bar

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Open daily 10am to 3am | J.E. Irausquin Blvd #47 | 288.9000 | casinoalhambra.com
Play Responsibly. Visit www.gamblersanonymous.org if you or someone you know has a gambling problem.

Aruba's underwater wonderland



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

Tres Trapi

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

Antilla shipwreck

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

Baby Beach

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

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. The main entrance to reach the beach is through a small bridge that takes you through the mangrove trees. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, accompanied with wooden stairs built to allow easy access to the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you'll find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is snorkel heaven. ❑

Fun facts about cacti hedges "Trankera"



(Oranjestad) – When off-roading in inland Aruba, you may notice some cacti hedges around various properties or lined up by certain pathways. These man-made hedges are called "trankera" and play an important role in maintaining our flora and fauna.

The trankera dates to colonialism, where settlers established several 'cunucu' (farm) on the island. People either used stone walls or trankera as a fence to ward off strangers and wild animals that can feed on the cunucu vegetation or cattle.

Nowadays, trankeras are less common, and those that still stand are often not maintained. On the surface this seems like a bad development, however this proved to be beneficial for our flora and fauna. Naturally developed flora around the hedges offers more shelter for fauna. Another aspect is the propagation process. When pruning hedges, flowers and seeds were removed, which limits propagation to a minimum.

So, though trankeras don't play that big of a role in Aruba's agriculture anymore, our environment still reaps the benefits of these long-standing natural structures.❑

Up for a snorkeling adventure in Aruba? Top 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 seacock and setting her ablaze.

Eventually, the crew was arrested, but SS Antilla could 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.



Turtle at Antilla Wreck Aruba
Credit: Serge Melki

SS Pedernales

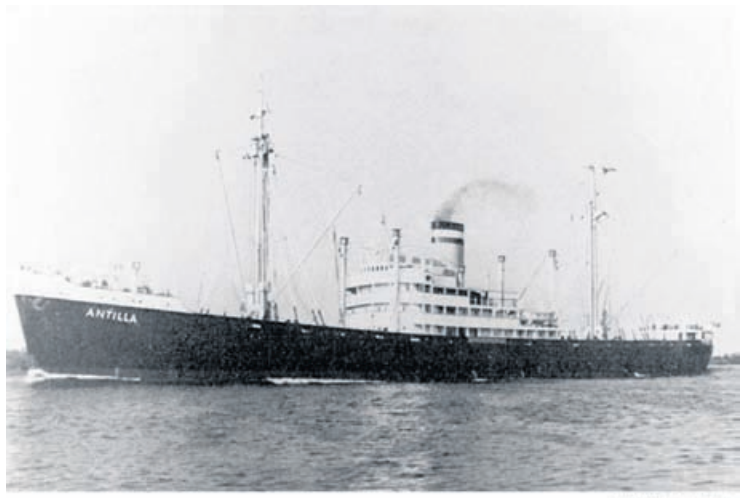
Like the Antilla, the story of SS Pedernales dates to WWII. Pedernales was used as a lake tanker between Venezuela and Aruba, and sailed under British Flag. At this time, The US and Britain were using Aruba and Curacao as fuel stations for the war ships.

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.



The HAPAG freighter Antilla

Launched in 1959, the 190-feet 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.❑

Dining in? Try making some local favorites!

How to make "funchi"

(Oranjestad)—One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is "funchi hasa" (fried polenta sticks), a super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here's how to make it!

Before we start, get to know the basics

What is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups, stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick and filling snack.



Ingredients (measured by heart)

1. Polenta flour/Funchi flour
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add too much. At this phase of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it's cooled you can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.

When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it with your favorite dipping sauce.❑

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.



Unique fauna of Aruba

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

Cascabel (rattlesnake, Crotalus durissus unicolor)

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

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

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

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

Shoco (burrowing owl, Athene cunicularia arubensis)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

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

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

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

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



Prikichi (parakeet, Aratinga pertinax)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

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

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

Coneu (cottontail rabbit, Sylvilagus floridanus nigronuchalis)

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

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

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







CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH



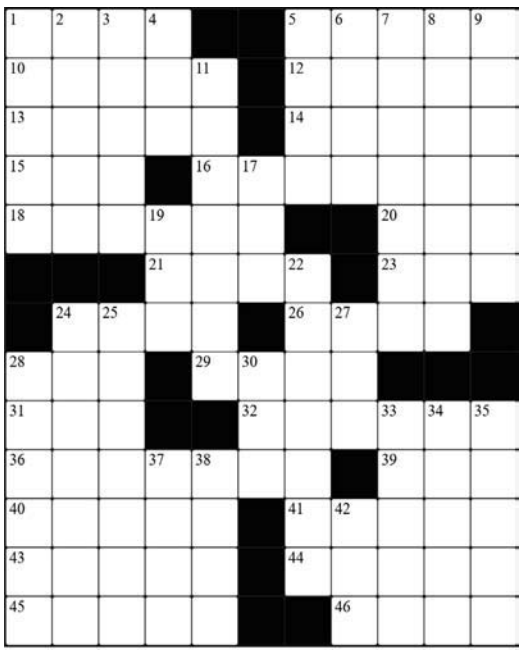
Yesterday's answer

ACROSS

1. Tobacco wad
5. Thunder sounds
10. Type a password, perhaps
12. Two per customer, e.g.
13. Came to
14. Get up
15. Polite address
16. Two-deck card game
18. Trick-taking card game
20. Huck's friend
21. Door fastener
23. One or more
24. Latin love
26. Cincinnati team
28. Penny prez
29. Mailbox part
31. Pop
32. Trick-taking card game
36. Children's card game
39. Melody
40. "The Odyssey" director
41. Tadpole, e.g.
43. Sluggish
44. Cry of surprise
45. Start a set
46. Speck

DOWN

1. Come into conflict
2. TV's Mandel
3. Greek marketplace
4. Stir-fry pan
5. Large family
6. Old Italian coin
7. 1997 Spielberg film
8. Engine parts
9. Like hot showers
11. Sweet fruit drinks
17. Cart puller
19. Pi follower
22. With one's head held high
24. Marine mollusk
25. Busybody
27. List-ending abbr.
28. Beautiful boy
30. Oahu garland
33. Brother of Groucho
34. Metal fastener
35. Wipe out
37. Sports announcer Albert
38. Poker price
42. Target



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

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

11-26 CRYPTOQUOTE

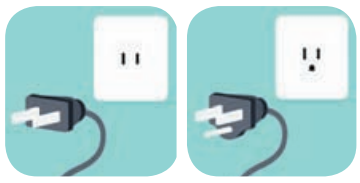
BLU EF DL MZHULVEB UC UOL NLCNBL AOC PHIL EF OHNNT. UOLT HZL UOL YOHZPJKM MHZWLKLZF AOC PHIL CEZ FCEBF DBCFFCP. — PHZYLB NZCEFU

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: WHEN YOU ARISE IN THE MORNING, GIVE THANKS FOR THE LIGHT, FOR YOUR LIFE, FOR YOUR STRENGTH. — TECUMSEH

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.



SUDOKU

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

King Classic Sudoku

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

Difficulty: ★★★★ 11/27

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Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★ 11/26

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'Rockstar' climate expert urges world to defend science



Director Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research Johan Rockstrom speaks during the ChangeNow 26 Opening ceremony at the Grand Palais in Paris on March 30, 2026.

Antalya, Turkey

He's briefed world leaders and business tycoons, appeared in a documentary with Leonardo DiCaprio, and amassed a cult following with his animated, no-nonsense warnings about the perils of climate change.

For a scientist, Johan Rockstrom is about as close to a rock star as it gets and at the United Nations climate conferences, the straight-talking Swede is in his element.

But this year, Rockstrom is on the offensive as science emerges as a key battleground at COP31 in Turkey. Debates have dragged over the science of crossing the 1.5C temperature limit while a long-running standoff over the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has spilled into the talks.

Rockstrom, who is director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, paused to speak with AFP after shaking hands with admirers in Antalya. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: You've been warning for years that the 1.5C goal would be crossed without urgent cuts to planet-heating emissions. The UN says overshooting 1.5C is now imminent and unavoidable. Have we failed this goal?

A: "I think science clearly shows that we need to have a more nuanced way of describing this. The first is that we have to admit failure. We signed the Paris agreement 11 years ago and so far we've just added emissions. And now we will inevitably be crashing through the 1.5C limit. That is failure so far and that has to be admitted, because that's the key why we need to accelerate. For every year that we fail in bending the curve, the pathway to safety becomes steeper and steeper."

Q: Where are we heading?

A: "We're not following a pathway that brings us back to 1.5C. We're following a pathway that takes us to 2.8C, 2.9C, perhaps even 3C of warming within just 75 years... there's no evidence we can support the world as we know it at that level. It's a path to disaster."

Q: Does science have a solution?

A: "The best the science can offer is to limit warming, and peak warming, somewhere around 1.8C and then potentially bring it back to 1.5C. And that is what policy-wise is described as 'keeping 1.5C alive'. But that is an enormously heavy lift... and the first step is the most urgent one, which is to put a brake on warming."

Q: So by drastically and immediately reducing emissions, and then pulling carbon from the atmosphere, it might theoretically be possible in future to return to 1.5C?

A: "I think it is correct to say that 1.5C is theoretically still possible. We definitely need to hold on to it as the landing zone. That would be a big mistake to now compromise with 1.5C.

"Exceeding 1.5C brings us into danger in two ways. One is that it increases the frequency and severity of extreme events... but it's also pushing us closer to tipping points which if crossed, would bring us to irreversible changes that would push us forever into less and less liveable conditions on Earth."

Q: Some nations at COP31 have questioned recent studies into overshooting 1.5C -- is the science sound?

A: "This is obstruction, it's complete nonsense, and everybody knows that... these are robust, scientifically verified scenarios."

Q: There's also a separate spat involving the IPCC, with some nations pushing to delay the publication of its next major reports. Is science under attack here?

A: "We are seeing efforts of doing that -- to undermine the role of science as the basis for the whole policy regime around climate. This is highly frustrating... We have to stand up and defend science very, very clearly."

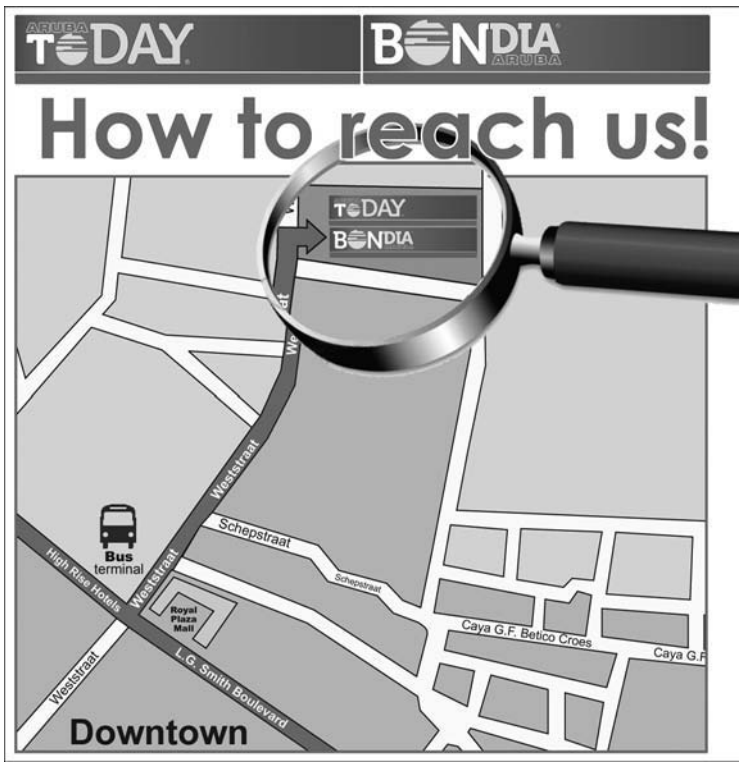
Q: Are you optimistic humanity will change course?

A: "That's the big question, isn't it? If you look at the world today, the answer would be -- I'm sceptical.

"We are in a world that is so fragmented and focusing entirely on geopolitics... In that sense I'm really, really nervous."❑

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Quantum leap: computing's next frontier takes shape

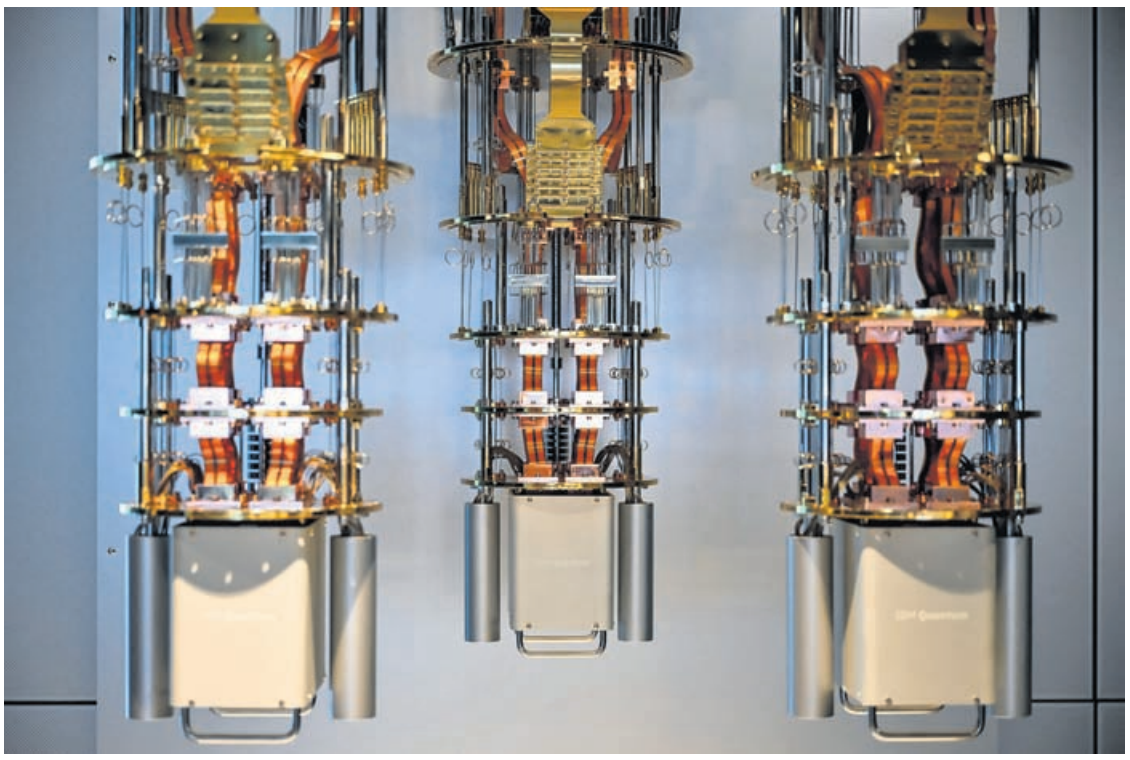
Paris, France

After several dashed predictions, quantum computing is accelerating rapidly with actual use cases and scientific breakthroughs now expected within years, not decades.

U.S. technology giants and start-ups, as well as banks and pharmaceutical companies, are pouring investments into the revolutionary technology.

And Europe is moving to catch up, with the European Commission announcing plans Wednesday to earmark up to 50 billion euros ($55 billion) to boost both quantum computing and AI as it seeks to avoid losing ground to the United States and China.

Here is what to know about quantum technologies that can be hard to decipher.



The IBM Quantum System Two is seen at IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center on June 6, 2025 in Yorktown Heights, New York.

- Beyond 0 and 1 -

While classical computing relies on bits with just two states (0 or 1), quantum computing harnesses "qubits" with infinite possible states.

Each added qubit theoretically doubles computing capacity, allowing quantum computers to analyze countless possibilities simultaneously, solving in minutes what might take millions of years classically.

"Classical computers are speaking the wrong language. In quantum we're almost speaking the language of nature," said John Levy, chief executive of the hybrid chip developer SEEQC. "This unlocks previously unsolvable problems."

Microsoft meanwhile has unveiled quantum technology based on an entirely new state of matter -- neither solid, gas, nor liquid.

Levy's verdict: "They should win a Nobel Prize."

Six major competing quantum computing technologies are currently being developed -- involving superconducting circuits, silicon qubits, ions and neutral atoms -- but "they all currently have problems", as Michel Devoret, winner of the 2025 Nobel Prize in physics for his work on the subject, pointed out in December.

It is impossible to predict at this stage which one will ultimately prevail.

- 'Efficiency race' -

Given its exponential computing power, Levy believes quantum's potential exceeds our "limited imagination", especially when paired with AI.

Some even view quantum computing as the only path to "superintelligent" AI with superior cognitive abilities.

Practically speaking, quantum technology will drastically accelerate discovery of new molecules — extending the periodic table.

This would mean new materials, breakthrough medications, advanced fabrics, complex financial models and super-efficient batteries.

Philosopher and investor Anders Indset foresees an "efficiency race" transforming everything from agriculture to transportation: "We'll have hyper-efficient, lighter cars and cheaper, cleaner air travel methods."

- Too much noise -

Leading US players IBM, Microsoft and Google are each aiming to develop a commercial quantum computer by 2029. IBM said in May that it would be investing $10 billion in the technology to achieve this goal.

Europe hosts start-ups in the field, however, such as French companies Pasqal (listed on the New York Stock Exchange) and Quandela, and Finland's IQM Quantum Computers.

And quantum computers already operate today.

IBM claims its quantum services have generated sales of $1 billion, though current applications remain limited mainly to research.

The market will initially expand through servers equipped with specialized chips and systems.

"We are now switching from quantum theory to the quantum economy," Indset said. "The drive is to be leader in trillion dollar industries."

According to the consulting firm McKinsey, quantum computing could generate up to $2.700 trillion in economic value by 2035.

The giants, already in a furious race to lead on AI, are heavily investing to solve quantum's biggest challenge: calculation errors.

Qubits require sub-freezing temperatures and are extremely sensitive to environmental "noise" such as vibrations, heat, electromagnetic interference that cause computational errors.

Google's new Willow quantum chip and Amazon's Ocelot semiconductor prototype aim to sharply reduce these errors and costs.

"We're witnessing the creation of an ecosystem," said Levy, noting that the pharmaceutical giant Merck is investing in his company to secure access to future quantum tools.❑

Anthropic chief denies wanting humans to 'surrender' free will to AI



CEO of Anthropic Dario Amodei speaks inside the Nasdaq MarketSite ahead of the anticipated IPO of artificial intelligence company Anthropic in New York City on November 19, 2026.

San Francisco, United States

Anthropic chief executive Dario Amodei on Wednesday denied wanting humanity to give up its free will to AI, calling it "absurd" to attribute the idea to him as rival tech leaders push back.

"No, I do not believe that we should 'surrender human free will' to AI systems, and it's absurd to suggest that I do," Amodei wrote in a lengthy post on X, a week after Anthropic's record-setting stock market debut.

"We should never sacrifice legitimacy or self-determination at the altar of efficiency or security," he added.

Fears that AI tools could slip out of human control have haunted Silicon Valley since a string of incidents this summer, including the hacking of Hugging Face by autonomous AI agents developed by OpenAI. "We really do earnestly believe AI could kill all humans!" an Anthropic safety lead, Evan Hubinger, wrote in September.

Amodei took aim, without naming names, at "some AI CEOs" who repeat slogans like "AI should be just a tool" but then are not "actually doing anything different in their products."

On Sunday, Meta's Chief AI Officer Alexandr Wang wrote on X that "we should not be okay with a 'handover' of society to AI."

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said earlier this month that if the tradeoff for curing cancer is "you are going to lose all agency and control and voice in the future," that is "a terrible sales pitch."

Amodei's post was in response to an article by US outlet Axios on AI debate, though he did not address his previous remarks on the topic.

In February, Amodei told The New York Times that in "life-critical, safety-critical cases, we really want to turn it over" to AI.

And in late 2024, he predicted that AI systems "will be the leaders, and they'll be ordering humans or other AI systems around." ❑

James becomes oldest with NBA triple-double in 76ers win

New York, United States

LeBron James became the oldest player in NBA history to produce a triple-double, leading Philadelphia to a 114-104 victory over the Miami Heat in the NBA Cup on Wednesday.

Four-time NBA Most Valuable Player James, who turns 42 on December 30, scored a season-high 25 points, passed off a season-high 12 assists and pulled down 10 rebounds to break his own triple-double age mark.

"Father Time always wins but right now he's giving Father Time hell," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

Miami grabbed a 32-29 lead after the first quarter but James scored 14 consecutive Sixers points in a second-quarter run for a 62-53 halftime lead, and the hosts never lost the edge in the second half.

"We wanted to get back to our defensive identity," James said. "We didn't do that in the first quarter but for the next 36 minutes I thought we got back to that."

The 76ers improved the best record in the Eastern Conference to 15-4 while snapping a seven-game win streak for Miami (10-7).

Both clubs are 2-1 atop Cup East Group B, but with a win Miami would have clinched the group and advanced to the knockout stage of the in-season tournament.



LeBron James #23 of the Philadelphia 76ers shoots the ball against Myron Gardner #15 of the Miami Heat in the second quarter during the 2026 Emirates NBA Cup at Xfinity Mobile Arena on November 25, 2026 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

With Joel Embiid out due to illness and Jaylen Brown out after early left hamstring tightness, it fell to James to score and set up his teammates.

"That's my favorite aspect of my game besides my IQ," James said.

"To be able to go out there and just play like a quarterback role and watch these guys run the right routes, and it's my job to put it on time and on target, it was fun."

Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 30 points while VJ Edgecombe added 18.

"These are my young bulls right here," James said. "They keep me going. They keep me energized."

Giannis Antetokounmpo led Miami with 32 points and 14 rebounds.

James left the Los Angeles Lakers in the off-season and selected the 76ers from several clubs in hopes of capturing a fifth NBA crown.

- Mavericks win group -

The idle Dallas Mavericks became the first team to reach the Cup knockout round, clinching the West Group A title when the Phoenix Suns lost 116-104 at Houston.

Alperen Sengun had a triple-double with 23 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists for Houston while Kevin Durant added 20 points and Devin Booker led Phoenix with 25.

At Portland, Deni Avdija scored 33 points and Damian Lillard added 29 to lead the host Trail Blazers over San Antonio 116-111, leaving West Group C deadlocked with the Spurs, Lakers, Portland and Golden State atop it at 2-1.

"It showed our maturity," Lillard said. "We won a tough one."

French star Victor Wembanyama scored 44 points and grabbed 16 rebounds to lead the Spurs, who fell to 15-4 after their first road loss of the season.

Jalen Brunson and Mikal Bridges each scored 19 points as the defending NBA and NBA Cup champion New York Knicks beat visiting Cleveland 121-102 for their sixth consecutive victory.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 12 points and 10 rebounds and Jose Alvarado scored 21 off the bench for New York.

Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points and James Harden added 28 for the Cavaliers.

Minnesota's Jaden McDaniels scored 32 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead the Timberwolves in a 113-106 victory at Oklahoma City.

Minnesota's LaMelo Ball had 19 points, eight assists and seven rebounds but left the game late with a left ankle injury.

Two-time NBA MVP Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led Oklahoma City with 32 points.❑

Two-time champion Sinner out of Australian Open after surgery

Melbourne, Australia

World number two Jannik Sinner was Thursday ruled out of the Australian Open in January as he recovers from right knee surgery.

The Italian, who won the season-opening Grand Slam in 2024 and 2025, announced this week that he had gone under the knife at a clinic in Finland.

He has not played a match since winning Wimbledon for the second time in July, with his appearance at Melbourne Park always in doubt.

"We've been in regular touch with Jannik's team and they've confirmed he won't be joining us for the AO in January following his recent surgery," Tennis Australia chief Andrew Abdo said in a statement to AFP.

"Jannik loves competing here in Melbourne and is looking forward to returning for AO 2028.

"We wish him all the very best with his recovery and look forward to seeing him back on court soon."

Experts have speculated that Sinner's absence could last three months.

That means the earliest he might be back in action would be during the American hard-court swing, at Indian Wells and the Miami Masters in February-March.

The 25-year-old Sinner was having a brilliant campaign before being stopped by his knee problem, with five Masters 1000 titles alongside his triumph at Wimbledon.

The Italian's 94 percent win record in 2026 was the best of his career.

In his absence, Alexander Zverev has taken over as world number one.

"Over the past few months, together with my team we've tried everything to treat my injury without surgery," the five-time major winner said in announcing the surgery on Tuesday.

"After some very encouraging progress early on, my knee unfortunately didn't respond as we had all hoped, that's why today I underwent a minor surgery to improve the condition of my iliotibial band."

Spanish star Carlos Alcaraz, who with Sinner has become the pre-eminent force in men's tennis, wished him well.

"Tennis misses him. I miss him," the world number three, who has had his own injury battles, said on social media.



Italy's Jannik Sinner talks to media after his win against Australia's James Duckworth in their men's singles match on day five of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 22, 2026.

Sinner won his first Grand Slam in 2024 by beating Daniil Medvedev in five sets at Melbourne Park, then retained his title a year later with victory over Zverev.

He lost in the semi-finals this year to Novak Djokovic, who was then beaten in the final by Alcaraz.

The Australian Open gets under way on January 17.❑



Bears stun Lions in NFL Thanksgiving thriller

Los Angeles, United States

Caleb Williams hit Rome Odunze for a game-winning touchdown with three seconds remaining on Thursday as the Chicago Bears beat the Detroit Lions 39-35 in an NFL Thanksgiving holiday thriller.

Williams's six-yard pass to Odunze -- who managed to get both feet down in the back corner of the end zone -- gave the Bears their first lead of a pulsating game in Detroit, where victory lifted them to 9-2 and into the NFC North division lead over the 8-3 Lions.

"We knew we needed a big one," Odunze said. "Luckily the O-line held up for me. Caleb delivered the ball exactly where it needed to be, and I was able to make a play in the back of the end zone."

Williams connected on 30 of 44 passes for 345 yards and two touchdowns -- both to Odunze.



Rome Odunze #15 of the Chicago Bears scores a touchdown reception against the Detroit Lions with three seconds remaining in the fourth quarter at Ford Field on November 26, 2026 in Detroit, Michigan.

The Bears had two rushing touchdowns from Kyle Monangai and one from D'Andre Swift to help offset a monster game from Lions running back Jahmyr Gibbs, who ran for 205 yards and three TDs.

The Bears erased an early 10-point deficit, knotting it at 10-10 on Monangai's first touchdown with 4:07 left in the first half.

Jared Goff hit Sam LaPorta with an 11-yard scoring pass to push Detroit's lead to 19-10 going into halftime, but Monangai's two-yard TD had the Bears back within two, minutes into the third quarter.

The Lions finally appeared to be in control after Gibbs motored 70 yards for a touchdown that gave Detroit a 35-24 lead with 8:20 remaining.

Chicago responded with a three-play, 71-yard drive capped by Williams's 41-yard scoring pass to Odunze.

Detroit's next possession ended with a Goff interception, the Lions coming up empty on two straight possessions before the Bears put together their game-winning drive.

The game was the first of three on the holiday slate, which also featured a heavyweight AFC showdown between Patrick Mahomes's Kansas City Chiefs and fellow MVP quarterback Josh Allen's Bills in Buffalo.

The Bills pushed their record to 9-1 with their sixth straight win last Sunday while the 8-2 Chiefs warmed up for the blockbuster holiday showdown with a 34-7 rout of Arizona.

The Dallas Cowboys host the Philadelphia Eagles in a classic NFC East division clash.

Quarterback Dak Prescott and the Cowboys offense came to life in a 51-30 win over Tennessee last week, but the Cowboys haven't had back-to-back wins yet this season.

The Eagles, who saw quarterback Jalen Hurts ruled out for the rest of the season in October because of blood clots, snapped a seven-game losing streak with a win over the New York Giants on Sunday.❑