



WELFARE SERVICES COUNTY

Ostrobothnia did what is dreamed of elsewhere: Psychiatry's new treatment model reaches the finals of a quality competition

The County of Ostrobothnia has achieved a breakthrough that is attracting attention all over Finland. The complete abandonment of the psychiatric treatment process not only shortened the queues, but also lifted the region to the top of the national quality competition.

When talking about mental health work, the headlines are often gloomy: lack of resources, difficulties in accessing treatment and cumbersome processes. However, the Welfare County of Ostrobothnia (OVPH) decided to write a new story. The renovation work has been so con-

vincing that it has made it to the finals of the prestigious quality award competition.

Focus on the patient, unnecessary bureaucracy in the scrap heap

At the heart of the reform was not only austerity measures, but also a bold rethinking of the processes. The psychiatric treatment process was streamlined by removing bottlenecks that had previously delayed the start of treatment. The goal was to create a seamless path from first contact to actual treatment and rehabilitation.

In practice, this has meant intensifying multiprofessional collaboration and using digital tools in a way that frees up experts' time for what is crucial: meeting the patient. The results speak for themselves. Access to treatment



has become significantly faster and continuity of care has improved. Before the reform of psychiatric specialised medical care, less than half of patients were waiting for treatment for more than six months. In addition to the changes in psychiatric specialised care, the provision of basic psychiatric services has improved. Psychosocial

centres in Vaasa, Närpiö and Pietarsaari offer treatment without a referral.

Help is also available electronically from Therapy Navigator and in the newly introduced mental health and addiction chat. The chat can be accessed on the county well-being service's website or in the ÖVPH app.

The reform has also re-

ceived praise from the staff. When structures support work instead of hindering it, well-being in the workplace increases. This is directly reflected in the quality of care and patient satisfaction.

A place in the final of the quality competition is a recognition of hard work

Reaching the final of the national quality competition is a great achievement, especially in the midst of the structural change in the counties of welfare services. This shows that Ostrobothnia has the ability to renew and implement major changes on a practical level.

"We didn't just fix the old, we built something new and more sustainable."

The jury has paid special attention to how the effect has been shown with data. It is not just a matter of gut feeling, but of a measurable improvement in the quality of care and the efficiency of processes.

Ostrobothnia shows the way for the rest of Finland

The Ostrobothnia model offers a glimmer of hope for the entire national health care system. It shows that it is

possible to make significant improvements in a challenging sector such as psychiatry when the will and expertise meet.

Although the final winners will not be announced until later, Ostrobothnia is already the winner. The renewed treatment process is here to stay, and its effects can be seen in the everyday lives of the people of Ostrobothnia every day. Here, it has been understood that quality does not come about by itself – it requires the courage to change and the ability to listen to both professionals and patients.

Other finalists in the quality competition include the HUS Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Haematology Division and the Gastrointestinal Diseases Unit of Mikkeli Central Hospital. The final will be held at the Finnish Medical Conference in Helsinki on 22 January. At that time, the winning candidates will also give a short presentation on their competition proposal.

However, one thing is certain: the bar for access to psychiatric care has now been lowered than ever before.

Source: Wellbeing services county

coming increasingly important, this move is seen as a way to ensure the competitiveness of domestic production against imported alternatives.

Source: STT Info

WORLD HERITAGE

Museum money for the Kvarken World Heritage Site



The Finnish Cultural Heritage Authority has launched a call for grants to support the protection and preservation of Finland's UNESCO World Heritage Site. Owners of the Kvarken Archipelago, whose task is to ensure the preservation of the value of a unique nature site, can also apply for a grant.

The Finnish Heritage Authority supports cultural heritage management

Finland ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention as early as 1987, and the Finnish Heritage Agency is responsible for its implementation in Finland. The aim is to grant funding for measures that ensure that the sites remain worthy of World Heritage status. Grants are awarded for a wide range of projects:

* Research and design work

* Restoration and care

* Restoration and repair measures

The Finnish Heritage Authority emphasises that World Heritage Sites must serve as examples and promote knowledge of repair methods and materials, which can also be applied to other cultural-historical sites.

Finland has a total of six cultural heritage sites and one nature site – the Kvarken Archipelago – that has been included on the UNESCO list. Grants can be applied for by the owners of the sites and the buildings located there.

Grants can be applied for electronically by 30 January 2026 at 4:00 p.m. via the Haeavustuksia.fi service.

Image of the week:



A Merry Christmas!

LUCIA

Alexandra Lindqvist is Finland's Lucia 2025

Alexandra Lindqvist from Kirkkonummi has been elected as Finland's Lucia for 2025. Lindqvist was crowned on Saturday 13 December at 17:00 in the HSAleelzing Cathedral, and she will be able to carry the traditional role of Lucia around Finland during the Christmas season.

Alexandra Lindqvist studies at the School of Social Science. Probably one of the important reasons why he visited the school on Tuesday

According to the jury that made the selection, Lindqvist has received a lot of support from the public and is preparing with enthusiasm.

The Lucia tradition brings light and hope to the dark winter, and the new Lucia's mission is also to represent compassion and community at various events and occasions before Christmas.

Lucia Finland also acts as a figurehead for the Lucia fundraiser, and the proceeds from it are used to support vulnerable families with children. The event is a long tradition that combines music, culture and charity during the festive season in Finland.

Alexandra Lindqvist represents a tradition that is part of the winter festival landscape and offers many Finns warm moments every year in anticipation of Christmas.

Sources: Lucia Finland 2025 – Alexandra Lindqvist, Lucia.fi.



OSTROBOTHNIA

NEW YEAR'S REVUE

Laughter is budding in Pörtöm – time for "Grönsaksland"



Pörtöm's popular New Year's revue is back. On January 10, 2026, the doors will open for this year's performance, which promises both local humor and sharp observations under the title "Grönsaksland (Vegetable land)".

For decades, the revue in Pörtöm has been one of the absolute highlights in the area during the winter months. This year's edition, Grönsaksland, premieres at 19.00 and ticket sales have already started online. The revue is known for attracting large audiences from all over the region thanks to its accurate satire and warm local feel. The organizers of Pörtöm UF say that it pays to be out well in advance to secure your place in the crowd.

Source: Pörtöm UF (bokning.portomuf.fi)

NÄRPES

Green giants in collaboration: Närpes Vegetables and Hultholm gear up



South Ostrobothnian Närpes Vegetables and Hultholm are starting a strategic collaboration. The goal is to strengthen the market position and meet future demands for sustainable food production.

By combining their strengths, the companies aim for an even more stable position in the Finnish vegetable market. The collaboration is about streamlining logistics and sales as well as creating added value for consumers. At a time when local produce and quality are be-

TIKANOJA

Music in Tikanoja ad Dec 27

At the end of December, Tikanoja Art Home in Vaasa presents the Year End Music Salon 2025 — a refined concert series combining classical music and museum ambience.

The concerts take place on Sunday, 27 December, with three performances at 12:00, 14:00 and 16:00. The programme includes works by composers such as Debussy, Satie, Fauré, Kreisler and Pärt, performed by violinist Maano Männi and pianist Irina Zahharenkova. Tickets are priced at €26, €15 for students, and €22 for Museum Card holders. The concert lasts about 60 minutes.

It offers a peaceful and elegant way to mark the end of the year — ideal for those seeking culture, reflection and musical beauty.

KRISTIINANKAUPUNKI

Christmas Peace declaration

On 24 December at 12:00, the traditional Christmas Peace declaration will be read on the steps of Ulrika Eleonora Church in Kristiinestad.



The ceremony gathers residents and visitors alike to hear the Christmas Peace proclaimed at noon. It signals the start of Christmas Eve — a moment of calm, reflection and communal peace. Everyone is invited to share in this meaningful tradition, embracing the spirit of quiet celebration and togetherness.

FIMLAB

Fimlab's Special Holiday Opening Hours During Christmas & New Year

The laboratory network Fimlab has announced

Cont on page 2

An unexpected event



It was a cold winter evening in Bethlehem. The stars glittered like diamonds against the dark sky, and a light snowfall lay over the city. Mary, a young woman with large, dark eyes, was on her way to an inn with her husband Joseph. They had traveled a long way, from Nazareth, to register in a census.

The inn was full. All the rooms were occupied, and Joseph was tired after the trip. He felt disappointed and worried, but Maria was calm. She knew everything would be fine. She was pregnant, and it wasn't long before she was going to give birth.

Joseph finally found a small stable where the animals were kept. He asked if they could sleep there for the night, and the stable owner, a friendly man, agreed.

Maria felt that it was time. She gave birth to a little boy, and carefully laid him in a manger, a wooden trough for the animals' feed. Joseph was overjoyed. He had never seen anything so beautiful.

At the same time, far away in the east, some wise men saw a bright star in the sky. They had been studying the stars for many years, and they knew that this star was so-

me thing very special. They interpreted it as a sign that a new king had been born.

The Three Wise Men, Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar, gathered their gifts - gold, frankincense and myrrh - and set out on a long journey to find the newborn king. They followed the star, which led them to Bethlehem.

When they arrived at the stable, where Mary and Joseph were lying with their newborn son, they were overwhelmed with joy. They bowed down and worshipped the child, and gave him their gifts.

That night, in a small stable in Bethlehem, a boy was born who would change the world. He was not just an ordinary baby, but the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He came to show people the way to love and forgiveness, and to give them hope for a better future.

This story, about an unexpected event in a small stable, has touched people for generations. It reminds us that even in the darkest of times, the light can always come out. It shows that love can win over hate, and that there is always hope.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

Joulumusiikki kirkoissamme - Julmusik i våra kyrkor - Christmas Music in our Churches



Vielä ehtii joululauluja laulamaan! Det finns fortfarande tid att sjunga julsånger! There's still time to sing Christmas carols!

Kauneimmat joululaulut - messu klo 10
su 21.12. klo 10.00
Kirkkosali (Mustasaari, Sepänkylä)
Sepänkylän seurakuntakeskus, Niilontie 3
Tervetuloa messuun, ja samalla lauletaan kauneimpia joululauluja
Visser-Keltto, Renvall.
Lopuksi kirkkokahvit

Sunday Service with Holy Communion
su 21.12. klo 13.00
Palosaaren kirkko
Sunday Service with Holy Communion. Church coffee afterwards.
Emilia Kontunen, Karolin Wargh

Kauneimmat joululaulut
su 21.12. klo 18.00
Huutoniemen kirkko
Tervetuloa laulamaan kauneimpia joululauluja!
Huutoniemen kirkkokuoro, joht. Valtteri Tuomisto, Tuuli Kela.

De vackraste julsångerna
sön 21.12 kl. 18.00
Sundom kyrka
Medverkande: Sundomkören,

dir. Monica Heikius, Tilde Martois, sång, Camilla Svevar, Piritta Pitkämäki Ihatsu, Karolin Wargh, Linus Knutar och Riikka Perälä.

De vackraste julsångerna
sön 21.12. kl. 19.00
Korsholms kyrka
Medverkande: Ungdomskören Germivox, Kyrkokören, Korsholms kammarorkester, elevorkester, Erica Nygård, Ninja Jakobsson, A-C Nordqvist-Källström, Michael Wargh m.fl. Andakt: Rune Lindblom

Kauneimmat joululaulut
ma 22.12. klo 18.00
Laihian kirkko
Mukana Antti Yli-Opas ja Kees Visser

Jultabla första och andra föreställningen
tis 23.12 kl. 17.00 och 19.00
Julkrubba.
Trefaldighetskyrkan
Musikalisk föreställning där julevangeliet varvas med musik, dans och drama.

Oi jouluyö! -konsertti
ke 24.12. klo 22.00
Vaasan kirkko
Jouluyön kauneinta musiikkia:
Tarja Viitanen laulu ja trumpetti
Jimi Järvinen urut.
Vapaa pääsy.

Juldagskvällens konsert

tors 25.12 kl. 21.00
Korsholms kyrka
Kammarkören Psallite. Dirigent: Erica Nygård

Tapainpäivän Kauneimmat joululaulut
pe 26.12. klo 18.00
Vaasan kirkko
Tervetuloa laulamaan kauneimpia joululauluja!
Canticum Maris Ensemble, joht. Tarja Viitanen, Valtteri Tuomisto ja Marja-Riitta Ylikangas-Annola.

Än är det jul - välgörenhetskonsert för Ukraina
tis 6.1 kl. 16.00
Trefaldighetskyrkan
Välgörenhetskonsert för Ukraina.
Medverkande: Rymma Bahdasarian, Ella Saarela, Halyna Luzhetska, Liudmyla Kozub, Lapsikuoro / barnkören Dzvinotchky, Svitlana Matvienko, Liza Dumchieva, WSG Seniorkör, dir. Rainer Holmgård, programkoordinator Anders Kronlund, konferencier Hippi Hovi. Kaffeservering i kryptan. Program: 20 € för vuxna. Fritt inträde för ukrainare och barn.

Toivelauluilta
ke 14.1. klo 18.00
Vanhan Vaasan pappila
Pirjo Tolonen

KELA

Steep drop in Kela reimbursements: The cost of a visit to a private doctor will increase significantly on 1 January 2026

The Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) announces that Kela reimbursements for private appointments with general practitioners and specialists will decrease significantly from the beginning of next year. The change will reduce the reimbursement paid to consumers from 30 euros to only 8 euros, which will significantly increase the actual price of private health services for citizens.

Back to the old level

The increased Kela reimbursement (€30) for private doctor's appointments, which entered into force in 2024, was intended to ease the congestion in public health care by directing patients to the private sector. Now, however, the compensation will be restored to almost the level it was before the increase (€8), in line with the Government's policy, which aims to allocate public funds as effectively as possible.

Effects and reasons for the

change

The new, lower level of compensation will enter into force on 1 January 2026. In practice, this means that the deductible for a private doctor's appointment will increase for consumers. For example, Kela will reimburse only 8 euros for a 100-euro doctor's appointment instead of the previous 30 euros. The compensation of EUR 8 also applies to remote appointments, such as video, telephone and chat appointments.

The reason for the cuts in reimbursements is that the increase made at the beginning of 2024 did not produce the expected result in reducing public waiting lists for treatment. Although reimbursement expenditure almost tripled, the number of reimbursed doctor's appointments increased only slightly (about 2%). Kela's reimbursement expenditure in 2024 was over EUR 89 million, which was approximately EUR 58 million more than in the previous year.

Exceptions and limitations
It is important to note that certain special areas will be spared from cuts. The reimbursement for a gy-

naecologist's appointment will remain at EUR 70 and the reimbursement for a psychiatrist's appointment at EUR 50-60, depending on the duration of the visit.

In addition, the extensions that entered into force on 1 May 2025 concerning oral health care, physiotherapy and fertility treatments will remain unchanged.

A new restriction will also be laid down on the maximum number of private doctor's appointments. In 2026 and 2027, Kela will reimburse visits no more than three times a year.

The changes reflect the Government's broader efforts to make the use of public funds more efficient and to target subsidies more effectively, as the previous increase experiment proved to be ineffective. The effects on the demand for services and the health inequalities of citizens will be seen in the future.

Source: Kela (<https://www.kela.fi/ajankohtaista/yksityislaakari-kayntien-kela-korvaukset-pienenevat-1.1.2026>)

From page 1

adjusted opening hours for its service points in Ostrobothnia during the 2025 holiday season

Specifically, Fimlab's branches in Alaveteli will be closed on 31 December 2025, and in Kruunupyy from 22 to 31 December. Quick blood sampling (Nopsa) at Vaasa Central Hospital, as well as spirometry and ECG services, will be suspended from 22 December 2025 to 4 January 2026.

All service points will also be closed on Christmas Eve (24 Dec), New Year's Day (1 Jan) and Epiphany (6 Jan). Other branches will maintain normal opening hours — check fimlab.fi for the latest updates.

SAS

The airline SAS will increase the range of routes at Vaasa Airport next spring 2026



Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) announces a significant expansion on the route between Vaasa and Stockholm when the summer schedule goes into effect on March 25, 2026.

With the new timetables, the number of weekly flights will increase from the current six to eleven, and on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, flights will be operated twice a day. This nearly doubled connection will offer passengers more flexibility and better connections to Scandinavia and more widely to Europe and beyond.

The expansion is the result of cooperation between Vaasa Region Development Ltd (VASEK) and SAS, and it is expected to benefit both business and leisure travelers. Peter Källberg, Project Manager at VASEK, says that the additional services will improve the accessibility of the area and strengthen the airport's position as a significant hub. Increasing the number of trunk connections can also further support the region's businesses and international connections.

The new schedules will apply after the Easter holidays, but passengers will soon be able to book their flights for the 2026 season. The situation follows broader growth in the Vaasa airport area, where the aim is to develop air traffic and attract more connections both in Finland and abroad.

Photo: Adrian Pingstone, Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain

NIGHT OF SCIENCE

The Night of Science – when will one come to Vaasa?

On 22 January 2026, Helsinki hosts the Night of Science with lectures, workshops, and experiments that make research alive and accessible.

Vaasa, however, still lacks a similar event despite having two universities and many researchers. Science should not stay behind university gates – it should be seen, heard, and experienced by everyone.

When will Vaasa take the initiative? When will we have our own Night of Science, a celebration of curiosity, learning, and inspiration?

ALMA

The renovation of Kirkkoesplanadi 15 will be completed on schedule

The renovation of Kirkkoesplanadi 15 will be completed on schedule

The technology-oriented renovation of Alma's premises at Kirkkopuistikko 15, the former Arbis building, will be completed according to plan by the end of 2025. The work has been part of the City of Vaasa's re-novation programme. In connection with the renovation, the building technology has been updated and the general appearance and

Cont on page 3

Photo Supplement

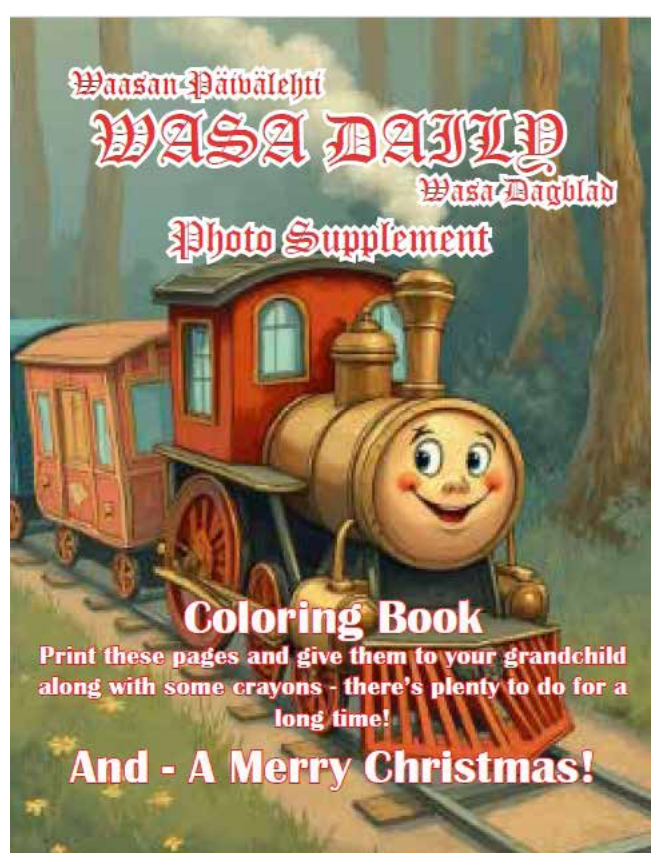


Photo Supplement - upress.obh

CITY THEATRE

Katrina returns to Vaasa – now to the City Theatre

After enchanting the audience in Åland, the musical theatre performance Katrina, based on Sally Salminen's timeless classic, takes the step over to Ostrobothnia. On 15–16 January 2026, the critically acclaimed production will visit Vaasa City Theatre, in a unique collaboration that connects Åland and Ostrobothnia with strong cultural ties.

A hero returns home

The story of Katrina is well known to many Finland-Swedes. She is the proud and strong Ostrobothnian girl who is deceived by love and follows her husband, the sailor Johan, to Åland. There, the dream of a bright life is quickly shattered: Johan turns out to be a lazy and unreliable man who cannot provide for his family. The novel, written by the Åland author Sally Salminen and published in 1936, is a powerful tribute to women's struggle for survival and justice.

The musical theatre performance, which is a collaboration between Katrina Music Theatre, Vaasa Philharmonic Orchestra and Åland Cultural Association Katrina, has been given a new script. Director Ida Kronholm and poet/writer Carina Karlsson have written the script, while the music comes from Åland composer Jack Mattsson, who also composed the music for the original production in 1997.

Strong Ostrobothnian roots on stage

The fact that Katrina is now coming to Vaasa is more than just a guest performance; it's a reunion. To underline the strong cultural ties between Åland and Ostrobothnia, mezzo-soprano Erica Back, with roots in Närpes, has been chosen for the lead role of Katrina.

Erica Back uses her own Ostrobothnian accent in the performance, which creates an authentic contrast to Johan's old-fashioned Ålandic. The other soloists and the choir come from Åland, while the production team has a broad Nordic roots.

The Philharmonic Orchestra brings music to life

The music will be performed by the Vaasa Philharmonic Orchestra, a collaboration that the production team is looking forward to with great pleasure. As conductor, Anna-Maria Helsing will continue in the same role as she had during the performances in Mariehamn in 2024–2025. Helsing, who was the music director of the Åland performances, promises a powerful and emotional experience when Salminen's timeless story comes to life through Mattsson's moving tones.

Katrina is a story of pride, sacrifice, and an unwavering desire for justice – themes that continue to touch audiences deeply to this day. The performance is given in Swedish, with subtitles in both Swedish and Finnish.

"Keep it up" Vaasa, here we come!

Sally Salminen's legacy: From maid in New York to Nobel Prize nomination

Sally Salminen's (1906–1976) debut novel "Katrina" is one of the most prominent works of Finnish-Swedish literature



Sally Salminen harvests rye in Sipoo in 1941. Photo: B. Soldan / SA Creative Commons Attribution 4.0

and has a fascinating history that stretches from a small island in Åland to the metropolis of New York.

An unlikely success

Salminen grew up in Vartiosaari on Åland in a large, large family. Although she dreamed of writing, she considered herself too poor and uneducated to succeed in the writing profession. However, fate wanted otherwise. The novel Katrina was written while Salminen was working as a maid in New York during the 1930s.

When the novel was published in 1936, it was an immediate and sensational success. It won a major Nordic novel prize competition and catapulted Salminen to literary stardom overnight. The book was quickly translated into over twenty languages and its powerful depiction of Katrina's struggle in the Åland archipelago community found a universal resonance.

Nominations and themes

Salminen was nominated three times for the Nobel Prize in Literature, which underlines her unique position and importance in Nordic literature. Her work is characterised by the fact that she managed to combine a very detailed and local depiction of everyday life in Åland and Ostrobothnia with universal themes:

Love and betrayal

The fight against poverty

Women's Self-Respect

The longing for justice

Her ability to depict how Katrina, despite becoming an "outsider" in the village community and being forced to live in near-slavery-like conditions, refuses to compromise her principles and her pride, made a deep impression on readers.

Although her later production never had the same impact as Katrina, Salminen continued to write diligently and her legacy lives on. The novel's timeless themes and strong character portrayal mean that it is still discussed in reading circles and is now being praised again through the musical theatre performance.

Source: City of Vaasa

From page 2

colour scheme of the premises have been modernised

Ventilation has been improved, and surfaces have been renewed and repaired. The dignity of the building has been increased, for example, by restoring the original ceiling height and the curved edges of the reading corner lobby on the second floor. The 150-year-old building was last renovated in the early 1980s.

The courses will return to the Church Esplanade from 7 January 2026. The temporary premises at Raastuvankatu 33 will be taken out of use. Operations in Alma's main building at Raastuvankatu 31 will continue as normal.

Source: vaasa.fi

WELLBEING SERVICES COUNTY

The indoor air problem in the H building is a mystery



The cause of the indoor air symptoms on the sixth floor of the H-building in Vaasa has not yet been found, although the investigations continue, says the Wellbeing Services County of Ostrobothnia.

The Cancer and Blood Diseases Ward will continue to operate in temporary premises in the S building, but staying in other facilities in the H building has not been found to be harmful to health.

Since May, the studies have focused especially on ventilation and air circulation. Previously, it was suspected that carpets cause symptoms, but this has not been confirmed or ruled out. Measurements made at different times have shown variation in fibre concentrations. Next, the researchers will find out where the fibres may come from – ventilation ducts or structures.

The aim is to get the facilities in the H building in order and use as soon as possible, and the causes of the symptoms are being investigated in close cooperation with the Bothnia High 5 alliance, which was responsible for the construction. The Wellbeing Services County of Ostrobothnia emphasises that although the symptoms are still a mystery, further measures are underway to ensure a safe working environment.

LAIHIA

Nominate Laihia's laureates

The municipality of Laihia invites organisations, associations and private individuals to make proposals for the 2025 awardees and scholarship recipients.

The award winners are sought in several categories: Athlete of the Year, Decent Citizen, Posture Youth, Exemplary Youth and Veteran Athlete of the Year.

Athletes who represent clubs from outside the municipality but live in Laihia can also be taken into account. Proposals must be justified and submitted in writing by 2 January 2026 at 3 p.m. either by post to the registry of the municipality of Laihia (P.O. Box 13, 66401 Laihia) or by email to address laihian.kunta@laihia.fi, with the subject line "Awardees 2025".

More information on making proposals and the rules for awarding scholarships can be found on the municipality's website. The award ceremony will be held in February 2026, when the awardees and scholarship recipients will receive the recognition they deserve. Now is a great opportunity to highlight the sporty and exemplary people of your community!

ALMA

Vaasa Adult Education Centre Alma: Spring term starts 7.1.2026

Adult Education Centre Alma will start its spring term on Wednesday 7 January 2026 – and there will be about 200 courses available. The list covers a wide range of hobby and skills courses, and there are also places left for several courses that have been running throughout the academic year.

At the institute, it is possible to study languages, civic education, art courses, handicrafts, well-being and many other subjects both in Vaasa and in nearby municipalities such as Likkyrö, Laihia and Isokyrö. The spring courses are open to everyone – whether you have a career, are a student or not – and the courses are suitable for both a new hobby and professional development or additional skills.

Alma emphasizes that study-ing can be just as much for your own enjoyment as for everyday life or working life. Registration is still on-going, and those interested are encouraged to check out the courses and make their selections soon – spots fill up quickly.

In addition to online registration, you can also register on site or by phone at Alma's service points in Vaasa: Raastuvankatu 31, tel. 0400 868 110 (Mon–Fri 8 am–4 pm) Raastuvankatu 33 / Kirkkoesplanadi 15 (7.1. onwards), tel. 040 6299 133 (Mon–Thu 10 am–2 pm).

On Thursday 11 December at 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m., the open event Christmas in Alma will be held at Raastuvankatu 31. In addition to a diverse programme, you can also register for spring courses.

More information about the event: vaasa.fi/alma – Events

WÄRTSILÄ

Wärtsilä extends contract

– secures stable electricity supply for major gold deposits in Mauritania



On 18 December 2025, Vaasa-based company Wärtsilä announced that it is extending its O&M agreement with Tasiast Mauritanie Limited S.A., a subsidiary of Kinross Gold Corporation, for a further three years.

The agreement applies to the power plant at the large Tasiast gold mine in northern Mauritania and aims to ensure continued reliable and secure electricity supply that supports the mine's production targets.

The 60 megawatt power plant has been in operation by Wärtsilä since it was commissioned in 2013. The plant is part of an isolated hybrid grid that combines solar power, battery storage and Wärtsilä's engines to provide both baseload power and backup capacity for the stability of the system.

The renewed agreement includes a performance-based component that was introduced in connection with the 2022 expansion, where the focus is on measurable results in line with the mine's commercial and operational goals. This model promotes a shared responsibility between Wärtsilä and the customer to achieve set performance levels.

The extension of the agreement strengthens the long-standing relationship between Wärtsilä and Kinross and contributes to the reliability of one of Africa's most important gold-producing plants.

Reference: Wärtsilä press release, 18 December 2025

Caption: Wärtsilä has renewed its O&M agreement with Tasiast Mauritanie Limited S.A., a subsidiary of the Canadian group Kinross Gold Corporation, for a further three years. © Wärtsilä

FINLAND

NEW FOOD

If you want to eat a little less meat...

Snellman launches beef-pea mince as flexitarian alternative



Aimed at consumers who want to reduce their meat intake without giving up familiar dishes, the product offers a practical "step towards plant-based eating". Snellman says the goal was to create a "protein-rich everyday meal solution" that keeps taste and cooking routines unchanged.

A brief comment: The new hybrid meat and pea product from Snellman is a practical step for those who want to reduce meat consumption without abandoning their usual recipes. At the same time, it illustrates a larger trend: many people are looking for flexible solutions where taste, tradition and sustainability meet.

MEDIESPÅK

Journalism and class differences in focus when the Swedish-language Media Language Seminar takes place in Turku

On 27–28 January 2026, the media industry will gather in Turku for the seminar Mediespråk (Media Language XXI). In the new Astra building, everything from American politics to how class differences are heard in the Swedish language in our mass media is discussed.

This year's programme is packed with big names such as foreign correspondent Cecilia Uddén and author Mustafa Can. The focus is on the challenges of journalism in a changing world situation and the future of the Nordic media market. The seminar, which is held in Åbo Akademi University's Academy Quarter, offers a unique platform for linguists and journalists to delve into how right-wing populist discourse and linguistic

Cont on page 4

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Jenny Nyström 1854-1946

Once upon a time, in the picturesque town of Kalmar, Sweden, a creative spirit named Jenny Nyström was born on June 13, 1854. Her family, led by the talented church cantor Daniel Nyström and the dedicated school teacher Anette Nyström, provided her with a happy childhood.

But when Jenny was only eight years old, the Nyström family decided to take on a new chapter and moved to the bustling city of Gothenburg, where her father got a better-paid teaching position.

In 1865, Jenny began her artistic journey at an art school in Gothenburg and laid the foundation for her future as a famous artist. Her quest for knowledge led her to Stockholm in 1873 for further studies, and she continued her artistic exploration in Paris from 1882 to 1886, specialising in portrait painting. Over time, Jenny Nyström developed into one of Sweden's most beloved artists, a testament to her versatile artistic education.

An important milestone in Jenny's life was the realization of her childhood dream – a solo art exhibition in Paris. The exhibition became a reality and marked a highlight in her artistic journey.

Meanwhile, in 1871, the esteemed author Viktor Rydberg created a heartwarming Christmas story entitled "Little Vigg's Adventure on Christmas Eve" or "Little Vigg's Adventure on Christmas Eve". Translated into Finnish as "Pikku Simon seikkailut jouluilta", the story took place when Little Vigg was alone in the cottage on Christmas Eve. To his surprise, a magical Santa Claus appeared and took him on a sleigh ride to spread Christmas joy from house to house.

Four years later, this enchanting story came to life through illustrations created by 18-year-old Jenny Nyström. Her artistic touch breathed life into Rydberg's story and set the stage for a productive career. Jenny later became known for her contributions to Christmas magazines and the creation of many Christmas cards, which mix folklore with festive celebrations. Her influence was echoed in the works of Finnish artists Wendelin and Koivu.

In 1887, at the age of 33, Jenny opened another significant chapter by marrying Daniel Stoopendaal, and together they raised a son, Curt Nyström Stoopendaal, who would also become a respected artist in his own right.

Jenny Nyström continued to share her creative spirit with the world until the age of 92, when she passed away peacefully in Stockholm in 1946.

Interestingly, the same year witnessed the departure of Rudolf Koivu in Finland, who had carved out his own path to create beloved Christmas characters inspired by Nyström's enchanting legacy. And so, the legacy of these two artists intertwined, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of art enthusiasts for generations to come.



From page 3

nuances affect today's conversations.
Source: Mediespråk.fi

BISHOP OF TURKU

Bishop Mari Leppänen to take a leave of absence

Bishop Mari Leppänen of the Diocese of Turku will take a leave of absence in early 2026. The Cathedral Chapter has granted Leppänen a leave of absence for the period 14 February–10 May 2026.

In addition, she will take his annual leave in connection with his leave of absence, which means that he will be absent from his duties from 19 January to 15 May 2026.



Leppänen explains the background of his decision in a post published on Facebook. According to him, the idea of a leave of absence was born last spring, and the decision is related to the need to stop after an intensive period of work. In January 2026, it will be five years since he started as bishop.

"The work has been rewarding and versatile, but also very comprehensive. In the midst of everyday life, it has been difficult to find time for slower thinking, reading and nurturing one's own spirituality, Leppänen writes.

In his publication, Leppänen refers to his experiences of a retreat of silence and reflects on the so-called "thin places" where, according to him, God's presence can be sensed in a special way. The leave of absence provides an opportunity to listen to this invitation and also give time for other important matters.

In his update, Leppänen also refers to an interview with Helsingin Sanomat, in which he discusses the reasons for the leave of absence in more detail. According to him, the solution is well thought out and has to do with coping and the rhythm of work.

WAGES

Tax Administration: 40-year-olds have the highest income

The focus of Finnish income has shifted to the younger age group – people in their forties now earn the most income, according to the Tax Administration's latest statistics.



According to the income tax statistics published by the Tax Administration, in 2024, people aged 40 to 49 received the most income, a total of EUR 37.8 billion. Ten years earlier, the largest group of income earners was those aged 50 to 59, but the distribution of income has changed in both earned income and capital income.

Capital income accrued most to those aged 50 to 59, while in 2014 the largest capital income went to those aged 60 to 69. According to the Tax Administration, the change reflects both the structure of working life and the ageing of the population: there are now clearly more income earners over the age of 70 than ten years ago, and people aged 60–69 work more during retirement.

Income tax statistics include taxable earnings and certain tax-exempt items, such as fringe benefits and reimbursements of expenses. Matti Luokkanen, Senior Officer at the Finnish Tax Administration, says that the

Cont to page 5

CULTURE HERITAGE

Kanttila – Minna Canth’s dilapidated cultural heritage in the heart of Kuopio

Kanttila, in the centre of Kuopio, is the building where writer and social influencer Minna Canth lived and worked.

Minna Canth (born Ulrika Wilhelmina Johnson; Tampere (19 March 1844 – 12 May 1897) was a Finnish writer, journalist and businesswoman. As a writer, Canth was one of the pioneers of Finnish realism.

He wrote plays, mini-novels and short stories. She was the first significant Finnish-language playwright and prose writer after Aleksis Kivi and the first Finnish-language female journalist [Source: Wikipedia].

This simple but historically significant building was completed in 1820 and has been a central part of Kuopio’s cultural history through many stages and owners. Canth moved to Kanttila with his family in the mid-1800s and also ran a yarn shop in the house, which provided the family with income.

Kanttila’s significance extends beyond the building itself; At the end of the 1800s, the city was one of the focal points of Finnish culture.

Minna’s salon, as the house’s large room was called, was an open place for discussion for writers, artists and social thinkers alike. There were heated debates about gender equality, women’s rights and changes in society.

Although Kanttila has been threatened with demolition and structural challenges over the years, the building has remained part of Kuopio’s cityscape. The Minna Canth Association’s House, founded in 2017, bought the building and started renovating it, but it is still far from finished.

The goal is to restore Kanttila to its original glory and turn it into a vibrant cultural center that pays homage to Canth’s heritage. It is to be hoped that this will succeed and save this cultural treasure from its present decay.

Kanttila is not just a building; It is a symbol of progress and courage – values that Minna Canth represented. The house still reminds us of how one person can make a difference for the whole of society.



duce obesity

Extensive meta-analysis surprises nutrition researchersA new international study claims that light soft drinks do not prevent weight gain.

Researchers at Harvard University and Sydney University reviewed 20 years of research and found that consuming sugar-free beverages was just as often linked to weight gain as regular soda consumption. The explanation may lie in the fact that sweeteners increase the craving for sweets and the appetite. The researchers’ recommendation is clear: the best drink for both weight management and health

CLIMATE CHANGE

CLIMATE CHANGE

Rising Heat: Arab Region Faces Unprecedented Climate Threats

The Arab region is warming at a rate significantly higher than the global average, triggering a series of escalating environmental and socio-economic crises.

A recent report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) highlights that the acceleration of temperature increases is placing immense pressure on water resources, food security, and public health across the Middle East and North Africa.

Data reveals that the past decade was the warmest on record for the region, with extreme heatwaves becoming more frequent and intense. These rising temperatures are exacerbating chronic water scarcity and leading to more severe droughts, which in turn devastate local agriculture. Beyond the heat, the region is also witnessing a rise in sand and dust storms, further impacting air quality and infrastructure. Experts warn that without urgent climate adaptation and international cooperation, the “climate hotspots” within the Arab world could face irreversible ecological damage, threatening the livelihoods of millions.

Reference: World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

LITTERATURE

LITERATURE

Adlibris bestseller 2025: Dan Brown in first place – Finnish authors were strongly in focus

Online bookstore Adlibris published the top lists of best-selling books in 2025, and international suspense author Dan Brown is climbing to the top with his book The Secret of Secrets.

At the same time, Finnish authors Satu Rämö and Finlandia Prize winner Monika Fagerholm have a strong presence among best-selling authors. Brown’s work was the best-selling novel in both fiction and total sales, while Rämö’s detective novel Tinna and Fagerholm’s Finlandia Prize-winning Isolation Mode were both successes at the top of the list.

The wide range of top lists reflects readers’ different interests: the categories of fiction, non-fiction, well-being works and children’s books are all represented in the most popular books of 2025. The list also included Sauli Niinistö’s book on foreign and security policy and a knitting book that combines themes related to crafts and well-being.

This year, readers have been looking for entertaining stories, up-to-date information, and reading experiences related to everyday well-being.

Source: Adlibris Finland Oy press release, 19.12.2025

AI

GEMINI 3

Gemini 3 - a large step ahead in AI

Prepare to be amazed! Google has just unveiled the latest iteration of its groundbreaking AI model, Gemini 3, and it’s nothing short of revolutionary. This isn’t just an update; it’s a massive leap forward in artificial intelligence, pushing the boundaries of what we thought was possible.

One of the most astonishing new features is its massively expanded context window. Imagine an AI that can understand and process incredibly long, complex inputs – entire books, hours of video, or vast data-sets – all at once, without losing its grasp on the details. Gemini 3 can do just that, leading to far more coherent, nuanced, and insightful responses than ever before. This is a game-changer for everything from complex coding projects to in-depth research and creative writing.

Cont to page 6

From page 4

development of income reflects a longer working career and a changing age structure at the same time.

FAMILY PHYSICIAN

Family doctor for everyone - in Kainuu

Kainuu is the first Finnish wellbeing services county to appoint a family doctor for all its residents, according to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL).

The model is part of the effort to increase the continuity of care and improve the quality of primary health care.

With the new family doctor model, each Kainuu resident has a designated doctor and their own care team, who are comprehensively responsible for the patient’s health. The aim of the model is to reduce morbidity and mortality, improve the quality of care and patient satisfaction, and curb overall costs.

“According to international research evidence, the continuity of the personal care relationship is key to high-quality primary health care,” says Sara Launio, Chief Physician at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

Seven wellbeing services counties received additional funding from the 2025 Sustainable Growth Programme for the development of family physician models. Kainuu is a pioneer, and other regions intend to gradually expand their models to the entire population. In practice, this means that more and more Finns will be able to have a long-term personal contact with health care in the future, which will improve the quality of care and patient safety.

HEALTH

TICK DISEASES

Tick-borne encephalitis on the rise – more and more people were hospitalised

Tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) has become significantly more common in Finland in 2025, and several of the infections have required hospital care. This is stated in a press release published by HUS on December 3, 2025.

Last year, 195 TBE cases were reported in Finland, but by the end of November 2025, 228 new cases had already been registered. In the HUS area, the number of infections has increased from 91 to 120. The factors are

considered to be warmer winters and an expanded tick area, among other things.

Three out of four of those infected have insufficient vaccination protection – 69% are completely unvaccinated and 13% have not completed or expired their vaccination series. According to a press release by HUS, up to 14% of patients have needed intensive care or intensive care, and some people recovering from intensive care need long rehabilitation before discharge.

The TBE virus is typically transmitted from a tick bite, and the only effective way to protect yourself is vaccination. The vaccine prevents infection in about 90% of those vaccinated.

HEALTH

Ozempic can be dangerous for your eyes

Ozempic, which enjoys great popularity as a diabetes medication and weight loss product, and the ingredient semaglutide it contains received an important warning from the European Medicines Agency (EMA). A possible, albeit very rare, side effect of the drug has been identified as the eye disease NAION (non-arteritic atic ischemic neuropathy).

WHAT IS NAION?

NAION is a serious but rare eye disease that damages the optic nerve. It originates from a disturbance in the blood supply to the optic nerve and can lead to sudden and permanent loss of vision in one eye. Usually, impaired vision is the only symptom of the disease and is not accompanied by pain. People with diabetes, high blood pressure or elevated blood lipid levels, for example, are at the highest risk of developing NAION. There is currently no permanent treatment for the disease.

The decision was taken by the EMA’s Pharmacovigilance Committee (PRAC) after reviewing available data, including small studies suggesting an increased risk in patients taking semaglutide. It is important to emphasize that this is still a very rare side effect and that the majority of people who use the drug do not have any risk of it.

What does this mean for patients?

The most important thing is to be aware of the possible symptoms. If you experience a sudden decrease in vision, blurred vision or dark areas in your field of vision, contact your family doctor or ophthalmologist immediately. Always mention to your healthcare professional that you are taking a medicine containing semaglutide.

Finally, it can be said that all medications have possible side effects, and it is important to have regular medical check-ups and be aware of the possible risk factors in your own health. Although NAION is rare, it is essential that patients and doctors are aware of this potential connection in order to be able to act quickly if necessary.

WHO

WHO warns of a new wave of antibiotic resistance

According to the World Health Organization, antibiotic-resistant bacteria are spreading faster than before.

According to a recent WHO report, infections caused by antibiotic resistance increased by 15 per cent in Europe over the past three years. Especially in intensive care units, bacterial strains are found against which no known antibiotic is effective. Experts stress that a more prudent use of antibiotics and the development of new drugs are necessary to prevent a “silent pandemic” that could threaten health systems worldwide.

HEALTH

Study: Daily Walking Reduces Risk of Heart Attack

10,000 steps a day provides significant health benefitsAn extensive study from the United States confirms the importance of daily exercise for heart health.

Researchers at Boston University analyzed health data from nearly 50,000 adults over a period of ten years. The effect was clear: those who walked at least 10,000 steps a day were 40% less likely to develop cardiovascular disease than those who walked less than 4,000. According to experts, short walks during the day are just as effective as a long run – the most important thing is movement, not effort.

AGING

Japan approves first gene therapy for age-related diseases

New treatment can slow down cell agingJapan’s Ministry of Health has approved the world’s first clinical gene therapy targeting biological aging.

The treatment uses a virus-like vector to activate cell repair mechanisms. The first patients are over 60 years old with early signs of memory impairment. The researchers emphasize that it is not a “rejuvenation vaccine”, but a form of treatment that can slow down degeneration and improve quality of life. The results are expected within two years.

OBESITY

Sugar-free drinks do not re-

CHRISTMAS

A Contemporary Version of the Christmas Gospel



It was an evening in December. The streets of the city glittered with fairy lights and Christmas decorations. People hurried back and forth with parcels in their hands, while the brake lights of cars formed a red river on the roads.

Mary sat at the kitchen table in the small apartment she shared with Joseph. She caressed her growing belly and looked out the window, where the snow was beginning to fall in heavy flakes. Joseph came through the door with his breath in his throat. He had been out all day looking for a place closer to the hospital where they could sleep when the time came.

"Maria, I've tried everything," he said and took off his hat. "I've called around and talked to everyone I know. The hotels are fully booked, and those who rent out apartments want a crazy amount of money.

Maria smiled calmly at him, despite his worried expression. "It'll work out, Josef. It always does. We are together, and that is what counts.

Joseph sat down opposite her, stroked his hand over hers, and sighed. "I know, but I want you and the baby to have a good time. It's not just any night that awaits.

Just then a beep was heard from Maria's phone. She read the message and started laughing. "What is it? Joseph

wondered. "It's an old friend of mine," Maria said. "She has a storage room that is empty right now. It's not much, but she says that we can borrow it if we need to.

"A storage room? Joseph looked skeptical. "Is it even warm there?"

"She wrote that there is a fan heater and blankets," Maria said. "It's better than nothing, isn't it?"

Joseph hesitated, but he could see the determination in her eyes. "All right. I'll pack the car," he said in the end. "We're going there.

They drove through the city, which was now silent under a white blanket of snow. The storage room was on the outskirts, behind an old warehouse. It was simply furnished, with only one mattress on the floor and a few boxes stacked along the walls. But it was warm and protected from the weather.

Maria sank down on the mattress with a sigh of relief. "This will be perfect," she said.

Night fell, and the stars lit up in the sky. Joseph was sitting next to Mary and holding her hand when she suddenly grabbed his arm.

"It's time, Josef. I feel it.

Joseph's face turned pale, but he quickly got up. He hadn't done anything like this before, but Maria kept calm and guided him through it. After a few hours, the small storage room was filled with a new sound - the first scream of an infant.

Maria held the baby in her arms and smiled, despite the tiredness. Joseph

looked at them with tears in his eyes. "He's here," Maria said softly. "Our son.

Suddenly they heard footsteps outside the door. Joseph opened the door carefully and was met by three men who were standing there with packages in their hands. They looked unexpected - one of them had a suit, another an orange jacket from a courier company, and the third looked like a long-distance traveler with a worn backpack.

"Sorry to disturb us," said the man in the suit. "But we saw the light from the window and heard about your situation. We just wanted to give you something.

They stepped in and handed over their gifts. The first man gave a gold necklace to the child. "This is symbolic," he said. "To remind you of his worth.

The other man handed over a box of incense. "A scent that soothes," he said.

The third man put down a jar of cream. "This one is good for sensitive skin," he said. "I use it myself.

Mary and Joseph thanked them, overwhelmed by the gesture. When the men left, they sat in silence, with the child now sleeping in Mary's arms.

"The world is strange," Joseph said, looking at Mary. "But sometimes it shows its very best side.

Maria nodded and pulled the blanket tighter around herself and the baby. "He has already brought us closer to other people. Imagine what he will mean to the world."

Joseph put his arm around them both, and they sat together, while a star shone extra brightly over their refuge.

THE COURSE OF LIFE

The Empty Nest Syndrome – when children leave from home



It's a time that we all have to confront sooner or later - when the children have moved away from home and the apartment, or house, suddenly feels empty. The Empty Nest Syndrome is a feeling of sadness and loss that many parents experience when their children leave the nest to begin their own lives. But what does this actually mean?

Feelings of loss
Grief: Many parents feel a deep sadness when they realize that their children are no longer part of everyday life. It can be a feeling of emptiness that is difficult to put into words.

Uncertainty: After being a parent for many years, it can be daunting to suddenly face an uncertain future. What to do with all the time that is now left?

Joy: On the other hand, there may also be a sense of joy and pride that the child has grown up and is taking their first steps towards independence.

Dealing with the emptiness
So how do you move on when emptiness sets in? Here are some suggestions:
Create new routines: It can be a good idea to set up new routines to fill the time that was previously used to care for the children.

Hobbies and interests:
Now is a great time to rediscover old interests or try new hobbies. Maybe it's time for painting, gardening or learning to play an instrument?

Travel: Planning trips, both short and long, can be an exciting way to explore the world and enjoy life.

Social activities: Spending time with friends and participating in social activities can help fill the void that arises.

A new beginning
The Empty Nest Syndrome doesn't have to be just a sad time. It can also be seen as an opportunity for new beginnings. Parents now have the chance to rediscover themselves without having to constantly think about their children's needs. It's a time to focus on your own dreams and goals.

So the next time the feeling of emptiness creeps in, remember that it's also a time for self-discovery and curiosity. Life is full of opportunities, and sometimes they come when we least expect it. national average.

Valtonen also highlights the factors behind municipality-specific differences: the age structure, use of public transport and distances may explain why mobile data consumption is higher in certain areas. STT Info In addition, he emphasises that improved devices and networks will further increase data usage: better video quality consumes more, and more and more work, entertainment andk is no longer just a privilege for young people.

From page 5

But the innovations don't stop there. Gemini 3 boasts enhanced multimodal capabilities, meaning it doesn't just understand text; it truly comprehends and seamlessly integrates information from images, audio, and video. You can feed it a document, a recording of a meeting, and a relevant image, and it will draw connections and provide summaries that are shockingly accurate and intelligent.

This new version is designed to be more intuitive, more powerful, and ultimately, more helpful across a dizzying array of applications. It promises to transform how we interact with AI, making complex tasks simpler and opening doors to entirely new forms of innovation. Get ready, because the future of AI is here, and it's called Gemini 3!

GEMINI 3

What is the pricing of Gemini 3?

The pricing and access for Gemini 3 are split into different tiers for consumers, students, and developers.

Here is a breakdown of whether Gemini 3 is free and what the costs are for the full-featured versions:

Free Access (Base Model)

Yes, the core Gemini 3 model is available for free.

- Platform: Accessible through the Gemini app (web and mobile).

- Features: This free tier provides essential AI functionality, including basic text chat, reasoning tasks, and simple multimedia understanding.

- Limitation: It has limited access to the most advanced features, such as the ultra-long context window and the highest-tier reasoning capabilities

Paid Tiers (Pro and Ultra Models)

The full power of Gemini 3 Pro and Gemini 3 Ultra—with the massively expanded context window, advanced multimodal features, and deeper reasoning—requires a paid subscription or usage-based payment.

WORLD

EDITH PIAF

110 years since Edith Piaf's birth

110 years ago, on December 19, 1915, a girl was born in Paris who bore in her voice the sorrow, longing and defiance of all France. Edith Piaf - "the little sparrow" - grew up in extreme poverty, surrounded by the cruelty of the street and temporary miracles. From the beginning, his life was full of survival.



Shje first sang about coins on the sidewalks, but his voice was bigger than the street. It carried with it a darkness that could not be resolved: the loss of a child, violent relationships, addiction, illness and constant unhappiness. Every tragedy settled into his songs, as if pain was the fuel that kept him alive.

When Piaf sang La vie en rose or Non, je ne regrette rien, it was not a feeling - it was a confession. He sang as if every note could be the last. The audience not only heard a singer, but life burned in front of them.

He died in 1963, only 47 years old, exhausted and broken. Still, Edith Piaf lives on, generation after generation. His voice constantly reminds us that love can be destructive, life can be merciless - and art can be immortal.

Musical Theatre Piaf - I don't regret that anything will continue at City Theatre until spring 2026.

Image: Wikimedia Commons, Studio Harcourt, public domain

AUSTRALIA

Australia bans social media for children under the age of 16

A new regulation has come into force in Australia

that prohibits anyone under the age of 16 from using social media services without a parent's confirmed permission.



The aim of the Act is to strengthen the protection of the privacy of minors and reduce cyberbullying. In the future, social media companies will have to identify the age of users more reliably and delete the accounts of minors without delay if the terms of service are violated. In particular, the implementation of supervision and the risk of young people moving to unsupervised platforms have attracted criticism. However, the Government assures that the system will take into account information security and fundamental rights.

Figure: MrRendonMC, Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain

USA

Trump introduced the "Gold Card" visa – high price attracts criticism

The estimated cost level of the latest immigration program in the United States, the so-called Gold Card visa, has sparked lively debate and criticism.

The program is designed to attract wealthy investors and entrepreneurs, but visa fees have reportedly been significantly higher than in previous categories. Experts estimate that the new visa category may increase the selection of immigration based on wealth and weaken the fairness of the system.

And the price - we don't know for sure yet, but probably at least a million dollars will be needed.

RUSSIA

Lavrov Warns of 'Nazi Resurrection' Across European Capitals



In a provocative address, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has claimed that Nazi ideologies are being resurrected within the heart of Europe. Speaking in an interview with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting corporation on December 15, 2025, Lavrov targeted major political hubs including Brussels, Berlin, London, and Paris, alongside the Baltic States, accusing them of adopting "blatant Nazi-like approaches" in their current geopolitical strategies.

Lavrov drew historical parallels, suggesting that the West's support for the current Ukrainian government mirrors the actions of Adolf Hitler and Napoleon Bonaparte. He criticized European leaders for allegedly ignoring what he described as Nazi practices committed in Ukraine. These statements mark a further hardening of Moscow's rhetoric against the West, framing the ongoing conflict as a fundamental struggle against extremist ideologies. While these claims are highly controversial and rejected by Western officials, they offer a stark insight into the Kremlin's current worldview and the escalating diplomatic rift between Russia and Europe.

Reference: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

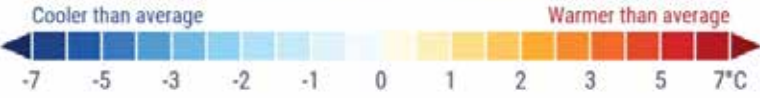
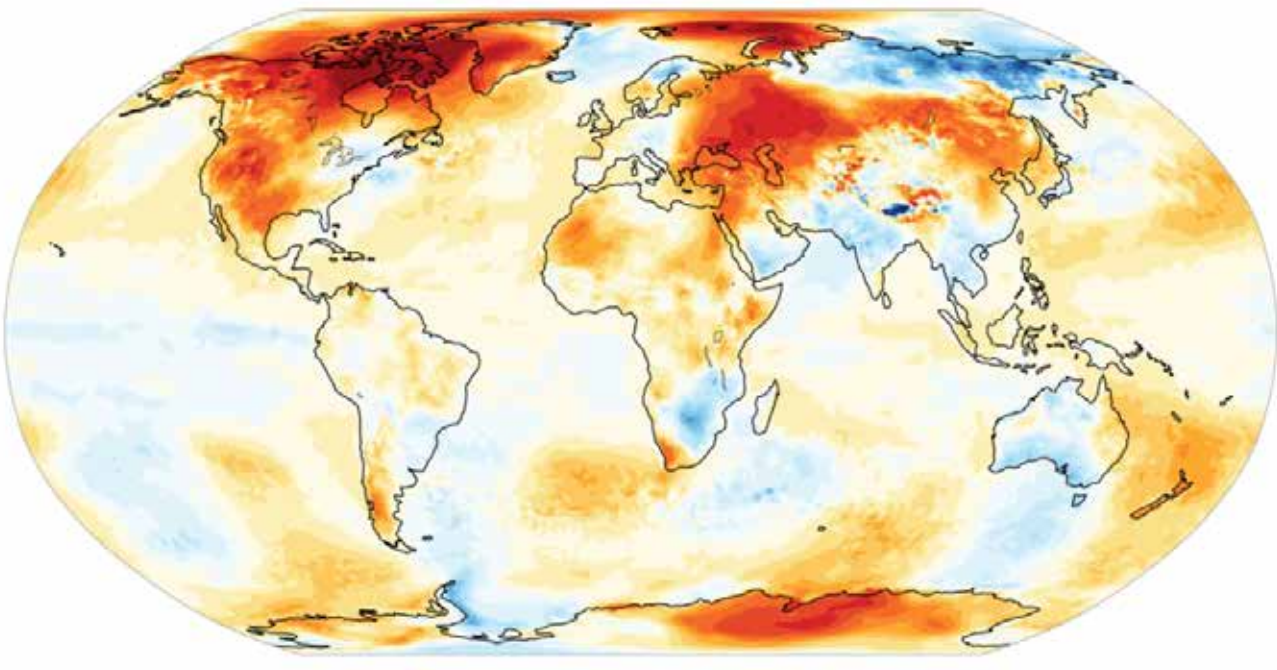
Photo: Wikimedia Commons, U.S. Department of State, Public

CLIMATE CHANGE

Copernicus: "2025: Earth on a Knife-Edge — Another Record-Shattering Year of Heat"

Surface air temperature anomaly • November 2025

Data: ERA5 • Reference period: 1991–2020 • Credit: C3S/ECMWF



Surface air temperature anomaly for November 2025 relative to the November average for the period 1991-2020. Data source: ERA5. Credit: C3S/ECMWF.

As 2025 draws to a close, the Earth stands — once again — on a precipice. According to new data released by the Copernicus Climate Change Service, this year is "virtually certain" to become the second- or third-warmest on record, tied with 2023 and trailing only the historic spike of 2024.

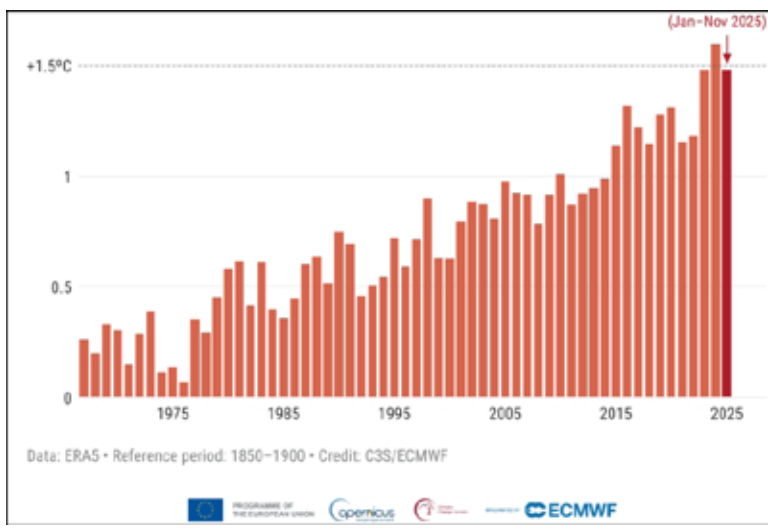
In November alone, global surface air temperature soared to 1.54 °C above pre-industrial levels, making it the third-warmest November ever recorded. And when scientists look not at a single year — but at the 2023–2025 stretch — the data reveal a grim milestone: for the first time in the instrumental record, the three-year average temperature is likely to exceed 1.5 °C above the pre-industrial baseline.

This is not fluctuation. It is escalation. The Heat Intensifies — But 2025 Is Not a Blip. The surge in heat is not evenly spread across seasons. Months like October and November have logged record or near-record anomalies globally. The elevated temperatures in November weren't confined to the tropics or mid-latitudes. Rather, the Arctic experienced among the warmest records, with unusually high temperatures over northern Canada, the Arctic Ocean and parts of East Antarctica. Meanwhile, ocean surfaces — another crucial climate indicator — also registered among their highest temperatures on record for the

month. Sea-ice coverage, especially in polar regions, remained well below average. And the long-term context is stark: the past decade alone accounts for the hottest ten years in modern history. Heat, Storms, Floods — The Climate Crisis in Motion. This isn't just data. It's a harbinger of disruption. The warm November correlated with violent climate events across the globe. According to Copernicus, tropical cyclones ravaged parts of Southeast Asia, triggering ca-tastrophic floods and huge loss of life. Elsewhere, unusual heat pumped energy into atmospheric and oceanic systems — fueling extreme weather, intensifying droughts, drying soils, destabilizing ecosystems, and pushing vulnerable communities ever closer to disaster. The planet's climate system is no longer balanced: it is overstressed, unpredictable, dangerous. And yet — this intensity is no outlier. The record-breaking warmth of 2025 continues a trend: each successive year is among the top hottest on record. As noted by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), 2015 to 2025 will likely amount to the 11

warmest years since the advent of global record-keeping. Why It Matters — For People, Nature, the Future. The current trajectory is not simply about "warmer weather" — it threatens the foundations of ecological balance, human health, food & water security, and social stability. Ecosystems and biodiversity — Polar regions are heating; sea-ice is retreating; ocean warming disrupts marine ecosystems; species that evolved for cold or stable climates may not survive these rapid changes. Extreme weather events — Heatwaves, floods, storms — all amplified. Communities globally face increased risk of disaster, displacement, loss of livelihoods, loss of life. Agriculture & food security — Changing rainfall patterns, droughts, heat stress — all undermine crop yields and food supply. Human health & inequality — Vulnerable populations will suffer first and worst. Heat-related illnesses, climate-driven migration, infrastructure collapse — all are increasingly likely, especially

in regions lacking resilience. Climate feedback loops — Melting ice, warming oceans, shifting weather patterns — these accelerate warming further, locking in damage that may become irreversible. In short: this isn't just another "hot year." It is a red flag — a warning. A Call to Action — The Hour Is Late, but Not Yet Too Late. The numbers from Copernicus and WMO are not cosmic paint-by-numbers. They are clear signals: humanity must act — swiftly, decisively, at global scale. Reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, transitioning to sustainable energy, protecting forests and ecosystems, investing in resilience — the pathways forward are known, if politically and socially arduous. Policymakers, corporations, communities — all must rise to the challenge. Because if 2025 ends among the hottest years ever recorded, 2026 — or 2030 — could shatter every record, unless we fundamentally change course.



Data: ERA5 • Reference period: 1850–1900 • Credit: C3S/ECMWF

UKRAINE PRESIDENT

Russia's Assets Must Be Used to Defend Against Russian Aggression and to Build What Was Destroyed by Russian Attacks – Address by the President to the Participants of the European Council Meeting



18.12.2025 Thank you so much, dear António, dear Ursula, Dear leaders, I'm grateful to you for your attention to Ukraine and for the support that has helped us save so many lives since 2022. We have all come a long way – and yes, there were many, many, really many challenges and

moments of doubt. But the fact remains – Europe achieved a lot, and Putin didn't break Ukraine, and he didn't make Europe look like a loser.

And in fact, on every major issue where Europe stood up to protect itself, its way of life, and Ukraine – Europe turned out to be right, and it delivered real results. Russia has lost – in literally everything it tried to use to threaten or break us, break Europe.

And Europe has demilitarized Russia's gas weapon – the continent no longer lets Moscow manipulate it with energy. And this is a historic achievement to my mind– something that just a few years ago seemed almost impossible. Russia hoped that Europe's defense support for Ukraine and the growth of Europe's defense industry would collapse – but that didn't happen either. Russia cheered and hoped for Europe's political downfall when the American Administration

changed – but again, Russia failed. The EU's leadership and many, many national leaders did what was needed to protect Europe's interests. And Europe has learned how to neutralize the toxic political forces that Moscow funded for years to divide and weaken the EU. And yes, Russian hate propaganda is still out there, especially on social media. But it hasn't broken the most important network that holds Europe together – the network of solidarity. A solidarity that lives not just in official institutions or among leaders, but in people's hearts.

The vast majority of Europeans still see Russia as the only one to blame for this war. And sure, some people in Europe still enjoy flying to Moscow. But let's be honest, most Europeans understand this – selling out moral values and European interests in Moscow will never become the European mainstream. It will always be the business of outsiders – not of real leaders.

COPYRIGHT: The Presidential Office of Ukraine. All materials featured on this site are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International. The use of any materials posted on the website is permitted provided you link to www.president.gov.ua regardless of full or partial use of materials.

ART EXPERIENCE OF THE WEEK



Fanny Churberg 12.12.1845 i Vasa - 10.5.1892 i Helsingfors Vinterlandskap, Talvimaiesema, Winter Landscae 1860-1869

George Orwell 1984 12



times 3.12.83 reporting bb dayorder doubleplusungood refs unpersons rewrite fullwise upsub antefiling

With a faint feeling of satisfaction Winston laid the fourth message aside. It was an intricate and responsible job and had better be dealt with last. The other three were routine matters, though the second one would probably mean some tedious wading through lists of figures.

Winston dialled 'back numbers' on the telescreen and called for the appropriate issues of 'The Times', which slid out of the pneumatic tube after only a few minutes' delay. The messages he had received referred to articles or news items which for one reason or another it was thought necessary to alter, or, as the official phrase had it, to rectify. For example, it appeared from 'The Times' of the seventeenth of March that Big Brother, in his speech of the previous day, had predicted that the South Indian front would remain quiet but that a Eurasian offensive would shortly be launched in North Africa. As it happened, the Eurasian Higher Command had launched its offensive in South India and left North Africa alone. It was therefore necessary to rewrite a paragraph of Big Brother's speech, in such a way as to make him predict the thing that had actually happened. Or again, 'The Times' of the nineteenth of December had published the official

forecasts of the output of various classes of consumption goods in the fourth quarter of 1983, which was also the sixth quarter of the Ninth Three-Year Plan. Today's issue contained a statement of the actual output, from which it appeared that the forecasts were in every instance grossly wrong. Winston's job was to rectify the original figures by making them agree with the later ones. As for the third message, it referred to a very simple error which could be set right in a couple of minutes. As short a time ago as February, the Ministry of Plenty had issued a promise (a 'categorical pledge' were the official words) that there would be no reduction of the chocolate ration during 1984. Actually, as Winston was aware, the chocolate ration was to be reduced from thirty grammes to twenty at the end of the present week. All that was needed was to

substitute for the original promise a warning that it would probably be necessary to reduce the ration at some time in April.

As soon as Winston had dealt with each of the messages, he clipped his speakwritten corrections to the appropriate copy of 'The Times' and pushed them into the pneumatic tube. Then, with a movement which was as nearly as possible unconscious, he crumpled up the original message and any notes that he himself had made, and dropped them into the memory hole to be devoured by the flames.

What happened in the unseen labyrinth to which the pneumatic tubes led, he did not know in detail, but he did know in general terms. As soon as all the corrections which happened to be necessary in any particular number of 'The Times' had been assembled and collated, that number would be reprinted, the original copy destroyed, and the corrected copy placed on the files in its stead. This process of continuous alteration was applied not only to newspapers, but to books, periodicals, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, films, sound-tracks, cartoons, photographs—to every kind of literature or documentation which might conceivably hold any political or ideological significance. Day by day and almost minute by minute the past was brought up to date. In this way every prediction made by the Party could be shown by documentary evidence to have been correct, nor was any item of news, or any expression of opinion, which conflicted with the needs of the moment, ever allowed to remain on record. All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary. In no case would it have been possible, once the deed was done, to prove that any falsification had taken place. The largest section of the Records Department, far larger than the one on which Winston worked, consisted simply of persons whose duty it was to track down and collect all copies of books, newspapers, and other documents which had been superseded and were due for destruction. A number of 'The Times' which might, because of changes in political alignment, or mistaken prophecies uttered by Big Brother, have been rewritten a dozen times still stood on the files bearing its original date, and no other copy existed to contradict it. Books, also, were recalled and rewritten again and again, and were invariably reissued without any admission that any alteration had been made. Even the written instructions which Winston received, and which he invariably got rid of

as soon as he had dealt with them, never stated or implied that an act of forgery was to be committed: always the reference was to slips, errors, misprints, or misquotations which it was necessary to put right in the interests of accuracy.

But actually, he thought as he re-adjusted the Ministry of Plenty's figures, it was not even forgery. It was merely the substitution of one piece of nonsense for another. Most of the material that you were dealing with had no connexion with anything in the real world, not even the kind of connexion that is contained in a direct lie. Statistics were just as much a fantasy in their original version as in their rectified version. A great deal of the time you were expected to make them up out of your head. For example, the Ministry of Plenty's forecast had estimated the output of boots for the quarter at 145 million pairs. The actual output was given as sixty-two millions. Winston, however, in rewriting the forecast, marked the figure down to fifty-seven millions, so as to allow for the usual claim that the quota had been overfulfilled. In any case, sixty-two millions was no nearer the truth than fifty-seven millions, or than 145 millions. Very likely no boots had been produced at all. Likelier still, nobody knew how many had been produced, much less cared. All one knew was that every quarter astronomical numbers of boots were produced on paper, while perhaps half the population of Oceania went barefoot. And so it was with every class of recorded fact, great or small. Everything faded away into a shadow-world in which, finally, even the date of the year had become uncertain.

Winston glanced across the hall. In the corresponding cubicle on the other side a small, precise-looking, dark-chinned man named Tillotson was working steadily away, with a folded newspaper on his knee and his mouth very close to the mouthpiece of the speakwrite. He had the air of trying to keep what he was saying a secret between himself and the telescreen. He looked up, and his spectacles darted a hostile flash in Winston's direction.

PODCAST

"BILINGUALISM IS HEALTHY FOR THE BRAIN"



People: Mats - a bit joking, self-deprecating. Oskar - slightly more serious, but has a twinkle in his eye.

Intro
MATS: Hello and welcome to Hjärn-gympa & språkbyte, the podcast where we strike a blow for the brain's adaptability - and today especially for this thing about knowing more languages. My name is Mats. OSKAR: And my name is Oskar. Hello! Time to dig a little into how the brain really works - with two languages in mind, and how it sometimes feels like a juggler at a fairground. MATS: Exactly. So sit down, let go of your phone (but only for this moment) and let's get started.

Part 1: Entrance and Everyday Examples

MATS: Okay, Oskar - if you're a language fan, say: have you ever experienced that you almost say a word in Swedish, and then a Finnish word jumps in the middle? OSKAR: Haha, yes it happens. I sit and speak Swedish, think "now I'm going to say..." - and then bang: a Finnish word pops up. And you know how it turns out - I have to stop myself. MATS: Exactly! And that, my friend, is actually an example of what scientists mean when they say that the brain is constantly battling languages. Both languages are "turned on" at the same time - and in order for us to use the right language, we need to actively slow down the other. OSKAR: Like you have two radio channels on at the same time and you have to press "mute" on one to focus. MATS: Yes, exactly! It's a bit like brain exercise.

Part 2: The scientific angle

OSKAR: So here's the thing: when the brain works with two or more languages, it's not just a passive receiver - it's actively working to choose, switch and inhibit. Research shows that people who are bilingual often have better executive functions - things like attention, impulse control, and the ability to switch between tasks. For example, Ellen Bialystok showed as early as 2001 that bilingual children and adults performed better than monolingual children in such tasks. (Bialystok 2001) MATS: Aha, so it's not just "knowing two languages" and then sitting comfortably and resting - no, the brain gets exercise! OSKAR: Exactly. And when we look at the structure - with brain imaging - we find that bilingual people often have larger or denser grey matter in language and control regions, and better white matter integrity - which makes it easier for signals to be sent faster. (For example, Mechelli et al. 2004) MATS: So the brain becomes kind of "equipped" for better communication within itself. OSKAR: Yes - and that brings us to the next thing, which is extra exciting: the cognitive reserve.

Part 3: Cognitive reserve and lifelong brain health

MATS: Cognitive reserve - what do we mean by that? OSKAR: Think of the brain as a company that has a reserve budget. If any part starts to malfunction, the reserve budget can kick in and make the company continue to function anyway. In the brain, this means that you can cope better with aging or injuries, without you noticing it immediately. MATS: And bilingualism helps build that rezerv budget? OSKAR: Yes. Several studies show that bilingual people develop symptoms of dementia or Alzheimer's disease, for example, later than monolingual people - often by several years. (For example, Craik, Bialystok, and Freedman 2010) And more recent research confirms that bilingualism may act as a unique factor in cognitive reserve. (Gallo & Abutaleb 2023) MATS: So it's not just "fun to know two languages on holiday" - it can even give the brain a head start. OSKAR: That's how it is.

Part 4: A little humor and everyday tips

MATS: Okay - let's take a short humor episode: imagine you're in the grocery store and are going to buy "milk" but your brain says "milk" because you're thinking English, and at the same time you hear someone speaking Swedish - bang, the brain is getting full activity. OSKAR: Haha, yes! And you have to decide quickly - should you say "milk" or "milk"? You quickly click about in the settings. MATS: Yep. So here are a couple of tips for those who want to train that bilingual brain: Change the language at home sometimes - decide that you only speak the other language at dinner. Listen to a podcast or audiobook in your second language while you wash the dishes - multitask your brain a bit. Learn a few new words every day - the brain likes small challenges. OSKAR: And remember - it's not about becoming a complete expert in all languages right away. Basic knowledge also seems to be useful. (Time article 2014) MATS: So even if you sometimes say "thank you - thanks" or "kiitos - thanx", at least you've given your brain a good workout.

Part 5: Summary and conclusion

OSKAR: So to sum up: the brain is amazing at adapting - and mastering a second language is more than just a cultural bonus. It reshapes the brain's architecture, strengthens executive functions, builds cognitive reserve, and can help you keep your brain alert for longer. MATS: And it doesn't have to be monster studies - just that you use the language, play with it, let the brain work. OSKAR: Exactly. So - why not start today? Learn a few new words, talk to a friend, or why not change the language at dinner. Your brain will thank you - maybe with a little dance. MATS: Haha! Thank you for listening to Brain Exercise & Language Exchange. Talk to you next time - until then: try saying "brain" in another language! OSKAR: Hello and have a nice time - and keep your brain in shape! MATS: Goodbye!

HUMOUR ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

DRINKING

- Why do you close your eyes while drinking? - The doctor has forbidden me to look too deeply into the glass.

IN THE CHURCH

Healthy advice. The priest notices that most of the audience is sleeping and that one of them has started snoring heavily, which is why he raises his voice and says: - Wouldn't someone be so good as to wake up that snoring brother of ours so that the others could sleep in peace.

MAD LOVE

Love. Young man: - I love you madly! Miss: - Then it is best that you turn to my father. He is a doctor for the mentally ill.

CARAMEL

Lill-Jan has received one large caramel, which he immediately puts in his mouth. Immediately afterwards, he cancels his best scream, because his mouth is closed, the caramel is gone. "What's wrong with Lill-Jan," asks mother. - Kajamel-len, boohää, hää häää! . . . - Have you lost the caramel? - Yes. - And mother and all the aunts start looking for it. - Where did you drop it then... - Buhää, hää - in the stomach.

MARRIED 6 DAYS

- Now we've been married for 6 days, and you don't love me anymore. - But dear Cecilia, of course I love you, but God

the Father also rested on the seventh day.

FREE TELEGRAM

Mac Carty from Aberdeen is visiting the U.S.A. One day he has to send a telegram to a relative. When he asks about the price at the telegraph office, he is told that the sender's name costs nothing. - Magnificent, says the scout. I am descended from an Indian chief and my name is Iwillarriveto-morrow.

SLOW AS THE EVENING SKY.

- Yes, feel free to kiss you, Cissi. - Hmm. - Are you going to be terribly angry with me if I give you a kiss, Cissi? - Mnah - Can I give you a kiss, Cissi? - I say int - Do they mean yes or no? - They say yes, Affe! - Why don't you want to say them then? Can I kiss you or not? - Think about it then! - Yes, I can't give you a kiss! - Well, now think about it - Well, yes, kiss you, Cissi? - Well, think smart, Affe!

TEETH

- Grandfather! How often do we get teeth? - Three times, the first two times we get them for free, but the third time we have to pay for them

Astronomic picture of the week:

Carina Nebula



The spectacular star-forming Carina Nebula has been captured in great detail by the VLT Survey Telescope at ESO's Paranal Observatory. This picture was taken with the help of Sebastián Piñera, President of Chile, during his visit to the observatory on 5 June 2012 and released on the occasion of the new telescope's inauguration in Naples on 6 December 2012.

Credit: ESO. Acknowledgement: VPHAS+ Consortium/ Cambridge Astronomical Survey Unit Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Next week:



BLOG WRITERS

Join Wasa Daily as a Blog Writer!

Are you passionate about sharing your thoughts, stories, or expertise with the community? Wasa Daily is looking for enthusiastic blog writers to contribute engaging content for our readers.

Whether you love writing about local events, culture, lifestyle, business, or personal experiences, we welcome your voice!

Writing for Wasa Daily is a great opportunity to reach a wider audience, connect with fellow locals, and showcase your creativity. No prior experience is needed—just bring your ideas and enthusiasm! We value diverse perspectives and fresh voices that reflect the vibrant spirit of our community.

Interested? Send us your blog pitch or a short sample, and let's get your words published! Join us in making Wasa Daily a platform for meaningful conversations and inspiring stories. Contact us at wasadagblad@gmail.com for more details. We can't wait to hear from you!

Wasa Daily

A modern newspaper with a layout with features of the press of the 1870s. Back then, newspapers had only 4-8 pages. Lots of text, but no images at all, so there's a lot to read on a few pages. Our paper is one of the very few newspapers in English serving English-speaking inhabitants in the Ostrobothnia region

The magazine contains quotations from old daily newspapers taken from the National Archives (digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi). GPT3, Gemini, Aria and Monica do some of the routine editing work, such as translation, corrector reading, and short notice writing. All texts have been checked by journalists and the editorial staff is responsible for all the content of the texts.

Wasa Daily is a daily newspaper type publication, so far it is published on Sunday mornings. But our goal is for it to come out every morning in the future.

The magazine is available online for free. Editor-in-chief Hans Björknäs. Readers' writings are welcome! The magazine is locally owned and will remain so. For ever! Editorial office: Wasa Daily, Koulukatu 37 B 7, 65100 Vaasa, tel. +358-40-5462455. Helsinki editorial office: Wasa Daily, Toineen linja 9 B 36, 00530 Helsinki. Phone +358-40-5462455. Email: wasadagblad@gmail.com

From our readers

We very much welcome submissions from our readers. Comments, stories, memories, debate, news from home. Probably this will be the most important part of this spring paper. But space is limited, so please write as short as possible! So please send posts to: wasadagblad@gmail.com

Advertise in Wasa Daily

Being among the first to advertise in this historic and hyper-modern daily may have some PR value. Send ads to wasadagblad@gmail.com

WASA DAILY wasadagblad@gmail.com

HOROSCOPE FOR DECEMBER 2025
December Horoscope: What the Stars Have in Store for You
Leo (Jul 23-Aug 22) You're the star at the top of the tree this month, Leo. But don't hog the spotlight too much; let someone else light a candle or two. Sharing is the greatest gift, even if it's just the last gingerbread cookie.
Virgo (Aug 23-Sep 22) Your December checklist includes organizing Secret Santa, color-coding decorations, and perfecting your "surprised" face for predictable gifts. Try to relax. Even if the bows aren't perfectly tied, the world will keep spinning.
Libra (Sep 23-Oct 22) December has you torn between binge-watching holiday movies or handmaking snowflakes for every window. Tip: Do both. Balance is your superpower—just don't try to bake and gift-wrap at the same time.
Scorpio (Oct 23-Nov 21) You've got strong opinions about eggnog and even stronger ones about who gets to control the holiday playlist. Channel that passion into spreading joy, not just enforcing Mariah Carey exclusivity.
Sagittarius (Nov 22-Dec 21) Sagittarius, you're practically a snow globe of che-