



The Lycommunication

4th February 2026

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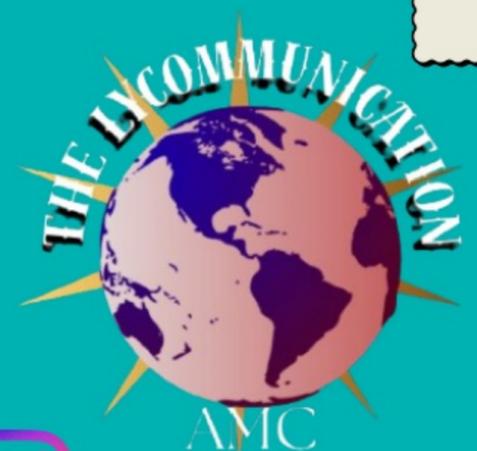


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Maduro Captured by the US

On January 3, 2026, Nicolás Maduro, president of Venezuela since 2013 and one of the most controversial leaders in South America, was captured, along with his wife, Cilia Flores, by the United States, on Donald Trump's orders.



WHO IS MADURO ?

Nicolás Maduro gained control of Venezuela in 2013. Since then, he was a very controversial leader. Indeed, a lot of Venezuelans say that his government was corrupt and unfair. Beneath* its appearance of a simple south American country, Venezuela has economic problems, food cuts, very little access to medicine. It is reported that, as a consequence, 7 million people have left the country under his government.

*Beneath = under

WHY DID TRUMP DO THAT?

The United States strongly opposed Nicolas Maduro during Donald Trump's presidential campaign. The American government considered him as the "illegitimate leader" of Venezuela and accused his government of corruption, drug trafficking, kidnapping and human rights violations. In July 2025, the US announced a \$50m reward for Maduro's head, accusing him of being one of the largest narco-traffickers in the world. For the US, these actions were meant to weaken* his power and get a political change in Venezuela.

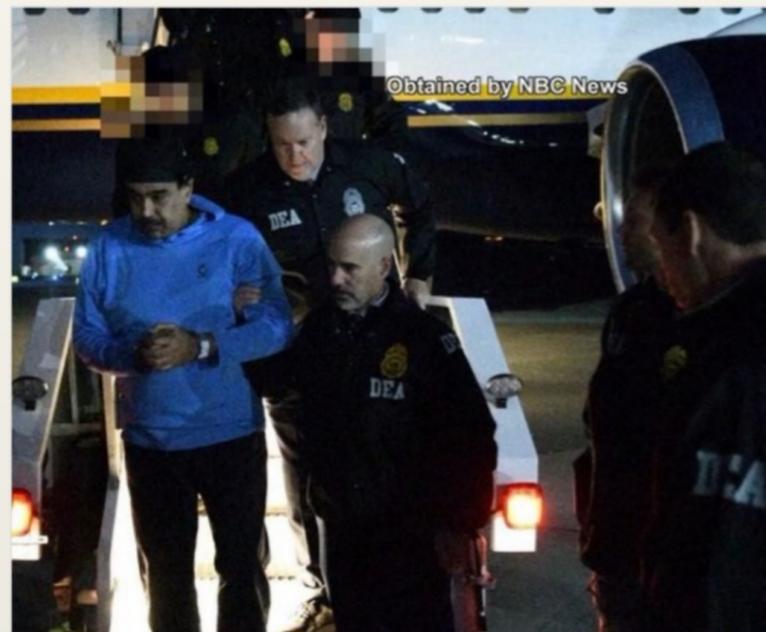
Weaken* = affaiblir



THE PROCESS

The strikes started at 11.43 p.m. on January 2, 2026 and lasted 30 minutes. At least 7 explosions were reported at 2 in the morning on January 3 and 150 US aircrafts flew over Caracas. The Venezuelan government said that Maduro quickly declared a national state of emergency.

Nevertheless, at 05.21 a.m., he and his wife were captured in a military fortress called Fort Tiuna in Caracas and sent out to NY city with the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration).



File:Nicolás Maduro being escorted by the DEA.jpg

Click on a date/time to view the file as it appeared at that time.

Wikipedia

THE CONSEQUENCES

On January 5, although Maduro pleaded not guilty, he was indicted* for narco-terrorism, helping to bring cocaine in the country, possession of automatic weapons, and possession of destructive devices. On the same day, Venezuela's Vice President, Delcy Rodríguez, became the acting president of Venezuela, however temporarily. The New York Times reported on January 3 that at least 40 people, including civilians and soldiers, were killed in the attack, and this number of victims rose up to 80 on January 4. The government of Cuba also reported that 32 Cubans were killed in Venezuela, and they were all members of armed forces and secret services.

Today, Nicolas Maduro is being held in the Brooklyn Jail in NYC, awaiting his trial**.

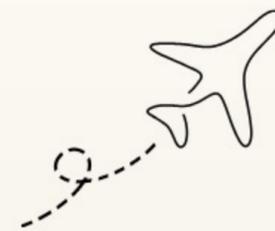
* Indicted: inculpé



** trial: procès



The UK Reintegrates the Erasmus Programme



On June 23, 2016, the UK held a referendum. The question was: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" 51.89% of voters chose to leave the EU, while 48.11% wanted to stay. As a consequence, the UK was no more part of the Erasmus programme; but, recently, the government chose to reintegrate it in 2027.

ERASMUS+, A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

Erasmus+ (EuRopean Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is a European Union student exchange programme established in 1987. It allows European students to study in a foreign university while validating their own university studies. Thus, you can study abroad from 2 to 12 months, enrich your personal and cultural knowledge and improve your skills in a foreign language.



Countries part of the Erasmus+ Scheme. Author: Fobos92

WHAT ABOUT THE UK?

The UK left the program in 2020. Hence, UK students lost access to the Erasmus scheme, which allowed them to study, train, or work abroad in EU countries and EU students also lost the same opportunities in the UK. For example, in 2018, 9,993 UK students and 29,797 EU students participated in Erasmus exchanges between the UK and the EU.



In May 2025, the UK and the European Union agreed that the UK will rejoin Erasmus+ from January 2027 for one year. This means that British students will again be able to study or do work placements in European universities and organisations, and European students will be able to come to the UK too.

The deal was part of a bigger plan from the UK government to improve relations with the EU after Brexit. The UK will pay about £570 million in the first year to be part of Erasmus+. It is expected that more than 100,000 British people could benefit from the programme in 2027.



About half or more of the people in the UK are in favour of reintegrating the EU. In September 2023, there was a march in London campaigning for the UK to rejoin the EU.

The British Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, who is the leader of the Labour Party, is in favour of increasing the UK-EU relations and cooperation and has launched a “Brexit reset” campaign. The negotiations with Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, are still ongoing.

If you are interested in studying abroad through the Erasmus+ scheme, here are two links:

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/fr>

<https://agence.erasmusplus.fr/profils/vous-souhaitez-partir-a-letranger/>

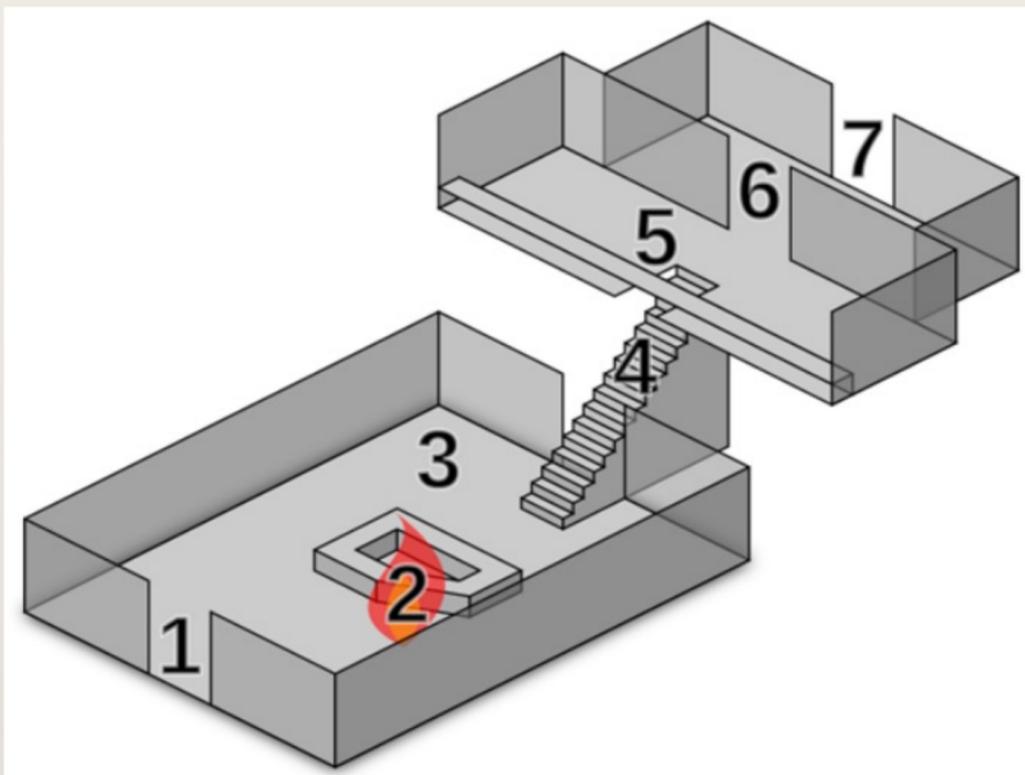


Deadly Swiss Bar Fire

We are going to tell you about the fire that occurred in the bar of “La Constellation” in Crans-Montana in Switzerland on the 31st of December, on New Year’s Eve. This drama affected many people as the victims were very young.

THE CONTEXT

Many young people gathered that evening to celebrate New Year’s Eve in this very popular bar. The basement was crowded and there were more than 150 people in the bar.



1. Access to additional seating area
2. Approximate start of fire
3. Basement bar area
4. Stairs to ground level
5. Ground-level bar area
6. Terrace
7. Exit

Simplified isometric diagram of the Le Constellation bar, with doors, locations, and approximate start of fire labeled. Author: cmglee. 4 Jan. 2026

At 1.26 a.m. on New Year’s Day, when a waitress, standing on a man’s shoulders, brought two bottles of champagne with “fountain candle sparklers”, the sparks touched the ceiling and a fire broke out. As they were celebrating and as the music went on, some did not realize that the situation was dramatic.

However, while the fire spread and the smoke increased, many tried to get back to the first floor and get out. Unfortunately, as you can see on the picture, there was only one way to escape: through the narrow stairs.



THE OUTCOME

Even though the firemen came quickly and a lot of people who had been inside or outside helped the victims, the outcome is tragic: 40 people died and 119 were injured.

Among the victims there was Tahirys Dos Santos, player of the FC Metz team, who was seriously affected by the flames. He was on the first floor, however his girlfriend was still in the bar, therefore he went back into the flames to look for her. He is considered as a hero.

THE ONGOING INVESTIGATION



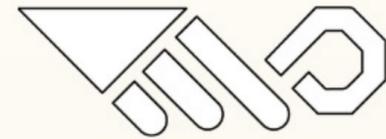
The journalistic investigation started straightaway as survivors provided testimonies and videos to explain what had happened.

There is obviously a criminal investigation and the owners, Jacques and Jessica Moretti are under scrutiny. Some new elements were revealed about the couple who own other bars but the police focuses on Jacques Moretti because he is known by the justice for tax fraud and housing aid in Corsica. He spent some time in detention, as the Swiss justice feared he would escape.

It was also proved that Jacques Moretti has bought and set up the incriminated insulant that covered the ceiling, which, apparently, was not suitable.

More generally, the owners seem to be responsible for a lack of safety in this bar. For example, the service door was locked from the inside which therefore forbid the exit and the staff was not trained for emergency situations. But other people have been charged as the safety regulations must be checked regularly, and this was not the case for this place.

One month after this tragic event, people still mourn the loss of these young people. Let's hope the investigation will help clear out the responsibilities and ensure that it will not happen again.



OPEN DOORS



On Saturday, February 7th, our school will be opened from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. to present the various types of studies that are available. All the staff and teachers will be there to present the pathways, subjects, equipment, etc.

Our students will also guide you all around the high school.

Don't hesitate to ask for information, they will be delighted to answer you!

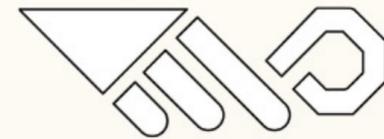
Please, see below for the important information about the Open Doors Day!

OPEN DAY
LYCÉE DE LA COMMUNICATION
Saturday, February 7th, 2026
9am - 4pm

POST-BAC <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BTS Audiovisual• BTS Communication• BTS CIEL Cybersecurity, IT and Electronics networks• DN MADE Graphic Design	PRE-BAC <p>General and technological procedures (STL2D, STD2A)</p>
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3 Bd Dominique François Arago
57070 Metz Technopole

www.Lycom.fr



Rock'n'Com



Rock'N'Com is a concert at the high school which gathers different styles of music like rock, hard rock, DJ sets, singers, dancers, and others. It will take place on the afternoon of February 5, 2026, in the "big studio" of the school.

The project is led by the entire class of BTS MAV in collaboration with the BTS Communication and the art class, with preparation spanning from 5 to 6 months (starting in September). The team is divided into four technical specialties (sound, pictures, technical engineering and editing) and one administrative department (Production Management); all the students have specific tasks and duties, such as setting up and handling the stage (and backstage), managing the sound, the lights and all the required equipment. As the concert is filmed, there is also a lot of work for the cameramen and video editors to get a perfect recording of the event, with the right shooting angles and editing.



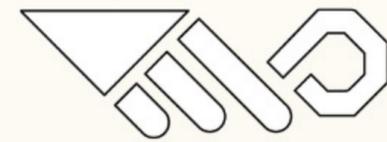
The class has selected talented students like: Amédébardeurs, Basmaxx, Lise Fromond, Maël Champsavoir, Kristen Leroy, Loïse Ernesti and Gloria Alves, Hugo Niesser. It is a very challenging event, both for the artists and the BTS students. However, despite the stress and complexity, this experience is a valuable opportunity for them to prove their ability to manage a large-scale event*.

*large-scale event = un événement de grande ampleur

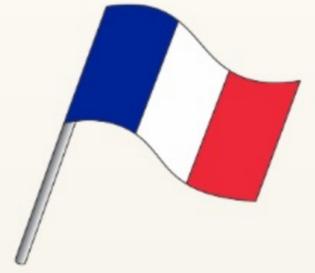
We look forward to seeing many of you, don't hesitate to come!

Our article is based on an interview of the BTS MAV (Careers in Audiovisual) with the participation of Maxence B.; Sasha J.; Elliott R.; Achilles R.; Lisa V.; Julie S.; Cheun M.; Ranut W.

Thank you guys!



INTERVIEW



Interview of Sophy, our great language assistant!

So, Sophy, can you tell us more about yourself ?

“Hi everyone ! My name is Sophy, I’m Irish and I’m the English language assistant, here in Lycée de la Communication”.

When you came to France, did you have any stereotypes about French people ?

“I learned a lot about French culture in school mainly like food, fashion, etc. Some stereotypes I had were that French people weren’t the nicest, I didn’t want that to be true so I left it until I came to see what was the case”

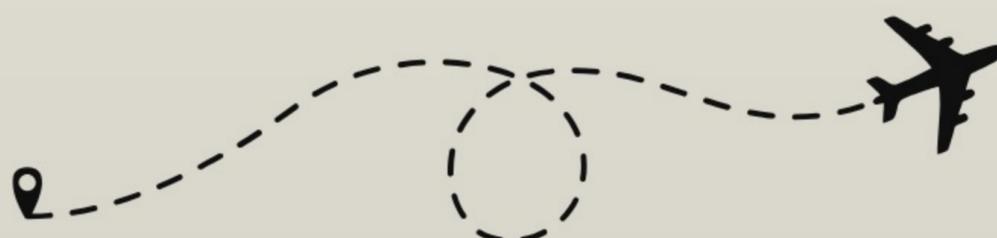


How did you end up learning French in Ireland ?

“I started learning French in secondary school and I kept it on until university. I studied media and French in Dublin city university, for four years. I did three years in Dublin, and one year here in France”.

When did you move to France first?

“The first time I moved to France was in 2021-2022. I lived in Paris for three months in the summer. I worked in an American university as a secretary, it was great and fun. Basically, I was just showing them around Paris, taking them on trips and also translating for them a lot, which was good for my French as well.”





You mentioned your Erasmus, can you tell us more about that?

“After living in Paris, I did my Erasmus, that’s basically a study abroad programme, so from Dublin I moved to Metz. I had the option between Angers, Avignon, Nancy and Lyon but I’m so glad I got placed in Metz because I love it, it’s the best. It was very good for me as well. In Ireland I come from a quite small town, and Metz is small enough, but there are things going on whereas where I lived there is not too much happening.”

What surprised you about speaking French with French people?

“After learning French for years in Ireland, coming here and speaking with young people was a completely different language. Everyone just speaks in ‘slang’(argot). It is completely different from what I learned. Instead of saying “Tu es” you say “T’es”. Everything is shortened, everything is flipped. It was quite difficult but I am learning every day.”

Can you tell us more about your experience as an assistant ?

“Basically I used this as an excuse to come back to Metz, I really loved it. After spending a year in Dublin, living at home with my parents, I really wanted to come back. So this was a great opportunity for me to come back. I lived with my best friend who is also Irish. She came back as well. I was also losing a lot of my French so I had to come back and relearn. So, basically, in the school I teach the students about Irish culture, history, customs...Which is really cool, because often you are taught about English or American history and not a lot about Ireland because it is a small country. It is cool to be able to be here and talk about it!”

For anyone who would like to go on an Erasmus, do you have any advice?

“I would say, try everything and say yes to everything. I have a lot of opportunities here so that’s why it is very important that you take hold of it and try everything, especially travelling, taking French classes in the evenings. I did that every Tuesday and Thursday, to learn French a bit more. “Café des Langues” is important as well, you meet a lot of Erasmus people, a lot of people from different countries. That’s probably the best advice I could give !”

“Thank you so much for your answers !”



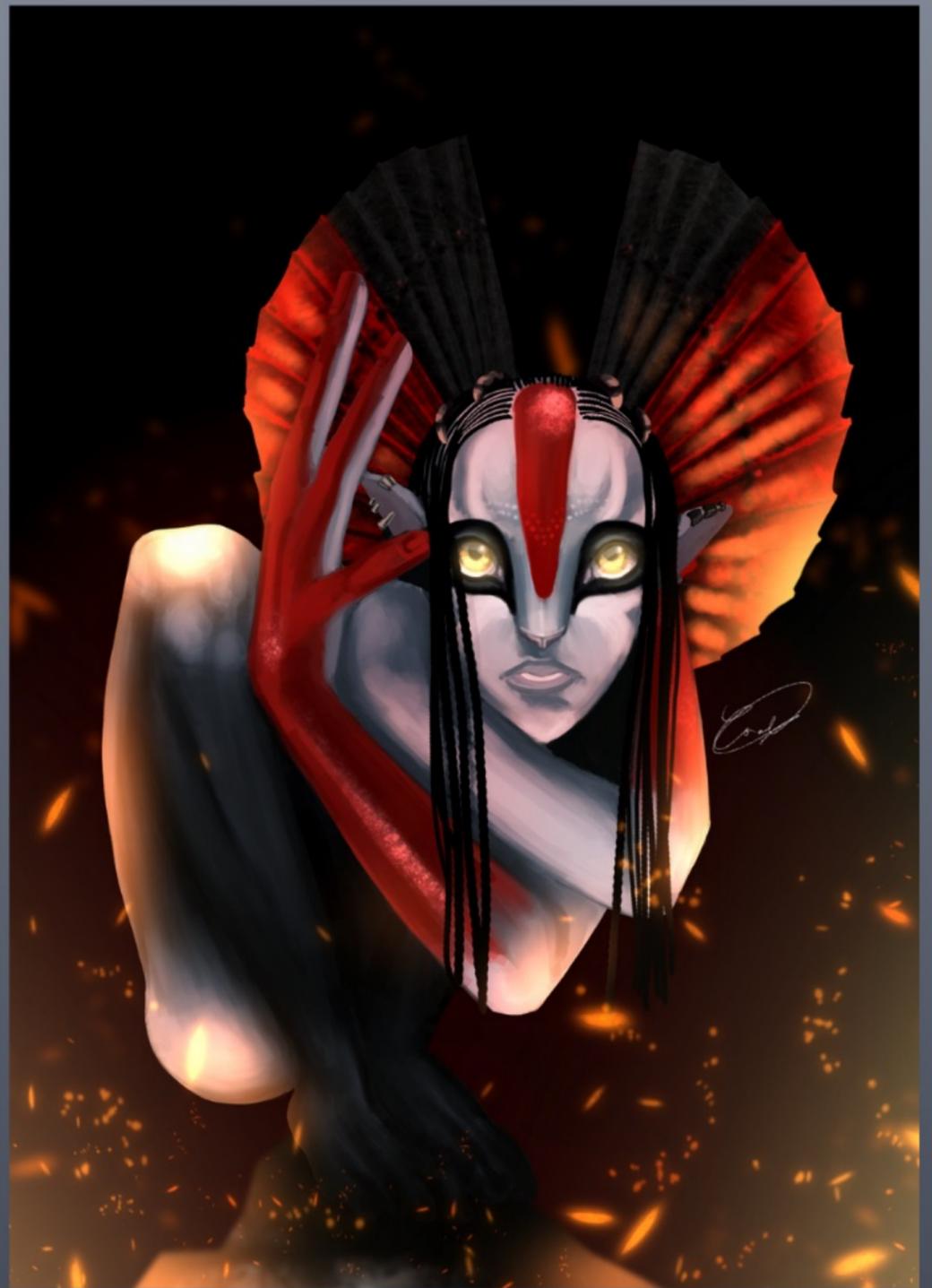
Avatar 3: A Spectacular New Dive into the Universe of Pandora

After years of waiting, Avatar finally returns to cinemas around the world.

This film was written and directed by James Cameron, a famous Canadian filmmaker known for his expansive vision and innovative special-effects films, most notably *Titanic*. Moreover he won an academy award for best director in 2010.

For the moment, 3 films have been released at the cinema: the first, entitled “*Avatar*” was broadcast in 2009 and had a huge global success, so the sequels were eagerly awaited.

They had a break from 2009 to 2022 and, according to the theories, during this time they didn't design, film or create only one film, but a saga of 4 to 5 films. Then, in 2022. The 2nd *Avatar*, entitled “*The Way of the Water*”, was released. However, being highly anticipated, it disappointed many people. In this film we discover new universes and new characters from the universe of the Na'vi. In view of the 13-year wait, people found that the scenarios as well as the special effects were not up to the standard of the first film. And finally, the third one, entitled “*Fire and Ash*” came out in December 2025. This film brings new settings (new parts of the planet Pandora) and a new group of antagonists called 'the Ash People', which reveals a new face of the Na'vi peoples of Pandora compared to previous films where only the humans were malicious.



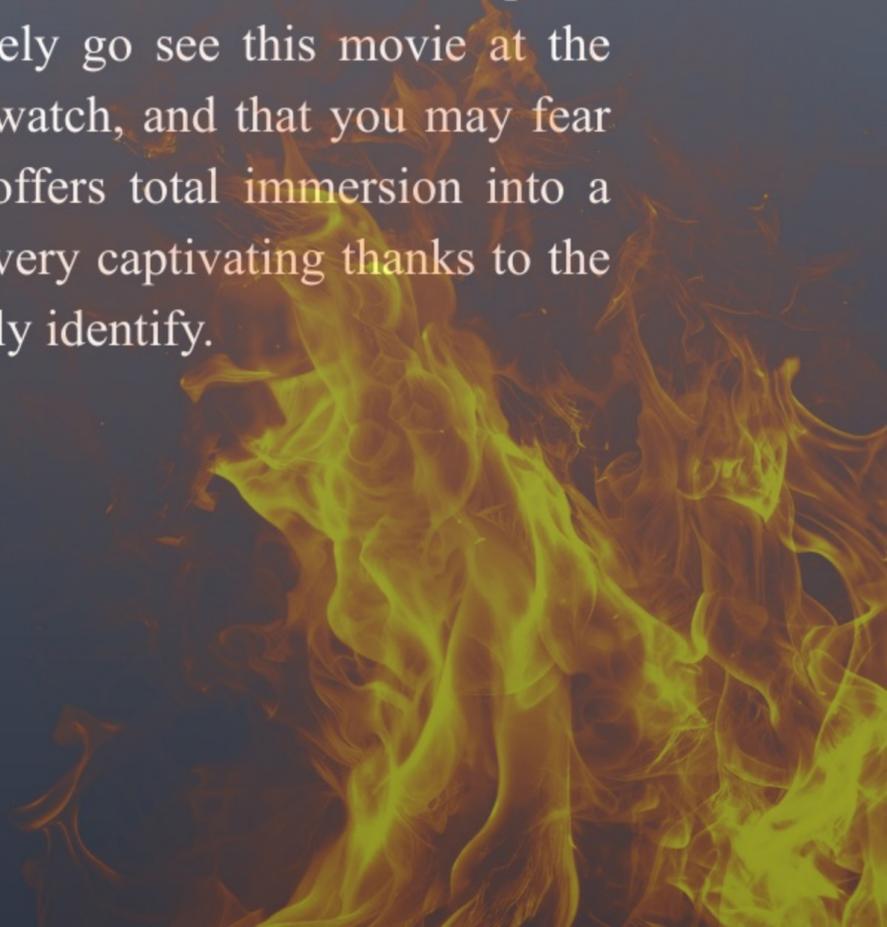
By Glowing Na'vi on Instagram



In *Avatar 3, Fire and Ash*, the story continues on the planet Pandora, after the events of the second movie. Jake Sully and his family are going through a difficult time following the death of their son, Neteyam. Meanwhile, humans continue their invasion of Pandora to exploit its resources, which causes new conflicts. The religion of the Na'vi plays an important role in this film. The Na'vi believe in Eywa, a kind of divinity or nature spirit that connects all living beings on Pandora. This belief influences their way of living, fighting and respecting their environment. Jake and Neytiri always follow these traditions and seek to protect the balance desired by Eywa. However, they meet a new tribe, the Ash People, who have a different perspective on religion. This tribe seems completely detached from Eywa and uses fire and force to survive. Their leader, Varang, questions the traditional beliefs of the Na'vi, which creates tensions with the other clans.

The film shows that even among the same people, religious beliefs can divide. *Avatar 3* is about faith, anger and cultural conflicts, while showing that religion can unite but also oppose individuals. This film can be compared to our world: as with humans, differences in cultures, religions and worldviews can cause conflicts, but also push us to think about how to live better together.

To conclude, as mentioned in the article, *Avatar 3* has had a remarkable release despite the particularly long wait time. Moreover, every time James Cameron releases a movie, he finds even more extraordinary techniques and special effects. The film can then be examined on an artistic level, thanks to the creation of a fully credible and detailed world, and its aesthetic inspired by nature. We therefore advise you to absolutely go see this movie at the cinema, despite the fact that it is very long to watch, and that you may fear falling asleep in front of it. It is a film that offers total immersion into a universe that is not human, but is nevertheless very captivating thanks to the endearing protagonists, with whom one can easily identify.



Carnivals

& their origins

A lot of carnivals take place in January and February, but do you know the origins and what they can look like?

Most of the carnivals take their inspiration from a Roman celebration, called the *Saturnalia* festival (literally in honor of Saturn, the God of time and harvest). At that time, there were grand banquets, people gave gifts to one another, and they also exchanged their social roles for fun (slaves were free to criticize their masters, and masters even had to make dinner for their slaves). Later, carnivals became more a way to feast freely, without the social barrier. For example, the well-known Notting Hill Carnival in London, which happens every year in August, is a moment where people have fun and celebrate Caribbean culture, without any racism.



Saturnalia, by Antoine Callet, as a representation of this ancient festival



Carnival costumes from the town of Ponce, Puerto Rico

*float = char de parade

The "Carnaval de Ponce", a Puerto-Rican example

This February, another important carnival will be held : The "Carnaval de Ponce", also known as Carnaval Ponceño, which is a week-long festival held in Ponce, in Puerto Rico. This year, it will be from 12th of February to 17th February. It features dance, music and cultural traditions, with loud parades and colourful decorated floats*, and also live performances with Afro-Caribbean and Spanish music.

The first Ponce carnival was held in 1858, as a masked dance organized by the Spaniard José de la Guardia. It was inspired by European carnivals mainly with Spanish colonial custom, adapting them with local culture to do a celebration which emphasized masquerade and festivity. In the first editions, all people were wearing a mask, allowing participants to enjoy festivities anonymously in Ponce. Masks became a way to enable social criticism with the colonial society. Thus, anyone could go to the festival freely, without being stopped by a social barrier. The vejigante rapidly became the mascot of this festival, replacing the masks with this devil representation.



Cabezas de vejigantes.
Author: Oscar Rohena



Vejigante mask

How can you dress for the "Carnaval de Ponce" ?

Most dancers and participants wear a mask which carries a huge history. The mask represents vejigantes, which are folklore creatures. They represent an evil form or the devil characterized by the multiple horns they have on their masks. The materials used to make the mask can vary and depend on the region.

To decorate them there are multiples bright colors (the most traditional to wear are blue, green, red and black to contrast), dots, and geometric forms. The costumes are as colorful as the masks and can have the same patterns. It needs to be ample.

The masks represent vejigantes, but what are vejigantes ?

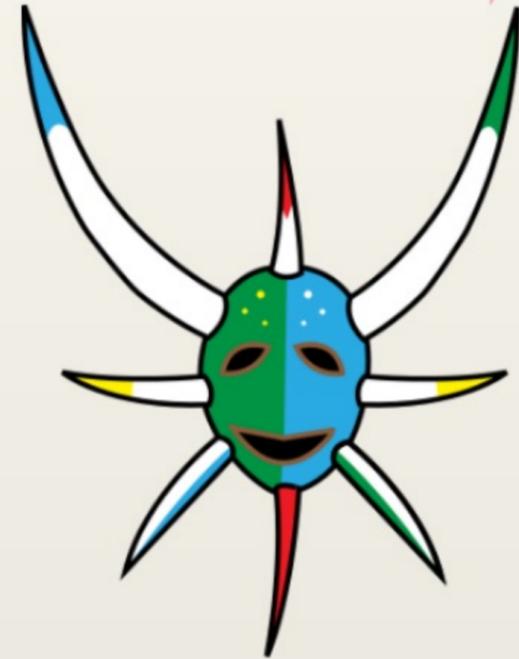
In the 17th century, it was traditional to see people in Spain who talked about vejigantes and said that they were demons meant to scare people into going back to church. There are a lot of references about vejigantes when they were used to symbolize the Devil in the battle between good and evil.

Africa has a huge influence on the new look of vejigantes in Puerto Rico because they were the creators of pottery which is a specific maker which is good on mask's materials and if you think that vejigantes' masks are scary then they're meant to be!

Now you're fully dressed, what can you do at the "Carnaval de Ponce ?

The Carnival starts on the Wednesday before Ash Wednesday, and it starts with the vejigantes party which is when you can see most costumed people. The next day there is the parade of the mysterious bighead carnival, known as King Momo Entrance Parade. On Friday, there is the crowning of the child queen, which was created in 1973. The following day there's the crowning of the carnival Adult Queen, which was an event created in 1956. On Sunday, there is the main parade, and the ball dance on Monday. For the last day there is a last event which is the burial of the Sardine. Everyone sings a song in Spanish and here are the lyrics :

Vejigante mask
by Mistman123



Phoenix-Musical Instrument Museum-
Vejigante Mask and Costume

"The Carnival is dead now.
They are burying him* ;
Throw just a little dirt in
So he can rise again."

*him, is for the Sardine,
therefore it is the burial of
the Sardine



A\$AP ROCKY HAS RELEASED HIS NEW ALBUM

Who is A\$AP Rocky ?

Rakim Athelaston Mayers, also known as A\$AP ROCKY, is a multi-hyphenated artist and fashion icon. He was born in 1988 in the Harlem neighbourhood and he became more and more famous over the years. Since 2011, he's been making billions of streams on Spotify, due to his passion for music and his multiple features with well-known artists such as Tyler The Creator, Kendrick Lamar, Pharell Williams, etc. He is very influential in music and fashion; in fact, he became a top model with his wife Rihanna and he's making some commercials for very famous brands. In a total of 8 years, he has released 4 albums which were all huge successes.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A\\$AP_Rocky_at_the_2025_Cannes_Film_Festival_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A$AP_Rocky_at_the_2025_Cannes_Film_Festival_(cropped).jpg)

Why did it take so long to be out ?

A\$AP Rocky, shortened A\$AP, took a whole 8 years to release another album since his album "Testing". Finally, the long awaited "Don't Be Dumb" was released on January 16th 2026. It was originally teased in 2023 and then a first release date was announced: 30 August 2024. You may be asking yourself why it took so long ? Well, A\$AP said in an interview with Billboard – a famous long-running American trade and consumer print publication that covers news, issues, and trends related to the music industry – that there were a lot of issues to clear the samples. If you don't know, in hip hop, musicians take another piece of music and chop it to put it in their own music. So, "clearing the sample" means obtaining the right to put parts of music that isn't yours in your own music, and if you don't obtain this right, it becomes illegal. He also was taken to court by his former friend, Terrell Ephron, who allegedly "got shot by A\$AP" but after a couple of months, he was found not guilty.

The latest album has multiple genres such as rage rap, jazz, pop and more. It is supposed to make you feel like you are walking through the different New-York districts.

A\$AP also said that the album cover was made by Tim Burton.

Two singles have been released: *Punk Rocky* and *Helicopter*.



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A\\$AP_Rocky_at_the_2025_Cannes_Film_Festival_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A$AP_Rocky_at_the_2025_Cannes_Film_Festival_(cropped).jpg)



NEW ZEALAND: A REMOTE COUNTRY THAT IS WORTH VISITING

Did you know that it takes 25 hours to get to New Zealand? Sure, that's a long flight, but it really is worth the trouble! So, let's discover this unique country and its historical and cultural wealth with several articles.

Located in the South Pacific Ocean, east of Australia, this country is composed of two main islands, simply called North Island and South Island. Its capital is Wellington, but the biggest city is Auckland. More than 5 Million people live there, mainly on North Island.



You might believe that their nickname, “Kiwi”, comes from the fruit, but it actually comes from the bird.



Source: CANVA



Auckland, the largest city.



This country is renowned for its magnificent landscapes, which are also varied. Indeed, South Island is mainly covered by “the Southern Alps”, a high range of mountains. The highest (3,724m) is called Mount Cook. As you will see, these mountains were the perfect location to shoot scenes from “*The Lord of the Rings*”.

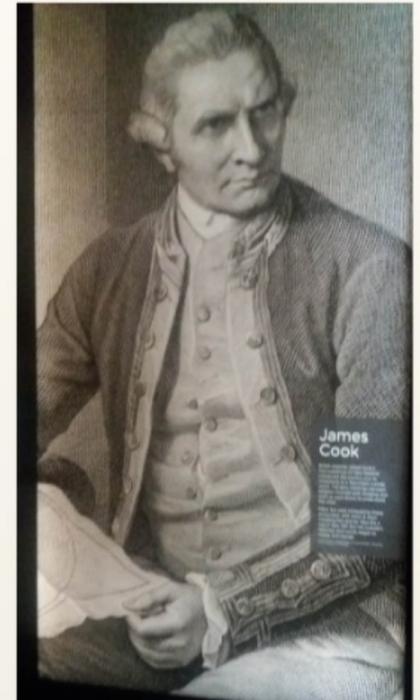
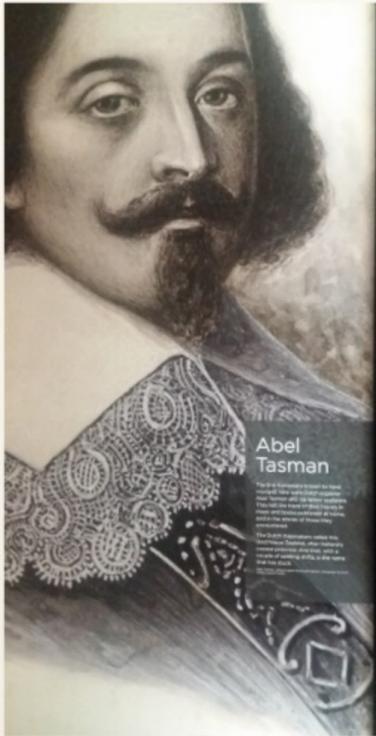


Mount Cook and Lake Pukaki
Bernard Spragg, 2014

North Island, even though it has some mountains like in Tongariro National park, is more volcanic, especially in the northern part (read the article on Whakaari!) and the area of Rotorua (read the article on that area!).



Tongariro National Park, with active volcanoes.



The native New-Zealanders, the Māori, discovered the islands in the 14th century. These Polynesian people called it “Aotearo”, which means “the land of the long white cloud”, because they spotted it thanks to a long cloud covering the mountains.

It was only in 1642 that New Zealand was discovered by the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman (who gave his name to Tasmania), then by Captain James Cook, another famous explorer, who circumnavigated* and mapped the islands in 1769.

*Circumnavigate: navigate around

Abel Tasman
Museum of Waitangi

James Cook
Museum of Waitangi



Waitangi (New Zealand): A boathouse with traditional Maori war canoe. Author: W. Bulach, 2009

The Treaty of Waitangi was a turning point: in May 1840, New Zealand became part of the British Empire. The treaty was signed between the British and Māori chiefs in Waitangi, in the Bay of Islands.

However, because there were differences between the texts in English and Māori, the interpretations of this treaty varied, and this led to disputes between the natives and the European settlers.

New Zealand is now a Commonwealth country led by King Charles III, it has its own government and is rather independent. As for the Māori, they have managed to preserve their culture and language and are a major part of the country's identity.



THE UNIVERSE OF HOBBITON

Have you heard of “the Hobbits”?

These fictional characters are at the centre of very famous stories and movies that took place in New Zealand.

Where do they come from?

These small but robust little humans were invented by the well-known British writer J.R.R Tolkien. They are the main characters of a saga which started in 1937 with the novel “*The Hobbit*”, followed by the trilogy of “*The Lord of the Rings*” (1954-1955). However, they really became known to the public much later thanks to the movies “*The Lord of the Rings*” (2002), and “*The Hobbit*” (2012), directed by Peter Jackson.



Ring. Author: Osa 150, 2010

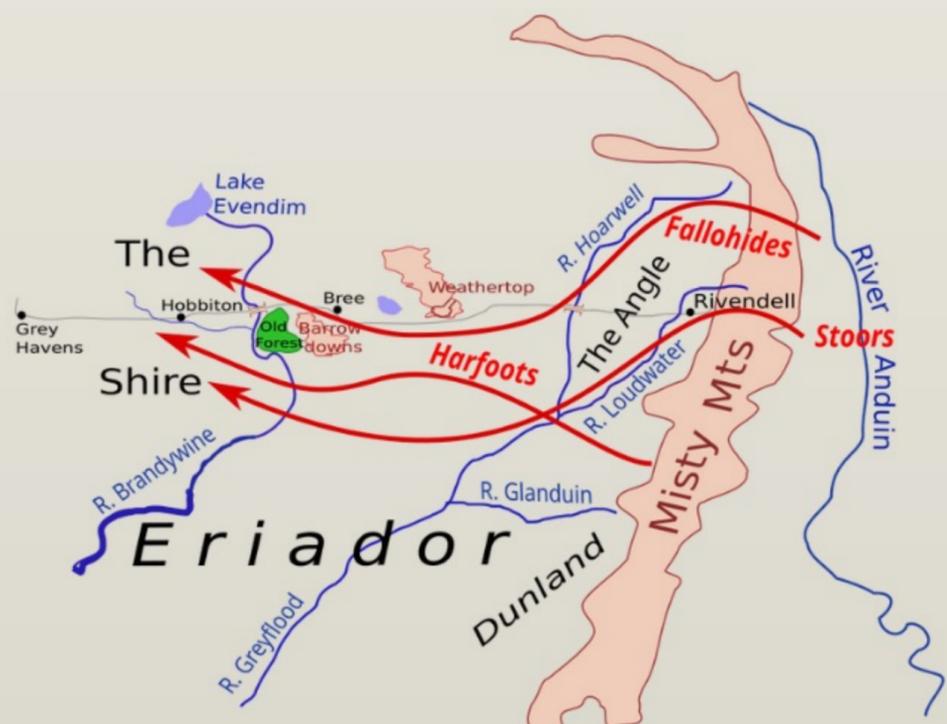


Hobbit drawing from Lucie Vergne representing Samwise Gamgee, Author: Charliewendiga, 2021

Bilbo Baggins, the hero

It all started with “*The Hobbit*”, which explains the origins of the trilogy “*The Lord of the Rings*”.

In this novel, J.R.R Tolkien created a whole world called “Middle-earth” where various types of people and creatures live and get involved in a quest and battles. One of these are the Hobbits. They have hairy feet so they can walk barefoot. The Hobbits are generally quick and quiet in their movement. They like their calm village, gathering, good food, music, and conviviality. They are very attached to their peaceful life and are humble people.



Hobbit Origins Map. Author: Ian Alexander, 2021

In this book, we discover Bilbo Baggins. He is a Hobbit who lives quietly in the Shire. He does not like danger or adventures.

One day, the wizard Gandalf and thirteen dwarves come to Bilbo's house. They ask him to go on a journey with them. At first, Bilbo is scared, but he agrees. Their goal is to take back a treasure from a dragon called Smaug. His life changes a lot after that.

During the adventure, Bilbo sees new places. Some are dangerous, some are magical. He meets trolls, elves, goblins, and big spiders. Step by step, Bilbo becomes braver and stronger. The story shows that even an ordinary person can be a hero.



Bilbo Baggins's house: Bag End

The shooting

The producer chose New Zealand because he thought that it was the perfect location for his movie, especially for the landscapes. For instance, some scenes were shot on the South Island, with its Southern Alps, but Peter Jackson also needed to find a location to shoot the Hobbits' village, Hobbiton. He found the perfect place near Matamata (North Island), on a land owned by the Alexander family, and said that the area was "like a slice of ancient England" and that he "knew Hobbiton needed to be warm, comfortable and feel lived in".

So, they set up the village, using the hills to build Hobbits' tiny houses.



Hobbiton, the movie set

The creation of Hobbiton started in March 1999 and, once the shooting of the movie “The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey” was over, it opened to the public. It is now a major touristic attraction with hundreds of thousands of visitors who explore the 5.5 hectares of the site each year. Visitors can imagine the life of Hobbits and feel like they are in the movies, with all the references and the vibe in this place. You can see 44 hobbit holes, Bagshot Row, the Party Tree, and Bilbo's Bag End home.

You can also have a refreshing break at the "Shires Rest Cafe", breakfast and "second breakfast" are served. Tourism has had a huge impact on Matamata, turning it into a major tourist destination, with the opening of new cafes and bars to welcome visitors. In December 2023, new holes were opened to the public, which required nine months of work.

It is more than just a movie set; it is a whole village with its calming landscape and its comforting food. Hobbiton is a whole vibe and you can come living this beautiful fairytale experience and feel like real hobbits.



The “Party tree” is in fact 100% fake! Each leaf was placed by hand and they do not fall in autumn!



If you ever go to New Zealand, this place should be at the top of your list of things to do and see!

Here is the official website to visit Hobbiton: <https://www.hobbitontours.com/>



Have you ever heard of the Māori people?



Māori people are a group of indigenous Polynesian people, they are mostly present in New Zealand, but also Australia, along with a few of them in other regions and countries in the whole world. More precisely, there are approximately 1,160,000 in the entire world, approximately 978,000 in New Zealand and 170,000 in Australia. They speak mostly Māori and English. Most of them are Christian or non-religious, some of them also follow the Rātana movement, which is not only a Māori Christian movement, but also a church. They are related to other Polynesian peoples such as Native Hawaiians, or Tahitians.

It is believed that they arrived on canoes in multiple waves.

They came from eastern Polynesia between the 13th and early 14th centuries. Over the centuries, they developed a whole society based on various tribes. The contact with Europe began in the 17th and 18th centuries and, in 1840, many Māori chiefs signed the **Treaty of Waitangi** (it is a document that was intended to protect Māori rights but later led to disputes, wars and significant land loss.). Despite the effects of conflict and disease, Māori communities persisted and today make up a significant portion of New Zealand's population, actively working to revive the language and cultural practices.



Tattoos are very important in Maori culture



Hongi greeting
Public domain

Māori culture (Māoritanga) remains a vibrant and important part of life in New Zealand, characterized by its language “te reo Māori”, traditional arts, performing arts such as haka (like war dances and chants), carving, and their spiritual beliefs about connecting people to ancestors and the environment. For social and ceremonial life, we have the marae, a place made for meeting where rituals, greetings (pōwhiri), and celebrations take place. Many Māori cultural customs continue today, such as the **hongi greeting** (you press the forehead and nose of the person you greet), the Kava* ceremony, communal feasts (hāngī), and reverence for nature and genealogy (whakapapa)) and there has been a strong movement to strengthen Māori language and culture, including immersion schools or even media in “te reo Māori”.

*Kava: is both a plant and a drink made from its roots



Hangi is a traditional meal with steamed* meat, fish and vegetables that are cooked under leaves, in the ground for several hours.

*steamed: à la vapeur

Rotorua, an almost mystical geothermal center



New Zealand is one of the most volcanically active countries in the world, and that's no coincidence. New Zealand lies at the boundary of two major tectonic plates: the Pacific Plate and the Australian Plate. There are three major volcanic zones in the country but we are going to focus on the Taupō Volcanic Zone (North Island). This is the most active. It stretches from White Island (Whakaari) to Lake Taupō. It contains active volcanoes (Ruapehu, Ngauruhoe, Tongariro), geysers, hot springs and fumaroles. The Taupō super volcano caused one of the largest eruptions in recorded history approximately 26,000 years ago.



Rotorua is a city located on the southern shore of the lake of the same name, in the Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand's North Island. The city has a population of nearly 65,000 and is located 60 km south of Tauranga, 105 km southwest of Hamilton, and 82 km northeast of Taupo.

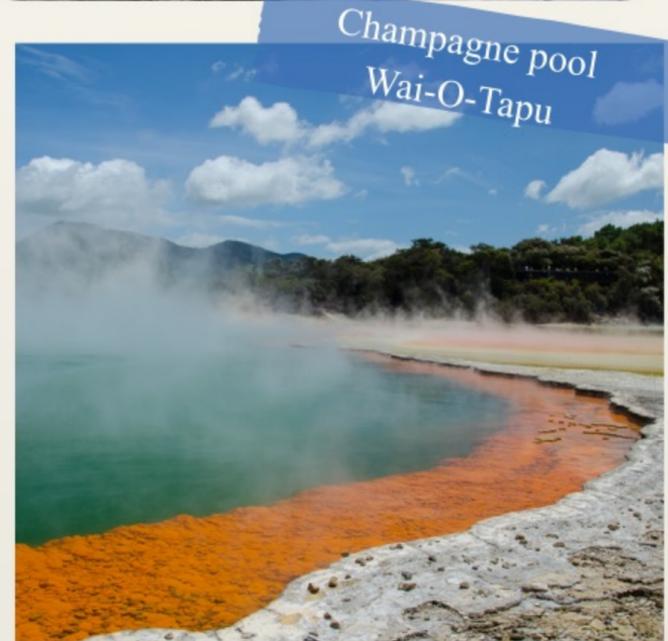
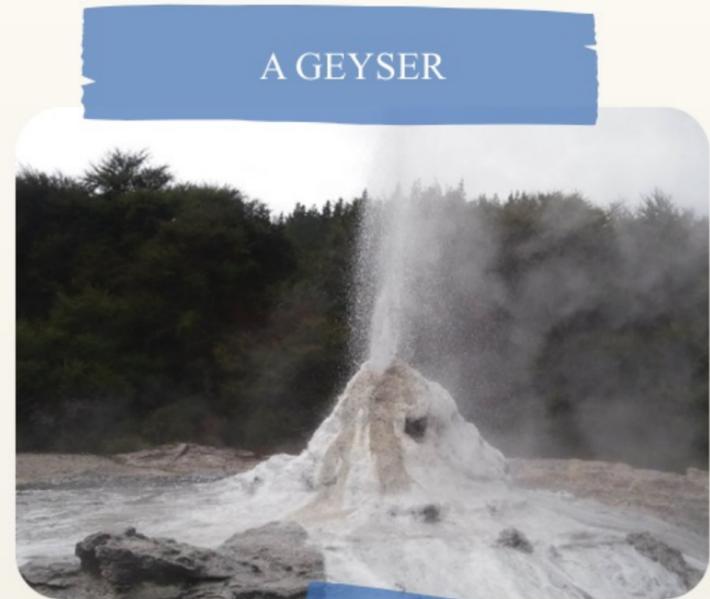
Its name is of Māori origin, the full name being Te Rotorua -nui-a-Kahumatamomoe 'Roto' means 'lake' and 'Rua' means 'two, and the full name is Te Rotorua -nui-a-Kahumatamomoe.

Rotorua is very famous for its geothermal activity. The city is known for its hot thermal springs, bubbling mud pools and steaming landscapes. At Te Puia, visitors can observe impressive geothermal areas, like the famous Pōhutu Geyser, which erupts many times in a day.





Other places such as Wai-O-Tapu are also very popular because of their colorful lakes and unique natural formations. These geothermal wonders impress tourists and show the powerful energy that comes from the Earth. In Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland you can understand and see how a geyser works. A geyser is a special type of hot water source that erupts intermittently, shooting out water and steam at high temperatures and high pressure.



In conclusion, New Zealand is a very active volcanic country because of its location at the boundary of the Pacific Plate and the Australian Plate. The Taupō Volcanic Zone is the most active area, and Rotorua is a perfect example of how geothermal activity shapes the landscape. Places like the Pōhutu Geyser and Wai-O-Tapu show the great power of the Earth through geysers, hot springs and colorful thermal areas. New Zealanders are aware of the risks and well prepared.

Nonetheless, man cannot always control nature and some active volcanoes can suddenly awaken. This was the case on Whakaari in 2019. If you want to learn more about it, read another article on this dreadful event.

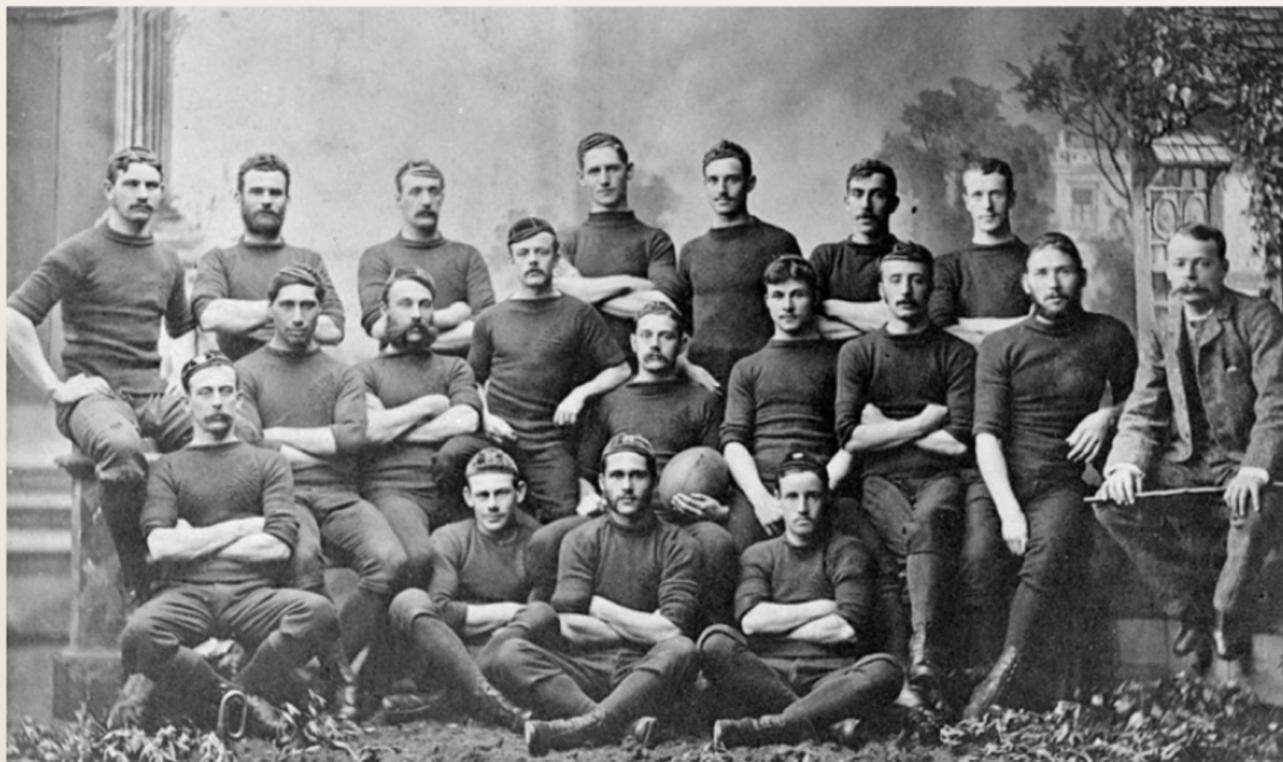


The Amazing All Blacks

*The All Blacks is New Zealand's national rugby union team.
They are famous worldwide, for their achievements, but for their haka as well.*

HOW DID IT ALL START?

Rugby started in New Zealand in 1870, thanks to Charles Monro, who discovered this sport in England. In 1879, the first club – the Canterbury Rugby Football Union – was created and the first international match took place in 1882, against an Australian team called the New South Wales “Waratahs”. The New Zealand national team played their first international games in 1884, but this time, in Australia. The name “All Blacks” was apparently coined in 1905 when the team, called at that time the “Originals”, was touring the British Isles.



The 1884 New Zealand rugby union team that toured New South Wales in Australia.

THEIR SYMBOL: THE SILVER FERN

The All Blacks adopted the national symbol of New Zealand: the silver fern. This plant was used by the Māori to find their way through the forest thanks to the underside of the fern leaf which reflects light.



Silver fern. Author: Krzysztof Ziarnik, Kenraiz



One of the flags of New Zealand

Haka, the roar of the All Blacks

The origins of the Haka

The Haka is a traditional dance from the Māori people of New Zealand. It has been part of Māori culture for many centuries. The Haka is a group dance that uses strong movements, singing, and facial expression to express emotions and communicate messages. For instance, they often stick their tongues out to frighten people.

Originally, the Haka was performed for many reasons. It could be used to welcome visitors, celebrate important events, show respect or prepare the warriors before a battle. It helped create unity and strengthen the identity of the Māori people.

According to Māori legend, the Haka is linked to Tane-Rore, the son of the sun God Tama-nui-te-rā. Tane-Rore represents the trembling of the air on hot summer days, which explains the shaking hand movement used in the haka.



Detail of Maori Contingent recruits from the Avondale Camp perform a haka at Auckland Domain

The Evolution of Haka

Over time, the haka became an important symbol of Māori culture and heritage in New Zealand. There are many types of haka, depending on the occasion and the situation. Some haka are used for war, other are ceremonial, and some are performed to welcome visitors or important people. Each haka has a different meaning and message. One of the most famous haka is “Ka Mate”, created in the early 19th century by the Māori chief Te Rauparaha, after he escaped from his enemies.

The haka has become internationally famous thanks to sport, especially rugby. The New Zealand national rugby team, the All Blacks, perform a haka before their matches to show unity, pride and respect for Māori traditions. This moment is very important for the players because it helps them to feel stronger and more united before the game.



2016 end-of-year rugby union internationals between Italy and New Zealand at Stadio Olimpico, Rome, 12 November 2016. Author: Stefano Delfrate

Today, the haka is still performed in New Zealand during ceremonies, funerals, celebrations and official events. It is not only a sport tradition but also a cultural one. The haka remains a strong link between Māori traditions and modern New Zealand society, and it shows that this culture is still alive today.



The Tragedy of White Island

White Island, also known as Whakaari (in Maori: Te Puia Whakaaei), is a small, uninhabited, volcanic island of New Zealand located in the north of North Island, in the Bay of Plenty.

The name “Whakaari means “the dramatic volcano”.

Unfortunately, this name is well deserved, as this volcano is particularly active.



White Island on a calm day

Despite the dangers linked to volcanic activity, such as heat, fumes, toxic gases or an eruption, this island was regularly visited by many tourists.

White Island Tours organized the trip, with guides and equipment, such as gas masks and a hard hat. As the island is about 50 km from Whakatane Wharf (the port), it took about 80 minutes to get there.

However, on December, 9 2019, the worst happened.

Forty-five people, who had been briefed on security measures and were accompanied by two guides, visited the island, following a defined path.

Suddenly, the volcano erupted, spewing acid rains and smoke.

Some managed to get back to the shore, but many did not.

As there were two boats around, they tried to take the injured people back to the port, many suffered from burns and had difficulties to breathe. A helicopter even managed to land and take some victims as well. Others were left on the island, supposedly dead.

The outcome was dreadful: 22 people died and 25 were injured, some very seriously.



A webcam image showing hikers walking on the crater rim of the Whakaari/White Island volcano, one minute before the eruption.
Author: Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences

This tragedy makes everyone wonder why there were visitors on an island with volcanic activity and why the island wasn't prepared for this case. Those questions have led the authorities and precisely the "WorkSafe" – the agency for the safety of the workplace – to react and launch an investigation. The 3 island owners and tour operators were charged for failing to ensure the health and safety of the workers and tourists. The trials are still going on.
Of course, the access to island is now strictly forbidden.

If you want to learn more about this event, watch the documentary "The Volcano: Rescue from Whakaari" on Netflix.

How to check fake news

What is Listenbourg ?

In October 2022, a Twitter user, named Gaspardo, shared a photoshopped map showing a new country called Listenbourg, located next to Spain and Portugal. He joked, “I’m sure Americans don’t even know the name of this country.” But Listenbourg does not exist in real life: it is made up.

Many people on social media joined the joke and created fake flags, an anthem, a government and more, for fun. Even big brands and media accounts shared things about Listenbourg for fun, however, that’s not real evidence the country exists. This is a good example to learn how to spot fake news.



Invented flag

Simple Steps to Check if the News is Fake

1. Check the source.

Ask yourself: who wrote this?

Is it from a real news website or official organization?

If it is from a random social media post or joke, be careful. Real news websites have editors and journalists whereas fake posts often come from personal profiles or places with no history of accurate news.

→ The Listenbourg story began on Twitter as a joke, not on a reliable news site.



USEFUL VIDEOS

How to find reliable sources of information on the internet (Psychgeist)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdEai7TvMdk>

Credible source: five tips to determine if your source is credible (Smart Student)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdcmjPR7Ntw>

2. See if other trusted sources say the same thing

Look up the story on real news websites like the BBC, Reuters, or official fact-checking sites. If only one post exists and no real news organization reports it, it might be fake.

→ For Listenbourg, major world atlases and geography books do not list it, because it does not exist.



USEFUL VIDEO

Comparing Information from different sources (NUITEQ Chorus Educational K-12 Content)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w78vJKsRdXY>



3. Check for mistakes

Fake news has often: bad spelling or grammar, funny names.

→ If you notice mistakes and strange language, be suspicious.

4. Check images and content

Fake posts often use edited pictures, photoshopped maps, screenshots without real links... You can use reverse image search tools to see if the picture was used before in a different context.

→ For Listenbourg, the map was clearly edited, and it does not match any real world map

USEFUL VIDEOS

How to tell if an image is fake content from AI (CBS News)

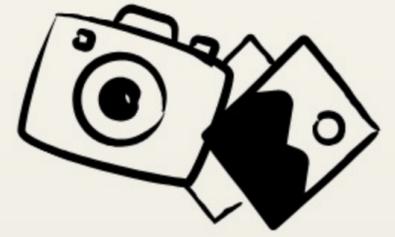
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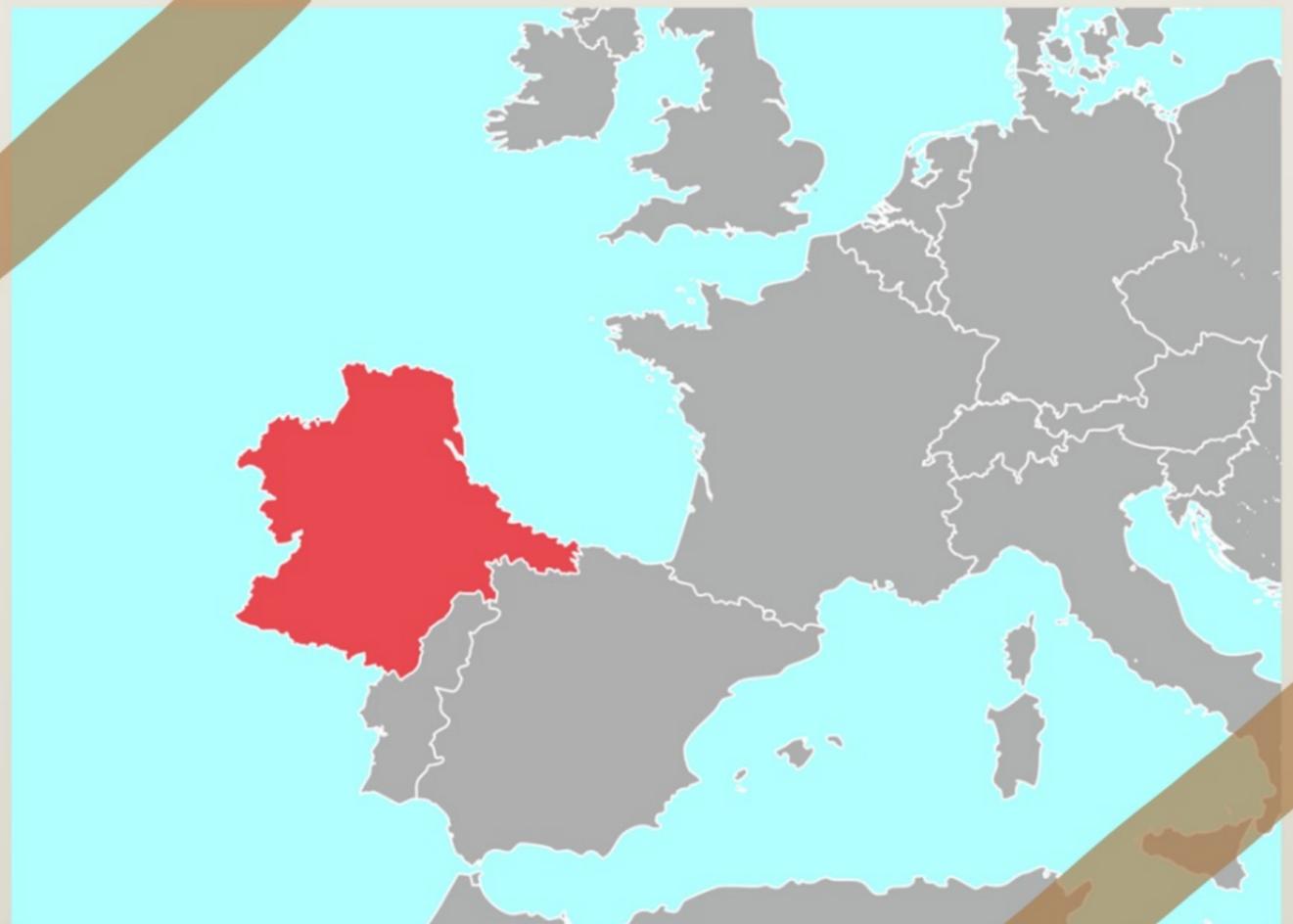
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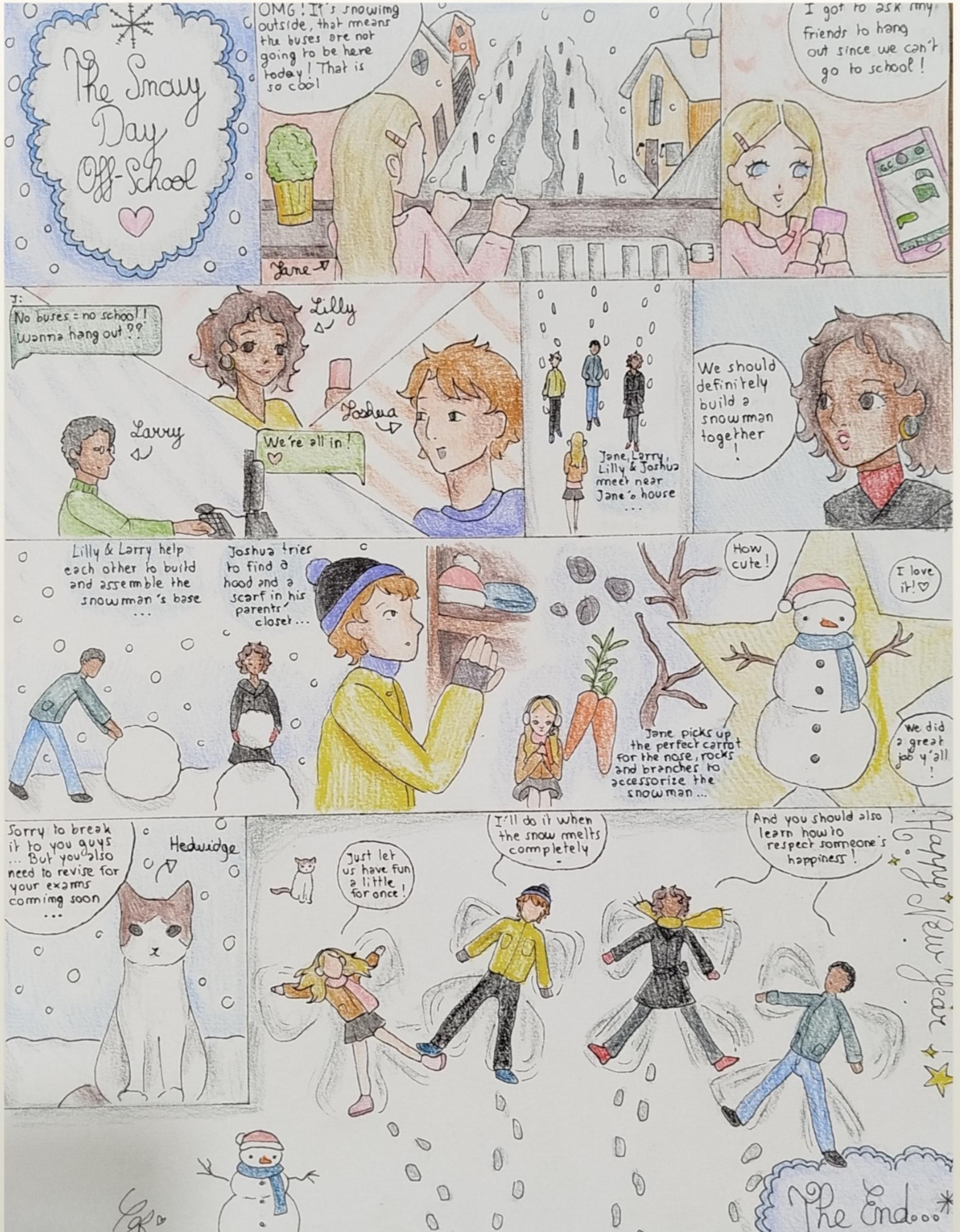


Why Fake News Spreads

Social media make it easy for stories to spread quickly, even fake ones. People often share things without checking them first. In fact, research shows many people share news without reading them fully.



Invented map



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How to spot when news is fake (European Parliament) PDF Document in French

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA\(2017\)599386](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_ATA(2017)599386)

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