

TO BHMA

International edition

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Three Weeks Will Reshape the World

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Greg Ip

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen." The quote, often attributed to Lenin, aptly describes the first weeks of 2026.

Please turn to Page 2

How Theme Parks Turned Nostalgia Into Historical Landmarks

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Jacob Passy

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Walter and Cordelia Knott had a problem on their hands: Their fried-chicken restaurant was a massive success.

Please turn to Page 4

These People Went From Hoarders to Extreme Minimalists

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Esther Achara

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

In the wake of holiday-induced shopping fatigue, you might well have sworn off impulse purchases in 2026.

Please turn to Page 4



A person walks past a government-run shelter that provides basic services and heat during blackouts, set up next to an apartment building left without heating and facing long power cuts after critical civil infrastructure was hit by recent Russian missile and drone strikes in Kyiv, Ukraine, January 23, 2026.

REUTERS/INA SHUBKO

A Kyiv Apartment Building Is Freezing—but Not Giving Up

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

formed on the inside handle of her balcony door, and she could see her own breath.

The 60-year-old pet-store manager now walks around swaddled in several layers topped by a long pink hoodie, wearing four pairs of socks and a hot-water bottle

around her neck to cope with temperatures that are at best around 50 degrees Fahrenheit inside and 10 degrees outside.

The situation in Tkachyuk's apartment building on Tychyna Avenue is familiar across Kyiv and other large cities, such as Odesa and

Dnipro, as four years of Russian airstrikes have devastated Ukraine's electricity grid and disrupted heating.

The strikes have left millions without electricity for most of the day and thousands of homes with heating that barely works. The situa-

tion is particularly acute in the capital, Kyiv, where blackouts had, until late last year, largely been a bearable annoyance that residents could weather with power banks, candles and battery-powered torches.

Please turn to Page 2



COURTESY OF EVELIN ANNE BOATENK

Setting off at the age of 32, Evelin Boatenk from Thessaloniki crossed the Atlantic in pursuit of her dream. Today, she runs two businesses and continues to build her future.

TO BHMA International edition

A Greek Woman's Journey Toward the American Dream

By Maria Katopodi

Twentieth-century Greek migration is closely intertwined with the United States and the American Dream. Countless stories tell of Greeks who left their homeland behind and, through sheer hard work under harsh and often unforgiving conditions, managed to achieve success and recognition abroad.

The land of opportunity still exerts a powerful allure today. The US remains a symbol of possibility and reinvention for many young people, among them Evelin Antae Boatenk, a young woman from Thessaloniki who decided to cross the Atlantic in pursuit of her dream.

Early Waves of Migration

Between the 1890s and 1917, approximately

450,000 Greek immigrants arrived in US ports. Many found work as hired laborers on the railroads and in the mines of the American West.

The overwhelming majority—about 90 percent—of those who passed through Ellis Island were men. Nearly all shared the same goal: finding employment in order to survive and support the families they had left behind back home.

Please turn to Page 6

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One with the future

Here in One Kyiv Apartment Building, They Are Freezing—but Not Giving Up

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Russian attacks on energy infrastructure have plunged much of Ukraine into darkness and cold but haven't broken its resilience

Continued from Page One

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said a million Kyiv residents were without power and more than 4,000 apartment buildings without heating as of Tuesday evening. Kyiv authorities said about one-fifth of the city's three million residents had fled the city this month, citing cellphone data. Authorities closed schools in the capital until February because of the energy situation.

The result, however, hasn't been the societal collapse that Russia has long sought by attacking civilian infrastructure. Instead, Ukrainians are showing the resilience and make-do attitude that have frustrated Moscow's efforts to pummel them into submission.

Ukrainians like those in Tkhoryk's building are huddling around stoves with their gas burners on, using cars to charge cellphones and store frozen food, and springing into action when



Anastasiia Samofal, a 27-year-old translator, sits in her kitchen to try to keep warm.

power comes back on to charge cellphones and use their washing machines.

Tkhoryk recalled the

words of her grandmother who survived first a Soviet-imposed famine that killed millions in Ukraine in the

1930s and then World War II.

"Well, we survived as best we could," she

recalled her grandmother saying. "We did what we could—we raised the children, we boiled grass,

melted snow—we did everything."

Tychyna Avenue, named after a Ukrainian poet, and its neighborhood represented the new Ukraine that emerged during the hardship of transitioning to capitalism after the fall of the Soviet Union. The area has everything expected of a modern European city: small restaurants, schools, playgrounds and a mall, all within walking distance on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River.

After the Russian army retreated from the outskirts of Kyiv in March 2022, life here settled into a new normal as residents grew accustomed to a war in which the most tangible impact was constant air alerts and worries about family on front lines. But in March 2025, a drone slammed into Tkhoryk's building, starting a fire that burned a woman alive.

Tkhoryk remembers hearing a loud explosion, rolling off the bed and rac-

The First Three Weeks of the Year Will Reshape the World

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

From Davos to Minneapolis, the events of this month have the potential to profoundly change the political and economic landscape for years to come

Continued from Page One

Over the last generation, several assumptions undergirded international relations and commerce. Shared values would always unite the U.S. with Western democracies, the global production of everything from semiconductors to oil made economic interdependence unavoidable, and an independent U.S. Federal Reserve and an infinite supply of Asian savings would keep world finance on track.

This month, a series of proverbial earthquakes have shaken all those assumptions with the potential to reshape the political and economic landscape for years to come. Though the fog of uncertainty still hangs, here's my take on what happened and why it matters.

The U.S. uncouples from Europe

Years from now, we may look at President Trump's declaration from Davos that the U.S. must acquire Greenland the way previous generations looked at the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Just as the wall's collapse symbolized the triumph of the West, Trump's Greenland grab may come to embody the end of the West as a collection of nations united by values.

In the days before Davos, Trump promised to wage trade war against Europe unless he got Greenland, a territory of Denmark, a fellow member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. His administration refused to rule out military force. By week's end he had withdrawn the threats, without formally renouncing the goal.

A U.S. seizure of Greenland would effectively spell the end of NATO. That Trump was prepared to take that risk left international leaders looking at the United States in a new, more fearful light.

This is the culmination of a profound schism between the U.S. and Europe over what should unite them. For Europeans, it's democracy, freedom and human rights. For Trump officials, it's history and culture. Europeans see their biggest threat as Russia. Trump thinks it's "civilizational erasure" brought on by mass immigration and low birthrates, as his National Security Strategy puts it.

For now, NATO remains intact and trade peace is holding. But the turmoil in markets last Tuesday, when stocks fell and bond yields and gold rose, hint at the anxiety that awaits

as the political and economic institutions that bind the West slowly unravel.

A new Monroe Doctrine built on resources

In 1823, President James Monroe declared the Western Hemisphere off limits to European colonization. China is, arguably, this era's equivalent to European colonizers. In search of markets and resources, it has extended its influence throughout Latin America. By removing Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro, Trump has exercised his own corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, depriving China of a key foothold.

Numerous U.S. presidents have meddled in the region. But whereas they prioritized the installation of a friendly government and, in Venezuela's case, democracy, Trump prioritized control of Venezuela's oil while leaving its leadership largely intact.

China comes in from the cold

Even Trump's fiercest critics credit him for opening their eyes to China. Western leaders no longer see it as a benign partner, but an adversary whose ambitions and values are fundamentally at odds with their own. This



U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, January 21, 2026.

brought hopes of a new global bargain in which the U.S. and other free-market democracies deepened links while decoupling from China. In 2024, Canada got on board, hiking its tariff on Chinese electric vehicles to 100% to match the U.S.

But when Trump returned to office he showed little interest in such a bar-

gain. He hit Canada with tariffs and talked of annexation. Two weeks ago, Canada recalibrated. Prime Minister Mark Carney struck a deal with China to slash the EV tariff while China reduced duties on Canadian canola.

Though small in the scheme of things, the deal showed how third countries must swallow their misgiv-

ing to get her two dogs to the relative safety of the bathroom, away from external walls.

"There are people screaming, and you can't do anything," she said. "That's probably the scariest thing."

The energy crisis has permeated the neighborhood since it took hold late last year when Russia intensified strikes on power stations and other infrastructure. Now, the nearby grocery store isn't as reliable as usual, with its opening hours dependent on generators powering it. The private sauna on the river that was once a traditional leisure activity now mostly provides a chance for a warm shower.

Heating for the building that depends on electrical pumps to pipe hot water has been badly disrupted.

It has all come during a particularly cold winter, with heavy snowfalls and temperatures around 6 degrees Fahrenheit or lower since early January.

Daryna Prokopenko, a lawyer during the week and tattoo artist on weekends, lives in Tkhoryk's building and has devised ways to ensure that her boyfriend and their sons, ages 4 and 1, survive.

The four burners on her gas stove heat the room a bit—hardly safe, but badly needed, she said.

The unpredictability of the power cuts has shaken Prokopenko's daily routine.

When she reaches for her phone early in the morning, her eyes dart to the Wi-Fi symbol. If it is on, she races to charge every power bank, laptop and lamp, as the power can go out any minute. If there is laundry to do or cooking, she springs into action at the first sign of electricity back in the building.

"When the light comes on, I get a burst of energy and strength—you have to tidy up the mess here, wash the dishes there," she said.

Cars work as both charging stations and freezers, with frozen dumplings and other products stored in their trunks. Christmas trees still strung with lights brighten apartments during power cuts. Children on break from school charge family devices at government-run "invincibility points," large tents that run on generators to provide heat and electricity.

For Viktoriya Tokareva, an accountant from the eighth floor of the Tychyna Avenue building, one nearby tent became a makeshift office when her apartment lost power for a week. While Tokareva worked, her 4-year-old daughter hung out with a psychologist and watched cartoons, as her kindergarten was too cold to open.

Anastasiia Samofal, a 27-year-old translator from the second floor, taped her 22-pound power bank to an old shopping cart to haul it to the tent. A few weeks ago,



Liubov Klymenko, 66, heats fireproof bricks, stones and an old family iron on the stove in her kitchen, which she uses to warm her apartment after critical civil infrastructure was hit by recent Russian missile and drone strikes in Kyiv, Ukraine, January 23, 2026.

there was enough electricity for her to watch the long-awaited finale of "Stranger Things" on Netflix. Now, power is strictly for essentials.

"It's so dark that you can't read, and there's no light to sit on the phone for long, because then I'll have to go downstairs to recharge it," she said. "The only entertainment is cooking because I cook and warm myself up at the same time."

She hangs out on pillows surrounding her gas stove with her cat Murchyk, which now always wears a

little sweater. To wash the dishes, Samofal uses a tip she saw online: wearing winter gloves under rubber ones to wash plates in cold water.

It is even harder for those taking care of young children on their own. Olha Kosova's husband is in the military, and the power cuts made it hard to heave the heavy stroller up to the fourth floor and heat water to bathe her 1-year-old daughter. She left the building for her parents' house in the Kyiv suburbs, where power outages are rarer and she could get more help.

"The war has been going on for years, and every year, it gets harder and harder," Kosova said. "I wouldn't even move out of that apartment if I didn't have a child. I want to give her a warm home, and I want her to always be clean."

Technicians are working grueling, 12-hour shifts to get the lights back on. Vadym Buhlak, who is employed by DTEK, Ukraine's largest private power company, said he and colleagues had restored electricity to a building last week that had been without power for 10 days.

"They were practically praying for us," he said, recalling residents bringing out tea and candy to thank his team.

DTEK said it has been fielding tens of thousands of calls a day asking for help.

"Russia is using winter as a weapon to try and trigger a human catastrophe in Ukraine. Every part of the energy system is being attacked at a level that's incomparable with anything we've seen since 2022," said DTEK Chief Executive Maxim Timchenko.

There is no indication that the Kremlin has broken Ukrainian morale. Early on Saturday evening, the Tychyna Avenue neighbors huddled around a fire for an impromptu barbecue.

Laughter rang out in the dark streets. Children ran around without a care as neighbors caught up with acquaintances old and new. One cautioned that her food contribution—some sausages—was still frozen.

"No way to unfreeze them," she said, laughing.

The group made a toast with glasses of vodka and whiskey for warmth. They broke into song, a Ukrainian patriotic march that has become an anthem of resistance to Russia.

"For some reason, our glorious Ukraine is in sorrow," they sang. "Hey-hey, we shall cheer up our glorious Ukraine!"

up there with the development of shale two decades ago. The Commerce Department said Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing, as part of \$250 billion in new Taiwanese investment, will add to several chip factories in Arizona. In exchange, the U.S. would cut tariffs on Taiwan and exempt companies like TSMC that invest in the U.S. altogether.

These aren't just any factories. They will make the advanced chips essential to the artificial intelligence, communications and mobile applications designed by Nvidia, Qualcomm and Apple. Production of such chips has long been concentrated in Taiwan and South Korea, and the U.S. lack of such capabilities is a key vulnerability.

The deal shows that that manufacturing can be reshored under the right conditions.

Taiwan will remain the dominant supplier of these chips for the foreseeable future. But just as shale made the U.S. energy-independent, and thus less invested in keeping the Middle East stable, having some degree of chip autonomy makes it

less invested in keeping Taiwan free.

War between the president and the Fed

Many presidents have sought to pressure the Fed on interest rates, but none as much as Trump. After months of his attacks, his Justice Department took the most drastic step yet, initiating a criminal investigation of Fed Chair Jerome Powell, ostensibly over his testimony on building renovations.

Powell, who had previously declined to respond to the attacks, came out swinging, calling the investigation a pretext to neuter the central bank's independence.

The outcome of this battle matters immensely to investors around the world who have long assumed the Fed would act in the long-term interests of the U.S. economy and global stability. Trump wants a Fed chair who puts his agenda first—i.e., lower rates, faster growth, and a higher stock market.

There are still institutional guardrails. The Supreme Court signaled this past week it is not inclined to let Trump fire a Fed governor, Lisa Cook, over alleged mortgage misrepresentations. Such a re-

moval without due process, judicial review or remedy "would weaken, if not shatter, the independence of the Federal Reserve," Justice Brett Kavanaugh said.

Even if the guardrails hold, the Fed won't be the same. Its next chair, to take office in just four months, risks the same treatment if he defies the president.

Japan and the end of easy money

While Trump's Greenland grab roiled markets, events half a world away fed the turmoil as Japanese bond yields shot up and the yen fell.

For decades, the Bank of Japan used both zero interest rates and government bond buying to combat inflation that was too close to zero. Inflation is now comfortably above zero. As the bank has slowly raised rates, bond yields have marched steadily higher.

Then this past week, when Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi called a snap election with a promise to cut taxes, she crystallized fears that Japan's already massive debt will become unsustainable.

The world has a stake in this because Japan is one of the world's largest, if not the

largest, creditors. Its government and investors hold \$1.2 trillion worth of U.S. Treasury debt. Japan increasingly needs those investors to buy its own debt. Adjusted for exchange rates, markets think Japan will be paying much more to borrow than the U.S., Germany or Switzerland in a decade's time, calculates Marcel Kasumovich, senior adviser to Evenflow Macro, a research firm. The market is telling the Bank of Japan "to hike rates a lot."

As Japanese rates rise, debtor nations will feel pressure to offer higher rates to keep Japanese investors buying their bonds. The U.S., whose government is the world's largest borrower, is especially vulnerable.

This list isn't exhaustive. Federalism is under strain from aggressive immigration enforcement in Minnesota and counterprotests. Trump has already suspended some funds to the state and threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act to send in active-duty troops.

Any of these events alone would be a game changer. In combination, they will reshape global economic and political patterns with consequences we don't yet fully understand. And it's only January.



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, January 20, 2026.

ings about China if they want to hedge their dependence on the U.S. As Carney noted in Davos, "not every partner will share all of our values."

Canada should not kid itself. America on its worst day is more democratic and law-abiding than China on its best. Geography dictates that the U.S. is its natural economic partner, and changing

that will be costly. Trump has set out to demonstrate just that, threatening 100% tariffs if Canada proceeds with the China deal.

American technological autonomy advances

Semiconductors are often called the new oil. If so, then Trump's deal this month with Taiwan ranks

How Theme Parks Turned Nostalgia Into Historical Landmarks

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Amusement parks flourished after World War II, as the economy grew and families needed child-friendly entertainment

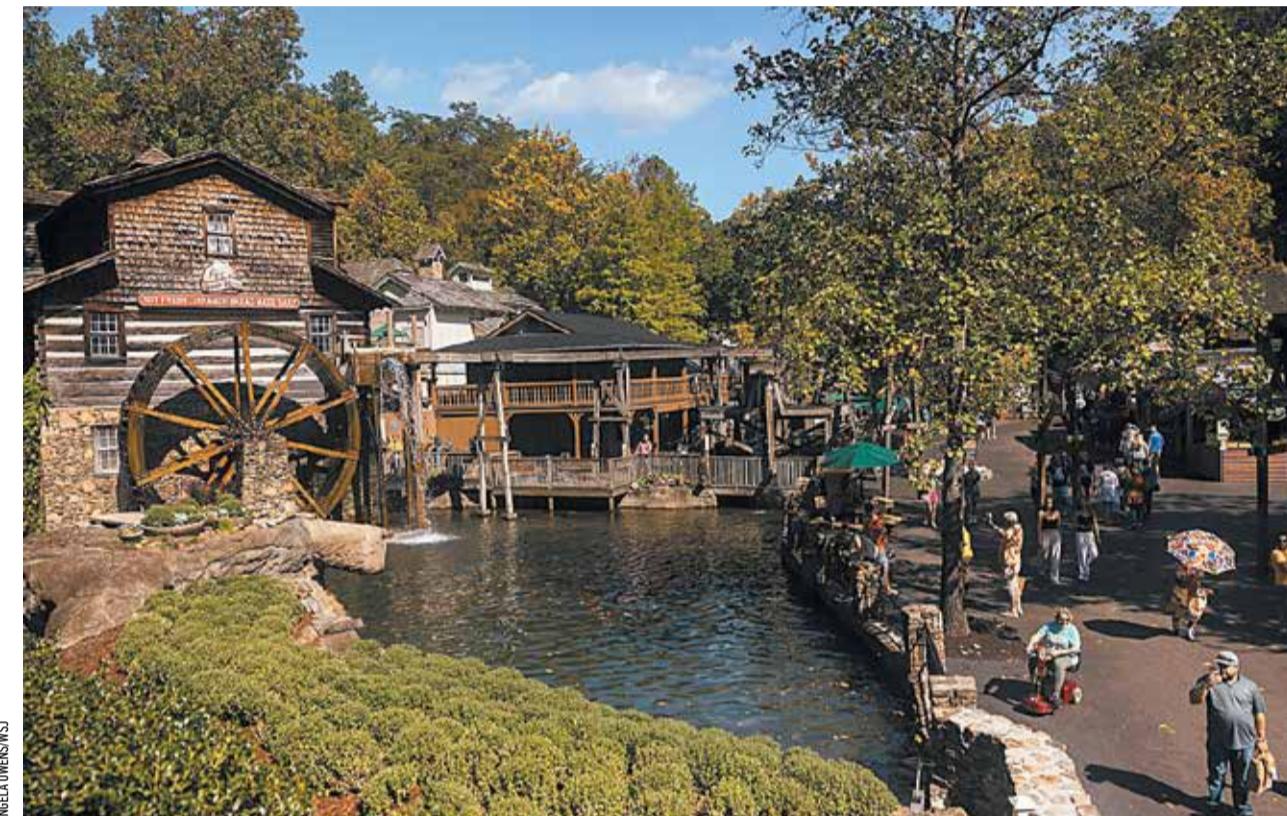
Continued from Page One

Hungry diners would flock from around Southern California for a taste of their chicken dinners and boysenberry pies. Lines would stretch for blocks, drawing the ire of would-be customers.

Walter decided they needed to build attractions to occupy patrons' time while they waited. First came the rock garden. Then the displays of fluorescent minerals and antique music boxes. Next was the re-creation of a volcano.

By 1940, some two years after the restaurant first opened, the Knotts began work on the biggest addition to their entertainment complex yet: a re-creation of an abandoned pioneer town, inspired by the history of the Old West and Walter's own grandparents, who moved to California from Texas in a covered wagon in the late 1860s.

Ghost Town, as the attraction came to be known, ultimately formed the basis



The Grist Mill at Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee.

for Knott's Berry Farm, one of the oldest theme parks in the U.S.

Since they were introduced in the 19th century,

America's amusement parks have acted as time capsules for the young country's cultural history. Many attractions at the parks are rooted in past

eras, serving as reminders of past fashions and technologies. Some parks have morphed into historical landmarks in their own right, with

multiple generations of families sharing in the experience.

"We're in the nostalgia business and have been since day one," says Ken Parks, cor-

porate vice president of planning and design at Six Flags Entertainment, the parent company of dozens of theme parks across the country, including Knott's Berry Farm and Cedar Point in Ohio.

An amusing history

Like many aspects of American culture, today's theme parks have their roots across the pond. Europe was home to the first amusement parks, including famed locations such as Bakken, which opened in Denmark in 1583, and Prater Park in Austria, which made its debut in 1766. These parks themselves evolved from the public pleasure gardens and picnic grounds that were commonplace across Europe, as well as world's fairs that were known for their eye-catching architecture and cutting-edge technology.

With the advent of the electric streetcar, many trolley companies built parks as destinations for their new modes of transport. At first, these trolley parks were sim-

These People Went From Hoarders to Extreme Minimalists. Here's How.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Aiming to own less stuff in 2026? Three decluttering trends to try, including a makeup challenge and the not-so-grim practice of 'Swedish death cleaning.'

Continued from Page One

But it takes more than a slap-dash resolution to permanently right the ship. Carla Holden, a "messy person turned minimalist," calls decluttering "a process of getting honest with yourself." Her Los Angeles apartment was once packed with "just in case" items. Over the past four years, the 40-something content creator and professional organizer has stripped things back in pursuit of a calmer nervous system and a "functional home."

A trio of trends popular on social media promote different routes to cutting back. While some TikTok influencers, like Holden, spring-clean their way to a more carefree lifestyle, others turn to "project pan," which halts buying new beauty products until that costly eye shadow, blush

or bronzer is worn down to "the pan." Some folks credit "Swedish death cleaning" for their newfound peace. This cheery-sounding practice guides you through the delicate process of purging belongings to spare your family once you pass.

Not since Marie Kondo's hit 2014 book "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up" has taking stock of your stuff felt so urgent. According to a TikTok spokesperson, #Minimalism posts increased by more than 15% in 2025 compared with 2024, while those tagged #ProjectPan increased by over 270%, and #SwedishDeathCleaning saw a more than 440% increase during the same period.

Regan A. R. Gurung, social psychologist and professor of Psychology at Oregon State University, attributes the decluttering revival to a need

for control: "People are feeling battered," he said. "Going minimalist means less to worry about."

Of course, it also buoys your bank balance. New York creative director Elysia Berman, 36, pulled back on spending at the start of 2024 after she found herself drowning in clothes, makeup and \$48,000 worth of debt. "During the pandemic, social media shoved products down our throats and, since there was nothing else to do, we bought them," she said. Now, 8 months debt-free, she views her year-and-a-half "no-buy" period (with a few slip ups) as a way of "taking back ownership and autonomy."

Ready to put down your Amex? We walk you through the three methods.

The All-Season Capsule Wardrobe

Florida, Costa Rica and Vienna). Now Riet, 51, a life coach and self-proclaimed "nomadic minimalist," fits all her belongings into "one medium suitcase and a carry-on." To earn a coveted spot, an item must work in "at least five different outfits." Jeans, black pants, simple T-shirts, tank tops and button-down shirts from Banana Republic and Madewell feature heavily. A lightweight jacket and cardigan make for easy layering; a slip dress is her go-to for dinners and events.

Tips for Tackling It

Riet suggests writing down your lifestyle demands: where you live, the climate and what your days look like. "Be honest about your daily life, not your ideal one." Go for mostly neutral colors and "add a few accent colors that suit your skin tone." Avoid busy prints since they're harder to mix, she advises. Stick to "timeless cuts and quality fabrics like, linen, cotton, wool, silk or cashmere." Only keep pieces you truly love. "If you just kind of like it, you'll never reach for it."

In 2018, Toronto pharmacist Christina Mychaskiw



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took stock of her shopping habits and embraced minimalism after realizing she had shelled out more than her monthly rent on a pair of boots. The 38-year-old's advice? Never buy non-essential items immediately; add them to a wishlist. "If you see it in January and still want it in March, it's likely a good buy." And don't shop when you're at a loose end, she added. "Boredom is expensive!"

ply gardens and picnicking grounds, but in time other attractions and rides like roller coasters and Ferris wheels were added.

In their heyday in the early 1900s, there were thousands of these parks across the U.S., with major cities sometimes having several venues. Among the earliest of these was Lake Compounce in Bristol, Conn., which opened in 1846 and is the country's oldest continuously operating amusement park. Other early parks, including Coney Island in New York and Kennywood near Pittsburgh, have also remained open to this day.

"At the turn of the 20th century, rides were almost an afterthought at amusement parks," says Jim Futrell, historian at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, an industry trade organization. "If you look at some of the writings of how to operate a successful amusement park, they looked at things like the live entertainment and dancing, whereas rides were lumped in with other concessions."

Decades later, a new type of attraction, theme parks, exploded across the country. Like older amusement parks, these new destinations had rides and attractions, but were designed around a central theme, like Knott's Berry Farm or Santa Claus Land.

Theme parks flourished in the wake of World War II, driven by the country's economic prosperity and result-

ing baby boom. America's growing families needed more child-friendly entertainment.

Among these parks was one that would redefine the industry: Disney's first park, Disneyland. Walt Disney's father had worked on the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, and as a boy, Disney grew up going to Electric Park, an amusement park near his childhood home.

The new park pioneered technologies such as audio-animatronics and innovative roller-coaster rides, as well as theming. Visitors were meant to be transported to different places and live out the stories they knew from movies and television. (In time, theme-park attractions would themselves inspire popular movies like "Pirates of the Caribbean.")

Common frontiers

Walt Disney also had a fascination with U.S. history, and wanted the public to be able to experience that history much like they would a ride or attraction based on one of his own movies, says Leslie Iwerks, a filmmaker whose latest documentary, "Disneyland Handcrafted," tracks the creation of the park. (Iwerks's grandfather Ub co-created Mickey Mouse.)

"Whether it was steam trains, riverboats or Victorian towns, he wanted to keep these things alive in the consciousness of guests," Iwerks says.

Frontierland owes much to the Ghost Town created by



Actress Debbie Reynolds, left, sits next to Marion Knott as they take the inaugural ride on the new "Montezooma's Revenge" ride at Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, California, May 26, 1978.

Disney's contemporary and friend, Walter Knott, down to the rides at each park inspired by mine trains. The same is true for many other Western-themed throw-back attractions that dot the theme-park map.

At Dollywood in Tennessee and its sister park, Silver Dollar City in Missouri, areas are dedicated to historic re-creations of America, such as Craftsman's Valley, featuring a model of a one-room schoolhouse and booths where people demonstrate trades like blacksmithing.

In creating these attractions, rather than being spot-

on re-creations of the past, parks tend to rely on people's preconceived notions regarding periods in American history, or what cultural anthropologist and theme-park researcher Scott A. Lukas calls culture sampling.

"You want to take a reference to history or to time, but you don't want to make it too specific," he says. Theme parks aren't meant to be museums, so historical attractions are designed to evoke emotions and a sense of nostalgia associated with the past.

Cultural battlefield

Theme-park operators face

constant pressure to push the envelope with new and exciting attractions. Roller coasters must be taller, faster and more mind-boggling. New technologies, such as augmented-reality goggles, are used to bring videogames to life. Special effects need to be more jaw-dropping than ever before to justify the millions of dollars it takes to construct these experiences.

Nowadays, soon after a contemporary Hollywood blockbuster is released, people start speculating about when it might be immortalized as a theme-park ride. "They serve as one of the media platforms through which these companies distribute their franchises," says Florian Freitag, a professor of American studies at the University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany whose research has focused on theme parks.

Theme parks have also gone under the cultural microscope as sensitivities have changed. Six Flags has removed references to the Confederacy in recent decades, including the Confederate Battle Flag that used to fly at some of its parks' entrances. (The company's name is a reference to the six countries that have governed Texas, where the first park was located, including the Confederate States of America.)

Disney's Splash Mountain—which was inspired by "Song of the South," a movie that many now consider problematic—was replaced at

Disneyland and Walt Disney World with a ride based on "The Princess and the Frog," the first Disney movie to feature a Black princess. Other Disney attractions, including Pirates of the Caribbean, the Jungle Cruise and Peter Pan's Flight, have been changed in recent years to remove controversial elements.

The strong sense of nostalgia many hold for the theme parks of their youth can produce blowback as parks expand and evolve. Fans will distribute petitions to prevent a beloved attraction from closing, and sit vigil when it does. To bid adieu to a Muppet-themed section of Disney's Hollywood Studios parks in Florida, some Kermit and Gonzo superfans organized a prom-inspired soiree at one of the area's restaurants.

Such passion reflects how theme parks have gone from referencing the past to becoming living landmarks in their own right. As other cultural touchstones like shopping malls and drive-in movie theaters have fallen by the wayside, theme parks have remained crucial places for shared experiences, says Sam Gennawey, an author who has written books on theme parks and their history.

"Every grandparent wants to take their grandchild to the park to see their eyes light up just like they remember their kids did before their kids got older and cynical," Gennawey says.



Decluttering, the Swedish Way

Swedish death cleaning, or *döstdräning*, is a longstanding Nordic practice that first rose to prominence with the 2017 publication of Margareta Magnusson's book, "The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning," and the subsequent 2023 Peacock show of the same name.

While decluttering is

about "getting rid of things that don't matter, like, 'let's toss all our expired condiments packets,' Swedish death cleaning goes deeper," said Kelly Brask, a professional organizer in Chicago. She called the process of taking stock of your total footprint "a more intentional type of downsizing."

The practice removes the emotional stress and guilt of throwing away a deceased loved one's belongings by

encouraging families to sort through things together beforehand. It can take weeks, months or even years to complete, said Brask.

Despite death cleaning's implied demographic, and as gloomy as it sounds, Brask believes it's a useful framework for all ages. "I regularly ask my three daughters how many Valentine cards or participation medals they want to keep—I want to teach

them early that it's OK to let go."

Tips for Tackling It

Ella Engström, based in Dalarna, Sweden, is an interior designer, professional organizer and "fixer" on the Peacock show. She called death cleaning "an act of love, responsibility and freedom. All those just-in-case items we hold on to are really just postponed decisions." She never pushes anyone to let go of sentimental items. "We take time to talk about the story behind each item...clients often discover that the memory doesn't live in the object itself." When people get stuck on an item, said Engström, a "dilemma box" becomes a temporary home. Once everything else is sorted, it's pulled back out.

Brask charges around \$100 per hour and requires a minimum of five four-hour sessions. She recommends that older clients pass along the history of an item to its inheritor—say, add "a note in the bag holding a pearl necklace saying, 'Bud gave these to Pris when they got married.'" She encourages more-senior participants to create a box labeled, "Throw away when I'm dead." This allows them to hold on to keepsakes, while

freeing up their family later.

"It's not morbid, it's mindful," said Riet of Swedish death cleaning. "It invites you to look through your possessions and ask, 'Am I leaving behind treasures or burdens?'"

The TikTok Beauty Challenge Taking Over Bathroom Cabinets

While the project Pan beauty challenge dates back to Reddit circa 2015, it didn't go viral until it reached TikTok in 2025. The gist: People line up the products they already own—all those makeup, hair and beauty purchases gathering dust in a bathroom cupboard—and pause buying anything new until they've used them up.

After realizing that she owned "more makeup than anybody needs," Mychaskiw undertook "project pan" from November 2024 until November 2025. Today she considers the Merit Flush Balm Cream Blush, Clé de Peau Beauté concealer and ILIA's Limitless Lash mascara her only essentials (she swears the mascara doesn't transfer, even on "greasy eyelids"). Holden keeps all her previously accumulated shower gel and hair products in an IKEA storage

box and shops "my home instead of Sephora."

Tips for Tackling It

Berman, the creative director, bought too many beauty products during the pandemic and hadn't finished any "in God knows how long." She took up the pan challenge at the prompting of some TikTok followers. The most valuable products? Those that can be used in multiple ways. Berman's favorites include a Westman Atelier blush stick that can be dabbed on the eyes, lips and cheeks, and a Basma Beauty Foundation Stick that doubles as a concealer. She avoids makeup palettes: Unless you love every color in the set, they "generate a lot of waste." She now only buys travel sizes of mascara, since it has a shelf life of 6 months.

Riet finds that a concentrated, 8-ounce bottle of Dermalogica face wash "can easily last me eight months." Among her other essentials: the brand's cleanser, moisturizer and sunscreen. She uses "every product until it's gone—even if I don't love it." But you can avoid that situation, Holden said, by requesting samples from stores before committing to a purchase.

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From Greece to New York: A Greek Woman's Journey Toward the American Dream

A young Greek woman navigates migration, ambition, and belonging in America

Continued from Page One

Another 70,000 people made the long voyage to the United States between 1918 and 1924. However, over the twenty years after that, the number fell to around 30,000. Most of these later arrivals were women; often referred to as "picture brides," they came to marry the Greek men who had emigrated to America in the earlier waves.

Postwar Shifts

Greek migration to the United States sped up again after 1945, as many sought to escape the economic devastation wrought by World War II and the Greek Civil War. However, following Greece's admission to the European Union in 1981, immigration numbers dropped significantly, to fewer than 2,000 arrivals per year. In the decades since, Greek immigration to the United States has remained minimal.

Even during the recent economic crisis between 2009 and 2018, when Greek society suffered a serious "brain drain", most of those who left migrated to other European countries rather than the United States.

A New Generation

Although the economic situation in Greece appears to have stabilized, the idea of the opportunities the United States can offer for both financial and personal growth remains highly attractive to many young people in Greece. Ultimately, however, it is the individual's



COURTESY OF EVELYN ANITA BOATENK

Boatenk stands at the booth of her Greek restaurant, Sagapo, at the 2025 Greek Hermes Expo in New Jersey.

unique circumstances that shape both their decision to migrate and how they cope with the challenges that may arise after they settle in a foreign country.

For Evelyn, being raised in a very close-knit family that had to struggle to get by both shaped her mentality and became the driving force behind her decision to pursue her dream abroad.

Roots and Resilience

"I grew up in Greece in a single-parent family," she says. Very early in her life, she had to find a job to help her mother support herself and her two younger half-sisters. "From a very young age, I learned what survival, work, and dignity really mean. I started work at 17 to help my mother and contribute to our household expenses."

At the same time, food was always her "safe place," as she puts it. "I grew up cooking with my grandmother and grandfather, surrounded by Greek, Pontian, Polish, and African flavors—my father is of African descent. Ours was a family in which the table brought people together." This multicultural foundation shaped not only her aesthetic, but also the way she views life.

New York Calling

Financial hardship from a young age and limited opportunities in her hometown led her to leave Greece. Her chosen destination was the Big Apple, long a magnet for migrants keen to try their luck and a city that em-

braces people from everywhere and all walks of life. "I needed to see how far I could get without a 'ceiling.' America—and New York in particular—is tough, but it's honest. If you work hard, it pays off. I didn't come with a Plan B. I came with \$2,000 in my pocket and no safety net—just determination and the belief that, if you don't take risks, you will never truly learn who you are."

A Dream Takes Shape

Setting off on her journey, Evelyn also brought with her a dream: setting up her own business and being her own boss. The project was a restaurant that would bring together Greek dishes and flavors from elsewhere, reflecting the multicultural richness of her heritage. She admits that the project is still evolving, both as a dining space and as an experience. Evelyn stresses that the biggest challenge is "keeping your vision clear in a city that is constantly pressuring you to compromise."

Inspired by love for her grandparents, she called the restaurant "Sagapo," which means "I love you" in Greek. "Growing up watching food bring my family together around our table, I learned what it means to share. I wanted the name to express love, hospitality, and family. To remind people that food isn't just consumption: it's memory, emotion, and sharing—"sit down and eat," as we used to say at home." Greek culture is

How Washington Is Rewriting the Eastern Mediterranean Power Game

By Cleopatra Kitti

The Eastern Mediterranean is entering a new phase of competition where legal claims, deterrence and sovereignty remain central, but are increasingly prosecuted through capital allocation, and transactional politics.

The rules of the game are not being renegotiated; they are being reprinted.

For Athens, Ankara and other regional capitals, the strategic challenge is no longer whether to assert legal rights, but how to do so in an environment where investment decisions, corridor design and governance frameworks determine which claims acquire economic and political weight over time. Law still defines the

boundaries of the game; capital increasingly determines its outcomes.

Turkey approaches this landscape through scale and optionality. Its ambition to operate across the full energy and infrastructure spectrum deploying TPAO's capacity upstream, midstream and downstream, reflects a strategy aimed at indispensability. By extending its reach beyond the Aegean and East-

ern Mediterranean into Africa and Asia, Ankara ensures that legal isolation in one theatre does not translate into strategic marginalisation.

Greece operates on a different axis. Its strength lies in institutional alignment: regulatory predictability, EU embeddedness and compatibility with Western legal and financial systems. By positioning itself as an institutional gateway for capital,

Greece enhances its credibility with partners while assuming greater responsibility for managing geopolitical frictions beyond its direct control. The trade-off is between influence gained through alignment and the flexibility required in a fluid and contested regional environment.

The regional dimension is shaped by the gravitational pull of Israel's energy and in-



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Boatenk surrounded by the Greek American Folklore Society dancers during the Greek Festival of St. Eirini Chrysovalantou in Astoria, NY, in the summer of 2025.

the core of her project, she stresses. "The philosophy of sharing, of family-style dining, of simplicity that carries depth—that's what I want people to experience, not just read written on a menu."

Loneliness and Community

However, no matter how strong and determined you may be, Evelin admits that the life of an immigrant can be very lonely at times. The loneliness of migration, she says, doesn't show on Instagram. "You can only overcome it by soldiering on—especially on the days when your self-belief is low." She adds that meeting her husband in New York has helped her, as she now has someone she can call family there.

On the difficult path she has chosen far from her homeland, Evelin makes special mention of the important and deeply supportive role of the Greek community. "The Greek community is an anchor. It's solidarity, understanding, and a shared language—both literally and emotionally. Having Greeks around you on such a demanding journey helps you stay on your feet."

Building Beyond Borders

To build up her business, the young Greek woman has created a strong social media presence, posting videos, shorts, and reels that humorously capture everyday life. But while her content



COURTESY OF EVELIN ANNA BOATENK

has received an enthusiastic response, she does not view social media as a promotional tool. "Social media is a relationship tool," she says. "I built an online community before my business even existed." And that journey gave rise to Mytha Creative Studio, the social media and branding company she co-founded with her friend Emily Intzekostas to help businesses across different industries build a meaningful and authentic presence online.

Reflecting on her journey, Evelin admits that while the entrepreneurial reality in America is undoubtedly demanding, it is also fair. "In America, people with passion and a strong work ethic are recognized and celebrated. If you work hard, you can truly succeed."

'The Greek community is an anchor. It's solidarity, understanding, and a shared language—both literally and emotionally. Having Greeks around you on such a demanding journey helps you stay on your feet.'

Moving Forward

Having left Thessaloniki two years ago, her future goals include living a life of stability and creativity surrounded by a strong sense of community. "I want my restaurant and my projects to be reference points, not just businesses." Her words also reflect her strong family ties when she says, "My dream has always been to gain financial independence, so my mother doesn't have to work anymore."

Finally, her message to young Greeks who may be thinking about leaving the country is this: "Leave prepared, not afraid. Remember who you are and where you come from. There is meritocracy where you're going, and space for those who work hard—just as long as they don't ask permission to pursue their dream."



Boatenk with her grandfather in 1999 in Thessaloniki dressed in traditional Pontian costume.



"Growing up watching food bring my family together around our table, I learned what it means to share," Boatenk explains, describing the philosophy that inspired her restaurant.



rastructure strategy, which increasingly anchors eastwest corridors. Israeli-led projects do not resolve Greek-Turkish disputes, but they alter their practical consequences by introducing alternative routes, partners and sequencing for capital. In doing so, they shape which legal positions translate into commercial reality first.

Egypt's potential role as a gas supplier to Lebanon, Palestine and Syria would depend on regional agreements and, the participation of Gulf, American and European financiers and operators. If structured to support

peace and stability, such arrangements could deepen regional integration embedding energy cooperation within broader diplomatic frameworks.

Within this architecture sits Cyprus: structurally pivotal yet politically exposed. Cyprus functions as a node, offering EU legal jurisdiction, proximity to Israeli systems and potential transit capacity, while lacking meaningful enforcement power. Its role is catalytic but fragile, dependent on transparent governance capable of withstanding sustained political pressure.

Overlaying these dynam-

ics is tension within EU energy strategy itself. Europe's pursuit of energy security, decarbonisation and strategic autonomy creates ambiguity for Eastern Mediterranean gas. While diversification away from Russia has raised the region's strategic relevance, the Green Deal questions asset longevity. The result is a narrowing window in which projects must secure political, regulatory and financial anchoring before policy shifts and regional instability overtake them.

Ultimately, power now flows through institutions as much as sovereignty. Le-

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Greece Revives Its Handicraft Heritage for a Modern Era

For the first time in decades, Greek handicrafts are returning not as nostalgic relics, but as engines of regional development, education, and innovation—connecting traditional skills with modern markets and EU strategies

By Angelos Alexopoulos

For the first time in decades, Greek handicrafts are stepping back into the spotlight—not as relics of the past, but as integral elements of a modern development strategy. From pilot educational centers for weaving, ceramics, and woodworking in rural and border regions to the new European Geographical Indications system covering both artisanal and industrial products, a new framework is emerging. Its goal: transform traditional knowledge into productive, exportable capital.

At a time when the European Union views handicrafts as a tool for regional growth, Greece is striving to reclaim lost ground. The country is investing in new training and certification programs for artisans, aiming to link local skills to the broader European market.

When the Ministry of Education announced last November that handicraft workshops would be introduced in schools, the move sparked sharp criticism in the media and on social networks. Many argued that focusing on traditional crafts—like weaving and embroidery—was a step backward, reviving an outdated model of education that runs counter to the pressing need for digital skills in the era of artificial intelligence.

Challenging the 'Linear View' of Innovation

For some experts, innovation is not solely the domain of high-tech industries. Dr. Aikaterini Polymerou-Kamilaiki, a senior researcher and former director of the Hellenic Folklore Research Center at the Academy of Athens, argued in a 2021 *Economist* article for the strategic importance of applied arts for sustainable local and regional development. She explained that moving beyond a "linear" economic view in the 21st century means combining traditional crafts and techniques with modern technologies—creating a bridge between past and present.

Dr. Polymerou-Kamilaiki supports the Ministry of Culture's efforts through lectures and as a member of the Council for Intangible Cultural Heritage. She



Woven textile created by the Weaving Arts Unit of the Lyceum Club of Greek Women in Volos.



Woven textile by the Weaving Arts Unit of Vlasti, inaugurated in October 2025, in the wider Kozani regional unit of Western Macedonia.

welcomed the Ministry of Education's decision to reinstate hands-on craft programs in schools. Speaking to *To Vima*, she explained:

"Handicrafts, seemingly outdated in the era of artificial intelligence, are re-emerging dynamically. They intersect with tourism, environmental protection, technological development, education, research, personal growth (entrepreneurship and artistic creation), and therapeutic and creative engagement. They leverage the cultural capital of local traditions, forming the core of UNESCO's philosophy on Intangible Cultural Heritage. Reintroducing these crafts into education can only have positive effects."

Europe's Growing Focus on Craftsmanship

The EU's renewed attention to handicrafts is evident in its new Geographical Indications system (GI), which opened for registration last December. For the first time, a protection tool long applied to food and beverages

now covers non-agricultural products—effectively completing the EU's unified GI market. In his statement, European Commission Executive Vice-President Stéphane Séjourné emphasized the stakes not through nostalgia, but industrial strategy:

"We are not only protecting the unique skills and traditions of our artisans; we are also creating new opportunities for development, jobs, and small businesses—allowing authentic European products to thrive in global markets, strengthening local economies, EU competitiveness, and preserving our cultural identity for future generations."

Reviving Rural Craftsmanship as a Growth Engine

The Ministry of Culture's flagship initiative, *Revitalization of Local Craft Units as a Driving Force of Development*, is part of Greece's National Recovery and Resilience Plan. Its core focus: skill-building in traditional crafts through pilot programs run over the past two years by the Lifelong Learning Centers of the Universities of Thessaly, Western Macedonia, and Western Attica. The programs operated across 19 centers in weaving (10), ceramics (5), and woodworking (4), targeting rural and remote regions.

Approximately 285 participants—professional artisans, hobbyists, vulnerable social groups, and unemployed individuals registered with the Greek Public Employment Service (DYPA)—completed the programs and are set to receive official certification from the Hellenic Accreditation System (ESYD).

One such weaving center is housed in the former Nestorio primary school in Kastoria, northern Greece—a region that hosted a carpet-making school in the early 2000s under the Hellenic Organization of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Handicraft (EOMMEX). "Handicrafts stopped here about 15 years ago. Jobs were lost. Products are now imported, while the rest of Europe preserved its craftsmanship," says Nestorio Mayor Christos Gosiopoulos. "Re-establishing weaving schools through this program is crucial for our remote, border communi-

ties, offering new employment opportunities, especially for women."

A Personal Calling for Participants

For amateur artist Katerina Gouliou, the Nestorio center was almost a personal summons. "When I saw online that a program would open here, I thought, 'This is for me.'" She describes a program that treats weaving not as a museum relic, but as a living skill. Guided by a multidisciplinary team of expert instructors, participants combined museum visits with educational exchanges.

Through hands-on workshops every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, alongside online sessions blending tradition, fine arts, technology, and marketing, Gouliou experimented with wool, cotton, and silk, integrating traditional patterns into contemporary clothing and décor. A small community of fellow weavers emerged around the looms, inspiring collaboration and idea-sharing.

She views her upcoming certification not as a mere piece of paper, but as a stepping stone to personal and professional growth: "It opens doors. Whatever comes next, it will be something very good. Weaving has deep roots, and our generation has a responsibility to pass it on. And this art isn't just for women—I hope men join the next cycle of the program."

Looking Ahead with Optimism

Today, Dr. Polymerou-Kamilaiki is more optimistic about the future of Greek handicrafts. Drawing inspiration from Italian models—like the ceramic village of Sassuolo in Emilia-Romagna and initiatives like *Homo Faber* and *The Place of Wonders*, which support traditional craftsmanship through scholarships—she envisions craft parks in key locations across Greece, including the Athenian Riviera, Eleonas, and Metaxourgeio.

"These hubs could turn Greece into a living showcase of traditional skills, innovation, and sustainable development," she concludes.