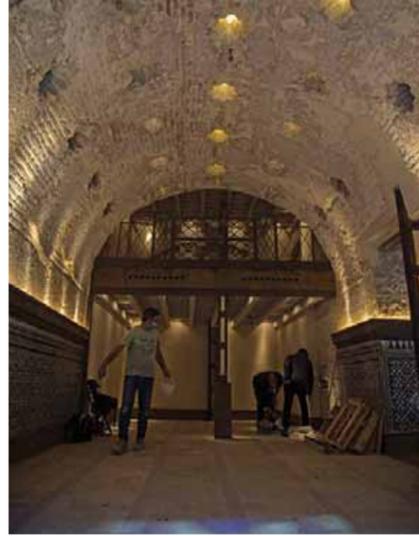




People look at the entrance of the Giralda Bar in Seville where an Islamic 12th-century bathhouse was uncovered during renovations works. — AFP photos



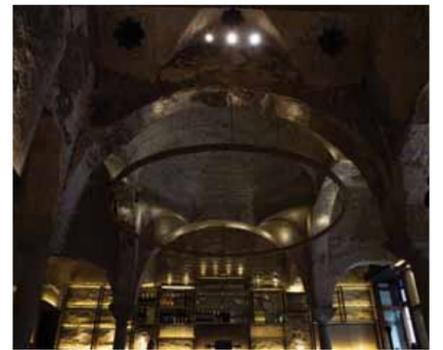
These pictures show the ceiling of the Giralda Bar.



These pictures show a wall at the Giralda Bar.



These picture show the ceiling of the Giralda Bar.



Inside a bar in Seville, a hidden 12th-century hammam is found

They had only just begun renovating the bar in Seville when they made a startling discovery: the building housed a perfectly preserved 12th-century hammam, its walls covered with beautiful paintings. What tipped them off was a star-shaped skylight that emerged within the first few blows of a hammer when the work first began inside Giralda, a bar in the heart of this southern Spanish city. The discovery was "completely unexpected", explained Alvaro Jimenez, the archaeologist assigned to monitor all such renovation works undertaken near Seville's Cathedral, a protected area. In total, they uncovered 88 skylights, star-shaped and octagonal, in the roof of this Moorish-styled bar with tiled walls that takes its name from La Giralda-once the minaret of the Great Mosque that now serves as the Cathedral's bell tower.

And there was more to follow, with workers uncovering beautiful artworks on the walls of the room, which measures

200 square meters, as well as the former hammam's warm, hot and cold rooms. More than 800 years old, the thermal baths along with their artwork, sculptures and wall fittings were perfectly preserved. That was thanks to the work of an early 20th-century architect called Vicente Traver who carefully hid it away when installing two extra floors.

A living museum

"We thought the architect had destroyed it but we realize now he saved it," Jimenez told AFP. "He saved what he found and preserved it for the future." Conquered by the Almohad dynasty in 1147, Seville was one of the two capitals of their empire alongside Marrakesh, in what is now Morocco. "Seville Cathedral is built on the remains of the Almohad Aljama mosque, the construction of which began in 1172, and which was inaugurated in 1198 with the completion



This picture shows the counter of the Giralda Bar.

of the minaret, La Giralda," he said. "The baths are located in the southern part of the city that the Almohads transformed into their political, religious and economic center."

Now visible above the bar's existing

tiles are ornate walls and engraved white arches. The bar, which will reopen soon, has been transformed into a living museum, completely restyled to reflect its history: a place to reflect on the Islamic artwork and architecture, as the city's resi-

dents would have done eight centuries ago. — AFP



This picture shows the ceiling of the Giralda Bar.



A health worker receives her first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine developed by China's Sinopharm company at the Hospital del Nino in La Paz. — AFP

Late for my job: 88-year-old caught going 191 km/h in France

An 88-year-old man caught speeding at a breakneck 191 kilometers per hour on a French country road told officers that he was late for his COVID-19 vaccine appointment, police said. The speed limit on the road where he was picked up on Thursday is 110 kilometers per hour, police in the eastern French Bas-Rhin region said on Facebook. The driver, a local, "gave as a reason for his speeding that he was late for his anti-COVID vaccine", it said.

Officers confiscated the man's driving license and impounded his car. "For everyone's safety, let's comply with speed limits, even after more than 60 years with a driving license," the post said. Since January, France has given residents over 75 priority in its vaccination program. The strategy is showing results, Prime Minister Jean Castex said on Thursday, with the rate of new infections among over 80-year-olds falling.—AFP

Canadian wants no presents, just COVID vaccine for 94th birthday

All a Canadian woman wants for her 94th birthday is a COVID-19 vaccine, according to a handwritten sign outside her home in Toronto. "I am 94 today! No gifts, just the vaccine please," it reads. Nina Rockett's daughter Margot made and hung the banner at her mother's house in Canada's largest metropolis when she turned one year older on February 24, amid mounting frustrations with the relatively slow pace of Canada's vaccine rollout. Canada has ordered or reserved more than 400 million doses of vaccine from seven suppliers, and started inoculating its citizens in December 2020 with the first authorized



Nina Rockett's daughter Margot showed her frustration over the government's slow rollout of vaccine by making and hanging the banner outside her mother's house on the birthday. — Frank Gunn

candidates made by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna. A third one developed by AstraZeneca was approved on Friday.

But the nation, with no vaccine production capacity of its own, hit a bump in the past month with shortages and delivery delays linked to European manufacturing issues. So far less than three percent of Canada's population of 38 million has received at least one shot. "It was the night before my mother's birthday and I realized she is turning 94 and she has no vaccine," Margot said in an interview with AFP. She lamented "a lot of broken promises" and a lack of firm information from doctors, public health officials and governments. Each of Canada's 10 provinces is responsible for administering vaccines purchased in bulk and distributed by the federal government. "What is happening here is terrible, is shameful," she said.

"I was fed up and I thought I just want the world to know that she is 94 and she is worthy of having the vaccine-and she wants it." As she spoke, the sounds of a passing car honking its horn broke the uneasy quiet of the neighborhood in a city that has been in a pandemic lockdown since December 26. It's been two days of "horns honking, thumbs up, (passersby) yelling I support you" and sharing stories of being unable to see their isolated elderly parents or grandparents for fear of unwittingly passing on the novel coronavirus to them, Margot Rockett said.

"I think everybody should hang a banner like this outside their door or window or balcony" to raise awareness of the plight of the elderly in Canada over the past year, she commented. As of Friday, Canada has reported more than 858,000 cases of the coronavirus and 21,865 fatalities. The bulk of them have been in Ontario and Quebec provinces where more than nine out of 10 COVID-19 deaths were people aged 60 years or older. — AFP



This recent undated handout photo shows "Baarak", a wild sheep who was found wandering the wilderness of the Australian bush with a huge 35-kilogram of fleece. — AFP photos



Aussie sheep sheds huge coat after years on the lam

A wild sheep found wandering the wilderness of the Australian bush has been sheared of a huge 35-kilogram coat after an estimated five years of unchecked growth. Struggling under a filthy fleece caked with years of mud and tangled debris, Baarak was spotted in a Victorian state forest and taken to an animal rescue sanctuary north of Melbourne, the group said on Facebook earlier this month. "I couldn't believe there was actually a sheep alive

under all of that wool," Pam Ahern, founder of Edgar's Mission Farm Sanctuary, told Nine News. The sheep's matted coat had been growing uncut for close to five years, Ahern estimated.

"I think he has been a cheeky little rascal of a young lamb who's just wandered off and never came back." Unshorn sheep struggle to walk under the immense weight of their wool, and without a haircut at least once a year most will not last long in the wild, particularly in Australia's often harsh and dry summers. Despite Baarak's hefty locks, he falls short of the world record held by a late compatriot, Chris, who made headlines when he was shorn of a 41-kilogram mane in 2015. Baarak's transformation from hulking mass to fresh faced has nevertheless given him a new fleece of life, with his overhaul racking up millions of views on TikTok. — AFP