

## Snapchat lets users share some stories on Web

# Apple to give users control over slowdown of older iPhones

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 25, (Agencies): Apple's next major update of its mobile software will include an option that will enable owners of older iPhones to turn off a feature that slows the device to prevent aging batteries from shutting down.

The free upgrade announced Wednesday will be released this spring.

The additional controls are meant to appease iPhone owners outraged since Apple acknowledged last month that its recent software updates had been secretly slowing down older iPhones when their batteries weakened.

Many people believed Apple was purposefully undermining the performance of older iPhones to drive sales of its newer and more expensive devices. Apple insisted it was simply trying to extend the lives of older iPhones, but issued an apology last month and promised to replace batteries in affected devices at a \$50 discount, lowering the price to \$29.

Despite Apple's contrition, the company is still facing an investigation

by French authorities, a series of questions from US Senate and a spate of consumer lawsuits alleging misconduct.

Besides giving people more control over the operation of older iPhones, the upcoming update dubbed iOS 11.3 will also show how well the device's battery is holding up. Apple had promised to add a battery gauge when it apologized to consumers last month.

Other features coming in the next update will include the ability to look at personal medical histories in Apple's health app, more tricks in its augmented reality toolkit and more animated emojis that work with the facial recognition technology in the iPhone X.

Google is getting into the audiobook business: The company launched a new audiobook store as part of its Google Play Books service Tuesday, promising competitive prices with a pay-as-you-go model. "You can listen to as many or as few as you want without a subscription," said Google Play Books

head of product management Greg Hartrell. The company is marketing the new service with a sale on popular audiobook titles including "Ready Player One" by Ernest Cline, "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" by J.K. Rowling, "Fire & Fury" by Michael Wolff and "1984" by George Orwell. Audiobooks are available in 9 languages across 45 countries.

Consumers will be able to buy audiobooks within the Google Play Books apps for Android as well as on the web, and also play them on iPads and iPhones, Google Home speakers, Chromecast streaming adapters and compatible devices. "You just pick up where you left off, no matter which device you are using," said Hartrell.

Android devices are getting offline playback of books at launch, and Google has also integrated the service with its assistant. This means that consumers will be able to say things like "Okay Google, read my book" — and their phone or Google Home speaker will start playing back the requested

title. Hartrell said that Google is using artificial intelligence to make sense of a book's table of contents and automatically give chapters the right headlines.

With audio books, Google is entering a space that has long been dominated by Audible. The Amazon-owned service has been selling audiobooks online since the mid-nineties online, and has also been Apple's primary audiobook partner since 2003. In addition to single titles, Audible has also been running a popular subscription service for audiobooks.

One frequent point of criticism of Audible has long been its use of digital rights management (DRM) technology that makes it impossible to play Audible files on some devices. Hartrell sidestepped questions about the file formats Google is going to use for its audiobook offering during an interview with Variety, but said the company was looking into making the service available on MP3 players and other legacy devices at some point down the line.

Snap is taking its first step to tear down Snapchat's walled garden.

Starting Wednesday, select Snapchat users will be able to access a new feature to share some public Stories — video, image and text posts — on the web, for people who don't have the messaging and media app. At launch, users will be able to press and hold on tiles in Discover to share Official Stories (from top influencers and partners) as well as user-generated Our Stories and Search Stories.

The move is designed to expand Snapchat's reach — and to potentially monetize content outside of the app itself. But it's unclear exactly how much of a lift Snap might see in terms of ad dollars from users sharing Stories on the web.

The feature will begin rolling out to Snapchat users currently on the redesigned app on Wednesday, which is currently available in countries including Australia and Canada (not yet in the US). The off-app Stories will be accessible via a new Story player on

Snapchat.com. The company said Our Stories and Search Stories will be available outside of the Snapchat app for 30 days, while Official Stories (posted by top influencers on the platform) will be available outside of Snapchat for 24 hours.

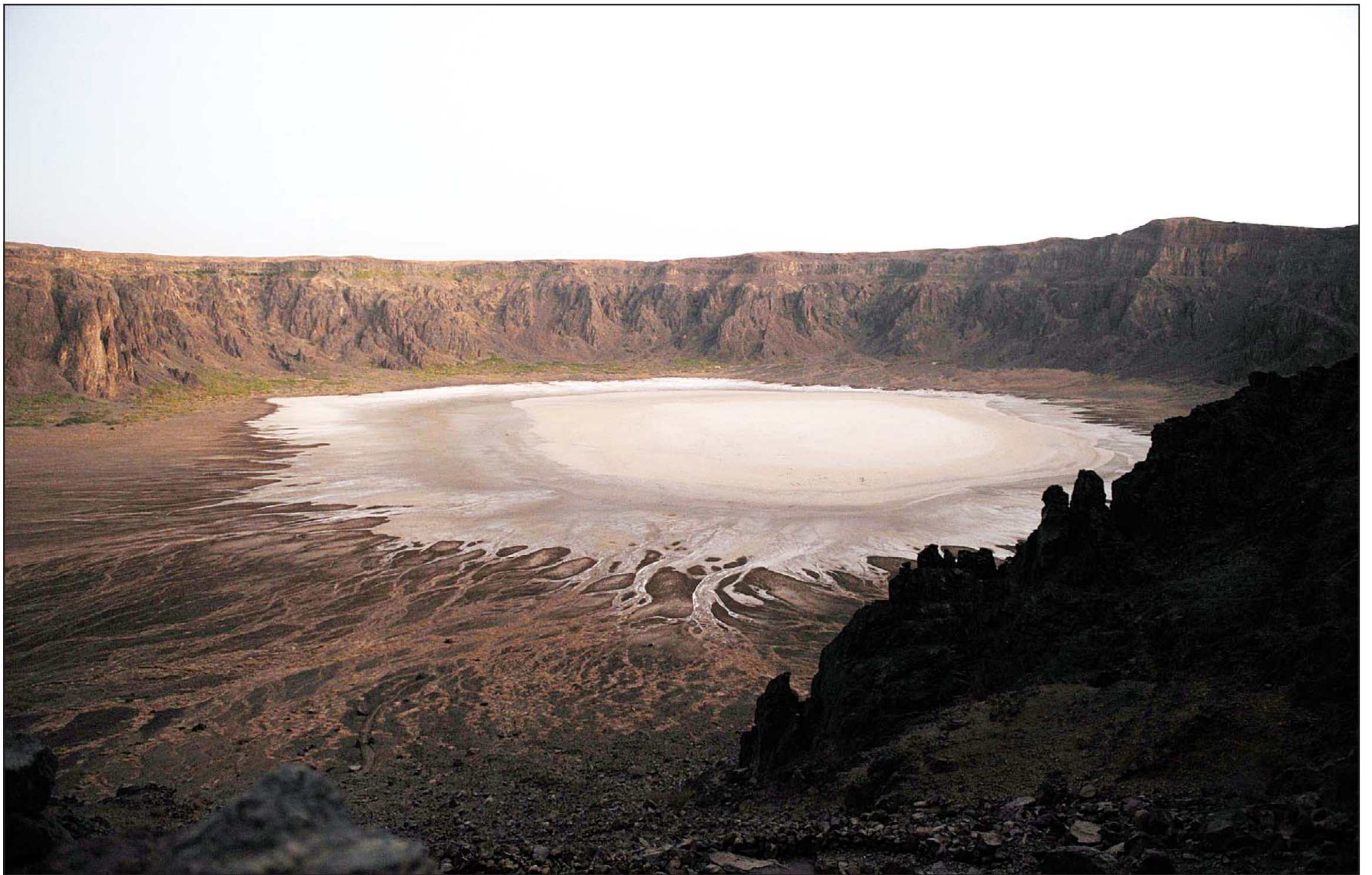
Word of Snap's move to open up Snapchat Stories on the web leaked in late December.

Here's an example of what Snapchat Stories on the web will look like:

Snapchat first launched the Our Stories feature in June 2014. Currently, Snapchat users create more than 3.5 billion Snaps per day, according to the company.

By opening up Stories to the web, Snap envisions a way for content on its platform to go more broadly viral — the way Twitter and Instagram posts have captured real-time news and cultural events. News organizations, for example, could link to Snapchat Stories on the web, while celebrities will be able to share their personal Snaps outside of the app.

## Travel



A picture shows the Al-Wahbah volcanic crater in the Al-Wahbah desert, some 360 kms northeast of Jeddah on Nov 17, 2017. (AFP)

## 'White oil' ... Al Wahbah crater

# Saudi Arabia seeks place on tourism map

dick  
**General**  
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and learn how to do it 4. Understand how to leverage your strengths and overcome weaknesses 5. Understand how to articulate your life goal and create a road map to achieve it.

For more information please visit [www.leckuwait.com](http://www.leckuwait.com) or call 99514995 / 66363310.

**AWL registration:** If you would like to join the American Women's League (AWL), please call 99039723 or 94067999 or email: [kuwaitaw1@yahoo.com](mailto:kuwaitaw1@yahoo.com). All American women and wives of Americans are welcomed.

**Ugandans register with UIK:** Are you a Ugandan living and working in Kuwait? Would you like to get in touch with other Ugandans in Kuwait both socially and professionally? Then please get in touch with us. We would like to invite you to register with the Ugandans in Kuwait (UIK) association, an informal organization of Ugandans living and working in Kuwait.

The purpose of this exercise is to get together as Ugandans and to consider taking the first steps to establishing a more formal organisation.

This association is voluntary. It is designed to create a forum for Ugandans in Kuwait to foster a sense of community, to communicate more effectively with each other and to encourage Ugandans out here to work together. We are also planning a celebration to mark 50 years of Ugandan's Independence this year.

If you have any questions regarding this association or if you are interested in registering, then please send us an email at [ugandansinkuwait@gmail.com](mailto:ugandansinkuwait@gmail.com). We hope to hear from you soon.

AL WAHBAH, Saudi Arabia, Jan 25, (AFP): Gazing at a shimmering salt pan below, a group of first-time Saudi hikers descended craggy slopes into a volcanic crater, part of a hidden trove of natural wonders being promoted to kickstart tourism.

Saudi Arabia will soon begin issuing tourist visas, opening up one of the last frontiers of global tourism — a sector touted as the desert kingdom's "white oil" — as it steps up diversification efforts to wean itself off its crude oil dependence.

But the conservative country, notorious for sex segregation and its austere dress code, is seen as an unlikely destination for global tourists aside from Muslim pilgrims visiting holy sites in Makkah and Madinah.

Now in the midst of historic social change, the kingdom is seeking a place on the global tourism map by promoting sites such as the Al Wahbah crater, widely unheard of even within Saudi Arabia with the near absence of local tourism.

On a warm winter weekend, Amr Khalifa, a private tour operator, brought a group of first-time Saudi campers to hike to the bottom of the crater.

Clutching hiking poles, the hikers picked their way through the slippery, boulder-strewn path to the salt pan. "I told my friends about Al Wahbah," said Jeddah-based corporate banker Mohamed Bahroon. "They had no clue."

### Activity

The little-known crater, barely a four-hour drive from the western city of Jeddah, is a remnant of volcanic activity — local folklore, however, has it as having been formed when



Saudi women walk through the Al-Wahbah volcanic crater in the Al-Wahbah desert. (AFP)



A Saudi guide takes a selfie as he leads a group of foreign tourists through the Al-Wahbah volcanic crater. (AFP)

two mountains were so passionately in love that one uprooted itself to unite with the other, leaving a bowl-shaped depression in its place.

In recent months, authorities have built roads and markers to the site and erected picnic shelters around the rim of the crater.

"The key challenge is to make such tourism sites accessible," said Khalifa, adding that he only had one camping group at the site that weekend.

Tourism is one of the centrepieces of Vision 2030, the blueprint to prepare the biggest Arab economy for the post-oil era, which was conceived by powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

In August the kingdom announced a multi-million dollar project to turn 50 islands and other pristine sites on the Red Sea into luxury resorts.

It also plans to develop historic sites such as the centuries-old Mada'in Saleh, home to sandstone tombs of the same civilisation which built the Jordanian city of Petra.

The kingdom aims to nearly double the annual number of tourists it attracts to 30 million by 2030, with the sector projected to become one of its top revenue earners.

Tourism chief Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz told AFP last month that preparations were afoot to launch electronic visas in the first quarter of 2018 to "all nationals whose countries allow their citizens to visit" the Gulf state.

"The kingdom is a very big treasure," Prince Sultan said, describing its stunning landscapes. "We're not just oil traders."

In an effort to change perceptions, Saudi Arabia has relaxed some of its most rigid rules — lifting a cinema

ban, allowing gender-mixed sporting events and announcing that women will be allowed to drive from next June.

But its absolute ban on alcohol still makes it a hard sell for many global tourists, experts say.

### Resorts

Rumours have swirled about plans to create exclusive resorts for foreign tourists, which, similar to many expat compounds in Riyadh, would have more relaxed norms.

But Prince Sultan said the kingdom, home to Islam's holiest sites, would not permit alcohol as "we do not want to give up our culture and our local values".

"Given the sensitivities of opening up to large numbers of non-Muslim tourists, I'd expect the authorities to focus more on encouraging local and regional visitors in the first instance, while the tourist infrastructure is developed," said Kristian Ulrichsen, a fellow at the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in the United States. "And then cautiously start to market the kingdom to the wider world."

But global travel agencies such as Britain-based Steppes Travel are already planning to offer packaged tours.

"There is a lot of potential for Saudi tourism — we know this not least from the pent-up demand we have within our own database," Justin Wateridge, managing director of Steppes Travel, told AFP. "There is interest in those that know and understand Saudi Arabia and not much needs to change other than the issuing of tourist visas. Travel breaks down barriers and prejudice."

Tourism is still a "new concept" for Saudi Arabia, said Khaled Batarfi, a Jeddah-based writer.