

## LONDON (TOWER BRIDGE) TO REYKJAVIK

Join us on this two week tour that takes in the beauty of England and Scotland. Starting with an overnight in London - a city which surely needs no introduction - sail away by crossing under Tower Bridge. England's islands, covered with grazing sheep on rolling hills and scattered small idyllic pubs are next then it's Scotland's big ticket landscape, lochs and extraordinary wildlife pack a punch. But despite all this, it is perhaps its eons of history that make this voyage really special. A sea day brings you to lceland for a little taste of magic.



### **ITINERARY**

Day 1 Pre Cruise

Days 2 - 3 London (Tower Bridge) UNITED KINGDOM

Centuries-old architecture shares an instantly recognisable skyline with the modern metallic and glass shards of skyscrapers in London, a city of endless history and tradition. Arrive at the centre of it all, below the watch of one of the most

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famous bridges in the world, Tower Bridge. From here, you can begin a tour of iconic landmarks, and discover why England's capital is one of the most visited, adored and adulated cities. So much to see, so little time. The traditional and contemporary go hand in hand in London like nowhere else. Ascend the London Eye, for a birds-eye view of the city, before wandering across the Thames's wide flow to the Gothic architecture of the Houses of Parliament, and the rise of Big Ben's unmistakable clocktower. A hefty sprinkle of royal pageantry awaits at Buckingham Palace, where red-jacketed soldiers stomp sternly and solemnly in their duty, during ceremonies to mark the changing of the guards. Close to Tower Bridge, you'll find the Tower of London's historic fortress, palace and prison, while bustling central markets like Borough Market offer a taste of flavours from around the world. Sweeping green spaces like Hyde Park provide spacious relief from the skyscrapers, while world-class museums exhibit finely curated exhibitions from across the world, covering the entire scope of human history and invention, as well as the natural world. Greenwich's leafy parks and centres of refined study are close by, or a boat ride along the Thames will introduce you to this megacity from the perspective of the water.

#### Day 4 St Peter Port GUERNSEY

The picturesque capital of Guernsey proves that you don't have to go to the Caribbean for white sand and crystal clear water. St Peter Port is both wonderfully pretty and atmospheric, full of blooming floral displays, tiny stone churches and brightly painted boats. What's more, summers are mostly sunny and comfortable, making the weather something you don't have to

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worry about. As the capital of Guernsey, St. Peter Port is where the "action" is found. This mainly takes the form of strolling the cobbled streets, stopping every now and then to admire, and perhaps photograph, the stunning views. Once French (original name: St. Pierre Port), the town is at least 800 years old, with the stone castle and maze like streets to prove it. Once you have made you way up to the ancient castle, make like a local and find refreshment with a cream tea, washed down perhaps with a glass of cider! If the weather is on your side, then surely there is no more invigorating pastime than hiking up to the spectacular Guernsey cliffs, taking in stunning views of wildflowers, sandy beaches and English Channel views. For those who want to spread their wings a little further, the tiny island of Herm is just a 20-minute boat ride away, and homes no cars, one pub, a few cows, some puffins and about 50 people. Don't be fooled by St Peter Port's nostalgic exterior. The seaside town has made a name for itself as a foodie heaven, with everything from beach huts to Michelin starred restaurants offering sumptuous, locally sourced fare.

### Day 5 Tresco, Isles of Scilly UNITED KINGDOM

For many visitors Tresco is the most attractive of the Isles of Scilly. This is especially due to its Abbey Garden, which is home to thousands of exotic plant species from around 80 different countries. Plant collector Augustus Smith began the gardens in the 1830s on the site of an old Benedictine Abbey by channelling the weather up and over a network of walled enclosures built around the Priory ruins. He had three terraces carved from the rocky south slope and maximised Tresco's mild Gulf Stream climate. Even in mid-winter there still are hundreds

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of plants flowering here. Another surprising attraction at the Abbey Garden is the collection of figureheads from ships that wrecked among the Isles of Scilly.

## Day 6 Girvan, Scotland UNITED KINGDOM & Port St Mary, Isle of Man UNITED KINGDOM

The Isle of Man sits in the middle, but a world apart, from the UK. It is in the Irish sea almost equidistant from Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. But it is not part of any of them. It is a self-governing British crown dependency. The island's cultural heritage is Gaelic with influences from the Norse and surrounding lands. This background has produced an island with its own traditions. Everything associated with the Isle of Man is Manx. The people are Manx and the language is Manx. Port St Mary is a quiet former trading and fishing port at the southern end of the Isle which provides access to the rural countryside and nearby towns. One route leads past historic thatched cottages in the crofters hamlet of Gregneash, and on to The Sound. Walking routes cross the narrow Mull Peninsula through scenery and history to Port Erin, a quaint old coastal settlement and shoreline set amongst a rugged coastline. In tune with the yesteryear feel of the island, a steam train still operates on the island, taking visitors to destinations like the Castle Rushen, built in 1200 and once the home of a Norse king. Manx people are proud of their Manx cats, famous for having no or little tail, the result of a genetic mutation passed down the generations. Manx Loaghtan sheep are another animal that evolved on the Isle. These sheep have two (sometimes three) pairs of remarkable horns. And the island is not just an isle of men - the name 'Isle of Man' evolved from 'Manannan', the Celtic god of the sea.

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Day 7 Stranraer UNITED KINGDOM

Tucked away on the scenic waterside of the languid Loch Ryan, 'The Toon' has long welcomed seafarers to its shores. Linger in Stranraer, which historically served as a ferry port, within reach of Northern Ireland. Or venture further for immersive adventures along Scotland's picturesque coastline. Stout and stoic, the castle of St John, which dates back to 1510, has seen its fair share of stories over the centuries. The turbulent history is etched thick into the castle's stone walls. Head inside to learn of the iconic tower house's many guises - from prison to courtroom. Stranraer itself is beautifully set beside the Rhins of Galloway's narrow anvil of land, which juts out into the sea in two directions. On clear days, it offers panoramic views as far as both Northern Ireland and England. Trails roll out across the entire peninsula offering breathtaking perspectives of the craggy coastline. and they are perhaps best enjoyed in the evening when the dipping sun layers honey-coloured light across the scenery. The cliffs around Stranraer are alive with roosting seabirds - listen out for the unmistakable screeches of kittiwakes. Head down to the stunning Mull of Galloway, for the elegant black and white lighthouse, which watches over Scotland's most southerly point. You might also double-take at the incongruous sight of towering palm trees on the Scottish coast, but the warming effect of the water cushions Logan Botanic Garden against winter frosts, allowing exotic plants from around the world to thrive here.

### Day 8 Helensburgh UNITED KINGDOM

Sitting pretty among Scotland's outdoor splendour, Helensburgh

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### is a historic waterfront resort, which has lost none of its sheen over the years. The elegant town has a lot to offer and opens up adventures around Loch Lomond, Argyll, or a little further along the River Clyde to Glasgow. The fancy flair of Helensburgh has made this a sought-after postcode. It's easy to see why -Scotland's staggering scenery is laid out to enjoy here in all of its glory, with bike rides aplenty and captivating walks along the Three Lochs Way, weaving between the finger-like reach of Loch Lomond, Loch Long and Loch Gare. A Victorian getaway of choice, the town is kept spick and span throughout the year and is a charmingly elegant place packed full of historical curiosities, crafty shops and cafes dolling out scoops of ice cream. Enjoy the pretty cluster of waterfront buildings, manicured flower displays, and attractive tree-lined boulevards. Summer markets hum with good-natured bartering, while sailboats duel on the glistening water. Helensburgh has made its mark over the years, giving the world television through resident John Logie Baird. It was also home to Europe's original steamboat, and a former prime minister in Bonar Law. The town's unique outdoor museum breaks down walls and places Helensburgh's heritage front and centre. Eccentric architecture from Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and gorgeous views stretching out towards the submerged wreck of the Sugar Boat, all add to Helensburgh's enduring appeal.

# Day 9 Arduaine, Scotland UNITED KINGDOM & Duart, Isle of Mull, Hebrides UNITED KINGDOM

It has been said that "Arduaine is a green and peaceful place, and must remain so." This describes the character and objective of the Arduaine Gardens. The gardens are located on a rocky promontory beside the Sound of Jura on the mainland of

Western Scotland. The tiny hamlet of Arduaine with its small stone pier provides access to the adjacent gardens. Arduaine has a Scottish Gaelic pronunciation which requires practice and tongue dexterity. For authenticity, it is best to ask a local Scot to pronounce it. The climate of this region of Scotland is moderated by the warm water of the North Atlantic Drift. This allows plants to thrive which find more inland areas too cold. But it is still Scotland, where any temperature differences are relative. The garden has extra protection from the weather, with planted wind breaks and spreading Japanese Larch. The result is an oasis of mild temperate growing conditions in the middle of a Scottish landscape. The gardens were established in 1898 by James Arthur Campbell and became the responsibility of the National Trust in 1992. In the 19th century, natural history was all the rage and gardeners collected and grew exotic plant species from around the world. The Arduaine collection includes species from South America and East Asia, with magnificent Rhododendrons, glorious Blue Tibetan Poppies and giant Himalayan Lilies. One plant, a long way from its home east of the New Zealand main islands, is the Chatham Island Forget-me-not--a flower to remember. An ancient stone castle on a remote rugged landscape evokes all sorts of fantasies. especially when approached from the sea. You can imagine mythical, romantic or historic tales as you approach or explore the Duart Castle on the Isle of Mull. The true stories may be just as good. The Isle of Mull is the second largest of the islands of the Inner Hebrides, after the Isle of Skye. The island has a mountainous core and several radiating promontories covered in moorland. On one headland jutting into the Sound of Mull sits Duart Castle. It was originally built in the 13th century and soon became the ancestral home of the Clan Maclean. Control and ownership of the castle has changed hands over the centuries



as broader conflicts for the Isle of Mull and Scotland played out. It was a ruin when the Maclean clan regained control by purchasing and restoring the castle in 1911. It is clan home for all the descendants of the family of Maclean spread throughout the world. There are stories of wrecks and treasure in the waters near Duart. The most evocative must be the wreck of a Spanish galleon in Tobermony Bay. This ship was part of the Spanish Amarda defeated by the English fleet and Atlantic storms, and the crew were taken to Duart Castle. The galleon is rumoured to have a treasure of gold bullion still waiting to be found. Zodiac travel may reveal other treasures. Hull is known for its European Otters and the majestic White-tailed Sea Eagle which has successfully re-colonised Hull after a long absence.

### Day 10 Iona UNITED KINGDOM & Lunga UNITED KINGDOM

If tiny islands that resonate with peace and tranquillity are your idea of travel heaven, then welcome to Iona. Almost 200 miles east of Edinburgh, set in Scotland's Inner Hebrides, this magical island has a spiritual reputation that precedes it. And luckily, more than lives up to. The island is miniscule. Just three miles long and only one and a half miles wide, this is not a place that hums with urban attractions. 120 people call Iona home (this number rises significantly if the gull, tern and Kittiwake population is added), although residential numbers do go up (to a whopping 175) in summer. The beautiful coastline is lapped by the gulf stream and gives the island a warm climate with sandy beaches that look more Mediterranean than Scottish! Add to that a green field landscape that is just beautiful, and you'll find that Iona is a place that stays with you long after you leave. Iona's main attraction is of course its abbey. Built in 563

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by Saint Columbia and his monks, the abbey is the reason why lona is called the cradle of Christianity. Not only is the abbey (today an ecumenical church) one of the best - if not the best example of ecclesiastical architecture dating from the Middle Ages, but it also serves as an important site of spiritual pilgrimage. St. Martin's Cross, a 9th century Celtic cross that stands outside the abbey, is considered as the finest example of Celtic crosses in the British Isles. Reilig Odhrain, or the cemetery, allegedly contains the remains of many Scottish kings. The stunning Isle of Lunga is the largest island in the Treshnish archipelago. With volcanic origin the isle was populated until the 19th Century, and remains of black houses can be seen around this magnificent coastal jewel. Abundant plant life and exotic birdlife are now the main inhabitants of the area. Fortunate visitors view the magnificent array of birds. especially the great puffins that breed on the islands plateau. One can sit within just a few feet away without disturbing the avian ambassador's peace. The 81 hectare island is home to many rare and endangered plants such as, primroses and orchids. Views over the landscape and across the ocean can be seen from the 300 foot high cliffs.

## Day 11 Shiant Islands, Scotland UNITED KINGDOM & Loch Ewe UNITED KINGDOM

Cliffs of tall hexagonal columns create a sensational landscape at the Shiant Islands, especially when viewed from the sea. The cliffs of six-sided rock columns look like the cross-section of an enormous honeycomb. The rock formations were formed when molten volcanic magma cooled very slowly underground. Millions of years of erosion has exposed the six-sided columns to the sea, and to us. The tallest of these formations is 120

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metres (390 feet) high. During spring and summer, flights of seabirds near the Shiant Islands catch the eye. Many long-winged seabirds wheel and soar gracefully. Others are more shaped for underwater swimming and fly in direct lines, beating stubby wings to resemble flying potatoes. Some birds nest in burrows while others, like Black-legged Kittiwakes, nest on cliffs. Rather than build nests, guillemots lay eggs on bare rock ledges. The pointed shape of the eggs ensures they roll in a tight circle, not off the ledge to the sea below. The Shiant Islands are part of the Outer Hebrides and located between the Isles of Lewis and Skye. Historically, they have supported families of sheep grazers who could tolerate a lonely island outpost. The Shiants were known as the last place in Britain where the Black Rat occurred in substantial numbers. Originally introduced to Britain from Asia in Roman times these rodents caused problems, eating eggs and chicks of seabirds. A successful eradication program eliminated the rats in 2016, giving the seabird colonies well-earned peace. Loch Ewe is the only north facing Loch in Scotland, with an interesting history and a fine scenic landscape this area has a true natural beauty. During WW2 the loch was a convoy collecting point with a strong naval presence; it was therefore protected by light and heavy aircraft guns, a boom net and mine defence system helped to shield this precious settlement. Loch Ewe is a natural deep water sea loch that links to the Atlantic Ocean with a relatively small mouth giving the loch a vast amount of protection from the weather. Nearby Inver ewe gardens thrive on the warm currents of the North Atlantic Drift to create an oasis of colour and fertility where exotic plants from many countries flourish on latitude more northerly than Moscow, giving an almost continual display of colour throughout the year.

Day 12 Dunvegan, Isle of Skye, Scotland UNITED KINGDOM & Locheynort, Uist Island UNITED KINGDOM

Skye epitomizes Scotland's wild celtic appeal. A turbulent geological history has given this beautiful, rugged island some of Britain's most varied and dramatic scenery. Steeped in mystery, romance and adventure, the Isle of Skye is perhaps the most well-known of Scotland's many islands. Charles Edward Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, escaped here from the mainland disguised as a maidservant of a woman by the name of Flora MacDonald. The north of the island is dominated by a rugged volcanic plateau, the south by the Cuillins mountain range, whose peaks were sculpted by the glaciers of the Ice Age. Skye is divided by numerous sea lochs allowing continuous proximity to the sea. The limestone grasslands of the south are the home of sheep and cattle. Scattered about are ruins of crofts, small holdings used for grazing; they were abandoned as their owners fell into poverty due to lack of income. Dunvegan is situated in a sheltered sea loch, or fjord, on the northwestern coast of the island on the Waternish peninsula. The small settlement is dominated by Dunvegan Castle. The oldest inhabited castle in Scotland, it has been the seat of the chiefs of the Clan MacLeod for the past 700 years. It offers insights into Scotland's clan spirit with paintings and relics from the MacLeod Clan. The gardens were originally laid out in the 18th century and are of considerable interest with the woodland glades, shimmering pools and a multitude of rhododendrons. Loch Dunvegan is home to a seal colony; the two main varieties are the brown seal and the great gray Atlantic seal. Small local boats depart from the jetty at frequent intervals throughout the day enabling close observation of these playful sea mammals. Follow in the footsteps of Bonnie

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Prince Charlie on a great escape to a remote and rugged island of wildlife and scenic wonder. Leave the bustle behind for the wild beauty of the Outer Hebrides, where your breath will catch in your throat at the sight of craggy coastlines, white beaches and ancient sites. The beautiful island chain waits off Scotland's fractured northwest and is home to an assortment of spectacular scenery and rare animals. Pinch yourself before curves of sugar-white sand beaches, fringing inky blue water unruffled except for the occasional galloping white horse rider. Uist island has a full 20 miles of beautiful Atlantic beaches, so there's no shortage of space to spread out and roam this isolated island dreamscape. Wander shoulder-width roads dissecting raw, unspoiled scenery, or ramble across fields parted by cobbled-together dry stone walls. Emerald peaks surge in the background, and the sea views afforded by Uist island never fail to inspire and amaze. Locheynort's picturesque waters harbour some of the Western Isles' famous wildlife, and the sea loch is known for its sleek and streamlined sea otters. Watch for them gliding effortlessly through glassy water and lazy seals reclining on rocks behind. Soak it all in with wonderful walks through the Arinaban Woodland, among the loguacious bird life, before sitting to admire the scenic surroundings and share a bite to eat. Wherever you visit, a welcoming smile and the melodic lilt of the Gaelic language will greet you.

# Day 13 St. Kilda UNITED KINGDOM & Boreray Island cruising UNITED KINGDOM

Gloriously remote, St. Kilda is an archipelago 50 miles off the Isle of Harris. Although the four islands are uninhabited by humans, thousands of seas birds call these craggy cliffs home, clinging to the sheer faces as if by magic. Not only is St. Kilda

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home to the UK's largest colony of Atlantic Puffin (almost 1 million), but also the world largest colony Gannets nests on Boreray island and its sea stacks. The islands also home decedents of the world's original Soay sheep as well as having a breed of eponymously named mice. The extremely rare St. Kilda wren unsurprisingly hails from St. Kilda, so birders should visit with notebook, binoculars and camera to hand. While endemic animal species is rife on the island, St. Kilda has not been peopled since 1930 after the last inhabitants voted that human life was unsustainable. However, permanent habitation had been possible in the Medieval Ages, and a vast National Trust for Scotland project to restore the dwellings is currently being undertaken. The islands even enjoyed a status as being an ideal holiday destination in the 19th century. Today, the only humans living on the islands are passionate history, science and conservation scholars. One of the caretakers even acts as shopkeeper and postmaster for any visitors who might like to send a postcard home from St. Kilda. It should be noted that St. Kilda is the UKs only (and just one of 39 in the world) dual World Heritage status from UNESCO in recognition of its Natural Heritage and cultural significance. As an isolated island of the remote St Kilda Group, Boreray island is one of the most far flung and weather impacted islands of the North East Atlantic. Imagine trying to live here during stormy weather. Landing requires jumping or swimming ashore; and yet the island has been lived on or visited from Neolithic times. Collecting seabirds and their eggs, and storing them for winter, may have been even more important than raising sheep. Boreray Sheep are the rarest breed of sheep in Britain. They evolved from short-tailed sheep brought from the Scottish mainland but have been isolated long enough to have evolved into a distinctive small and horned breed. Only found on Boreray Island, they remained as a wild

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flock when the last people left the St Kilda Islands in 1930. The Souy are a separate and different breed of sheep found on the other St Kilda Islands. Look out for the Boreray Sheep grazing on the slopes of hilly Boreray Island. Seabirds thrive on Boreray and its two attendant rocks stacks, raising new chicks each summer. Northern Gannets glide overhead as they attempt difficult landings at nest sites. Seeing gannets plunge from a great height into the sea is an exciting way to understand the effort required to feed themselves and chicks. Northern Fulmers nest on the volcanic rock cliffs and Atlantic Puffins fly in and out of burrow-strewn slopes. Boreray is part of the St Kilda World Heritage Site, a rare example of a site recognised for both its outstanding natural and cultural values.

### Day 14 Day at sea INTERNATIONAL WATERS

Days at sea are the perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and catch up with what you've been meaning to do. So whether that is going to the gym, visiting the spa, whale watching, catching up on your reading or simply topping up your tan, these blue sea days are the perfect balance to busy days spent exploring shore side.

### Day 15 Vestmannaeyjar ICELAND & Cruise Surtsey ICELAND

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The name Vestmannaeyjar refers to both a town and an archipelago off the south coast of Iceland. The largest Vestmannaeyjar island is called Heimaey. It is the only inhabited island in the group and is home to over 4000 people. The eruption of the Eldfell Volcano put Vestmannaeyjar into the international lime light in 1973. The volcano's eruption

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destroyed many buildings and forced an evacuation of the residents to mainland Iceland. The lava flow was stopped in its tracks by the application of billions of liters of cold sea water. Since the eruption, life on the small island outpost has returned to the natural ebb and flow of a small coastal fishing community on the edge of the chilly and wild North Atlantic. On 14 November 1963, a trawler passing the southernmost point of Iceland spotted a column of smoke rising from the sea. Expecting to find a burning boat they were surprised to find instead, explosive volcanic eruptions. They were witnessing the birth of a new island. Columns of ash reached heights of almost 30,000 feet in the sky and could be seen on clear days as far away as Reykjavik. The eruptions continued for three and a half years, ending in June 1967. Once formed, Surtsey was 492 feet above sea level and covered an area of almost 2 square miles. The island was named after the Norse fire god Surtur. It is a perfect scientific study area used to understand the colonization process of new land by plant and animal life.

#### Day 16 Reykjavik ICELAND

The capital of Iceland's land of ice, fire and natural wonder, Reykjavik is a city like no other - blossoming among some of the world's most vibrant and violent scenery. Home to two-thirds of Iceland's population, Reykjavik is the island's only real city, and a welcoming and walkable place - full of bicycles gliding along boulevards or battling the wind when it rears up. Fresh licks of paint brighten the streets, and an artistic and creative atmosphere embraces studios and galleries - as well as the kitchens where an exciting culinary scene is burgeoning. Plot your adventures in the city's hip bars and cosy cafes, or waste

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no time in venturing out to Iceland's outdoor adventures. Reykjavik's buildings stand together in a low huddle - below the whip of winter's winds - but the magnificent Hallgrimskirkja church is a solid exception, with its bell tower rising resolutely over the city. Iceland's largest church's design echoes the lava flows that have shaped this remote land and boasts a clean and elegant interior. The Harpa Concert Hall's sheer glass facade helps it to assimilate into the landscape, mirroring back the city and harbour. Its LED lights shimmer in honour of Iceland's greatest illuminated performance - the northern lights. Walk in the crusts between continents, feel the spray from bursts of geysers and witness the enduring power of Iceland's massive waterfalls. Whether you want to sizzle away in the earth-heated geothermal pools, or hike to your heart's content, you can do it all from Reykjavik - the colourful capital of this astonishing outdoor country.

### Day 17 Post Cruise

### Please note:

The excursions are provided as a sample of what may be offered on this voyage and are subject to change.

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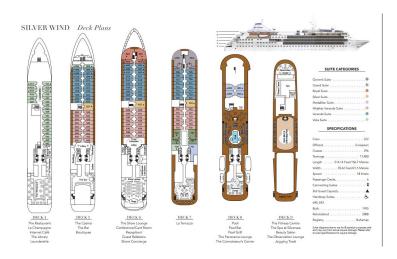
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## **INSIDE YOUR SHIP**



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## PRICING

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