

Exotic Sth America

TOUR operator Exoticca is highlighting one of its key South American itineraries which takes travellers to a series of bucket list landmarks across the continent.

Learn more about the company's 'Cities, Falls and Wonders' itinerary on **page nine**.

Webjet TTV growth goal

ONLINE travel agent Webjet Group will aim to double its total transaction value (TTV) by FY30 through a comprehensive five-year strategy which will focus on its core brand strength, customer loyalty, travel packages and a new business travel offering.

Unveiled as part of an investor presentation today (**TD** breaking news), the company will create a standalone business travel offering to address demand for "a seamless digital experience".

The company will aim to leverage its existing market and brand strength in domestic airfares to correct a trend which sees its existing business travellers look elsewhere for their travel needs as their organisations scale up.

Webjet said it will also evolve with "an exciting new look" to be rolled out from later this year and create a new loyalty program.

The growth plan comes as part of an objective company review, in which Webjet commissioned a survey of 3,500 Australians to understand their perceptions of the brand and booking behaviour.



The study revealed Webjet has high brand awareness but that it is not top-of-mind and not achieving optimum relevance among today's travellers.

Respondents said they had high brand recognition via Webjet's distinctive logo but that it is seen primarily as a domestic flight booking brand.

As part of its brand revitalisation, the company will increase its marketing spend from 1.5% of TTV to 2.5% during late 2026.

Part of this spend will be directed towards growing consumer awareness of Webjet's holiday package offering with flights, hotels and other inclusions bundled into one price.

"With our new strategic direction in place, we are excited to make bold new moves in the market, delivering exceptional results for investors and customers alike," said Webjet Chief Executive, Katrina Barry. *ML*

Work on yourself

CLUB Med is inviting agents to register for its dedicated industry portal, which provides access to a range of resources to help book an all-inclusive holiday.

Bonafide agents can register now for a login - more information on **page eight**.

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IASC approves Al

THE International Air Services Commission has rubber-stamped an application by Virgin Australia to permit Air India to codeshare on flights to New Zealand.

The green light comes as part of Air India's new codeshare pact with Virgin Australia, which took effect last month (**TD** 18 Feb).

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our **Luxury page**, plus a product profile from **Exoticca** and a full page from **Club Med**.

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Air NZ confirms mid-2026 for Skynest

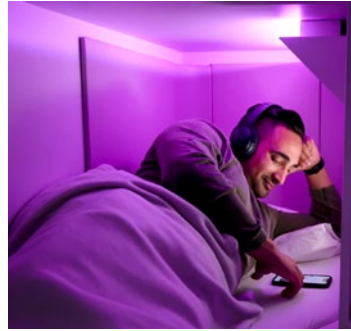
EXCLUSIVE

AIR New Zealand has confirmed its highly anticipated Skynest offering will debut in mid 2026, when the carrier receives its brand-new Boeing 787 aircraft.

Speaking with *Travel Daily*, Air NZ General Manager Australia Kathryn O'Brien said there had been a "huge amount of interest" from the market since the innovative concept was first unveiled a few years ago.

When it is introduced on its ultra long-haul service between Auckland and New York, Skynest will feature six lie-flat beds for premium economy and regular economy passengers to purchase.

"One of the great things about Air New Zealand is the fact it is an innovator, and I think for a long time, we have punched above our weight in terms of being a smaller airline...but always keeping innovation at top of the agenda,"



O'Brien said.

"We always want to be ahead of the game and Skynest is a great example of that."

Customers will be able to book four-hour slots, and there will likely be around three to four guest allocations per flight.

"At the end of each allocation, the Skynest will be turned over, and there will be all new linen and amenities provided to the customers," O'Brien said.

While the model and launch period have been shored up, Air


NZ is still mulling the finer details of the pricing structure.

"We haven't worked out in terms of the pricing whether it will change based on the time or whether passengers are in the first allocation or second or third etc - we are still working through the exact pricing and will be sharing more details ahead of launch," O'Brien confirmed.

Pricing has not been confirmed yet, but a fee structure of between NZ\$400-600 had been previously rumoured by reports.

The world-first Skynest concept was first scheduled to launch in Sep 2024, however supply chain issues around aircraft have delayed plans.

Rival airlines will be monitoring the launch with great interest to see how it performs, with O'Brien acknowledging there are "rumours" about competitors emulating the Skynest concept, but "nothing has come to life". AB



Travel Daily
ON LOCATION

In the air

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Norwegian Cruise Line, which will host us aboard *Norwegian Aqua* for its inaugural cruise from Lisbon.

WE ARE excited to be invited along for the first sailing of *Aqua*, the latest innovation in the celebrated Prima class for Norwegian Cruise Line.

While en route to Lisbon where she is about to dock, we have been reading up on all of the ship's highlights, and it's hard to go past the all-new Aqua Slidecoaster.

This unique adrenaline-pumping attraction is billed as the world's first hybrid rollercoaster and waterslide.

Stay tuned for more updates as we explore *Aqua*.



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Club Med agents hit the slopes



TRAVEL advisors have experienced the best of Japan's spring ski season with Club Med.

Sales for the travel operator have soared by more than 100% for the 2025/2026 spring ski season, with 14 Australian advisors being welcomed to two of its Japan ski resorts - Club Med Tomamu - Hokkaido and Club Med Sahoro - Hokkaido.

The seven-night fam trip was hosted by Business Development Managers Adam Ferraro and Stephanie Ireland.

The two also took advisors through a comprehensive business session covering Club Med's global ski portfolio, key product updates on its resorts in Phuket and Bintan, European travel trends, and the final release of its 2026 early bird sale.

Advisors also participated in a hands-on workshop exploring the Club Med for Travel Agents Portal, learning how to navigate the platform efficiently; and gained insights into the benefits of Club Med's Advantage Program. *MS*

AAA refutes claims

THE Australian Airports Association (AAA) has spoken out against the claims made by airline lobby group Airlines For Australia and New Zealand (A4ANZ), saying they are "nothing new".

A4ANZ called for government regulation of four major Australian airports, which they criticised as having "their hands in passengers' pockets" (*TD* 18 Mar).

Simon Westaway, AAA CEO, argued against these statements, and said, "Four reviews by the Productivity Commission over the last 20 years have found the current regulatory regime remains fit for purpose and there is no evidence that airports have exercised market power".

"Airport fees and charges remain a small proportion of an airline ticket and do not fluctuate, despite claims by airlines of monopoly behaviour.

"The Productivity Commission found airports continue to invest in facilities efficiently," he added.



Window Seat

TO SAY Trump has his detractors is an understatement, but one politician in France has declared that the US is no longer worthy of the Statue of Liberty - and is demanding for the TV-celebrity-turned-president to return it.

According to Raphaël Glucksmann, some Americans "have chosen to switch to the side of the tyrants", reflecting the impact of Trump's questionable foreign and domestic policies.

"Give us back the Statue of Liberty," Glucksmann said in a speech on the weekend, which was met with applause.

"It was our gift to you. But apparently you despise her.

"So she will be happy here with us."

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CATO's Blue Dot

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators has welcomed Blue Dot Travel as its latest member.

Based in North Sydney, the boutique operator offers a selection of small group tours to lesser-known destinations around the world.

Sunshine shakes off Alfred

VISIT Sunshine Coast (VSC) has secured urgent funding to drive home the message that it is safe to visit, following mass cancellations in bookings and events in the wake of ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

Announced on the weekend by Queensland Minister for Tourism, Andrew Powell, the cash injection will support a comprehensive tourism recovery program, featuring promotional deals by all three major Australian airlines servicing the Sunshine Coast.

VSC will roll out targeted destination marketing efforts to boost demand, showcasing the region's local attractions, events, and experiences, while Tourism Events Queensland will ramp up its 'Too Great to Wait' campaign, which advertises hundreds of holiday deals on Queensland.com.

"The State Government has been true to its word that there will be no daylight between response and recovery in getting underway in a comprehensive tourism recovery program," said VSC CEO, Matt Stoeckel.

"Many tourism businesses have really suffered," Stoeckel commented, pointing out that he "hadn't seen hotels that empty since the pandemic".

Forward bookings have also dried up, the VSC boss lamented, while acknowledging that "people are understandably cautious about booking holidays when they needn't be".

He added, "Our world-class



beaches of Noosa and Mooloolaba are looking good and big events such as the Noosa Festival of Surfing and the Mooloolaba Tri later this month are showing we're in good shape, we just need to get that message out more widely."

MEANWHILE, Southern Cross Travel Insurance (SCTI) has received 37 claims from Australian customers related to ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, as of 13 Mar.

SCTI CEO, Jo McCauley, said, "2025 is already accounting for 9% of 2024's catastrophic claims, with Cyclone Alfred now adding further to this total". JM

Pictured: Noosa Main Beach, post-Alfred.

Mpox in Tanzania

TRAVELLERS entering Tanzania must now undergo body temperature checks at all points of entry into the country due to an Mpox outbreak, a new DFAT Smartraveller update has advised.

Those continuing to the island of Zanzibar region are also required to have inbound travel insurance from the Zanzibar Insurance Corporation, which DFAT says should be in addition to a private travel insurance policy.

TTC goes platinum

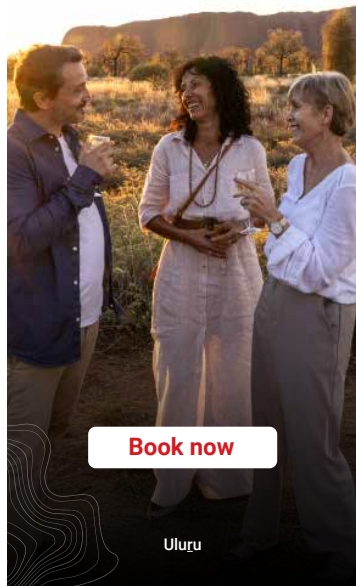
THE Travel Corporation's (TTC) portfolio of brands has received the Feefo Platinum Trusted Service Award for 2025.

The accolade is presented to businesses that have achieved the UK review platform's gold standard for three years in a row.

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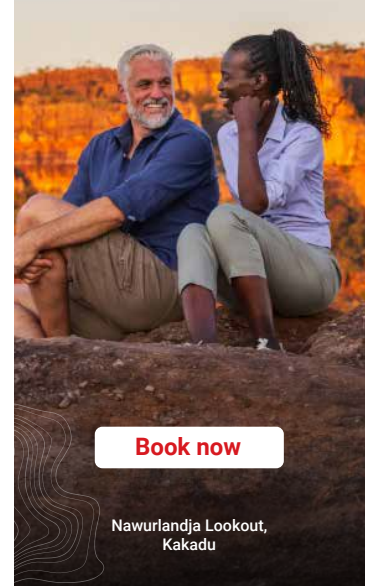
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Paralympian joins itravel team



ITRAVEL has welcomed two new mobile travel advisors to its network, with Lynda Holt (pictured left) and Lisa Priestley (pictured right) both bringing extensive expertise.

Holt, who is a Paralympian and an advocate for accessible travel, is passionate about helping travellers, particularly those with accessibility needs.

“As someone who has navigated the world from a wheelchair and travelled the world in my sporting career, I know firsthand the power of accessible travel,” Holt shared.

“Joining itravel allows me to bring my passion to life - breaking barriers, opening doors, and proving that adventure is for everyone,” she added.

Meanwhile, Priestley, who is based in Sydney, boasts 25 years’ industry experience and a deep knowledge of cruise and ski travel, with a speciality for crafting complex itineraries and multi-generational travel arrangement.

“The people, network, supplier agreements, and the technology [itravel] has worked so hard to build are exactly what I was looking for,” Priestley said. *JM*

MEL-KUL on Batik

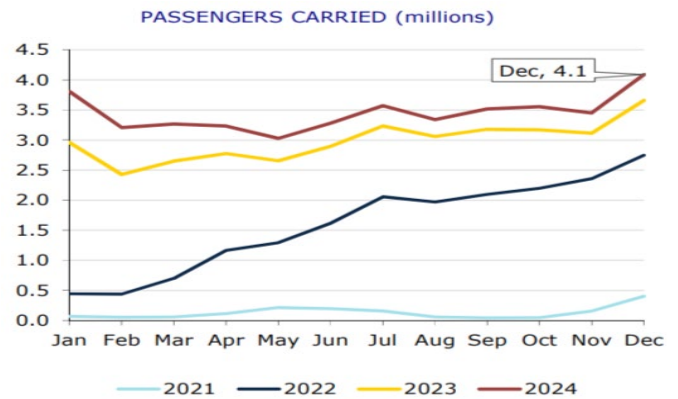
BATIK Air is bringing increased competition to the Melbourne-Kuala Lumpur route, with the airline set to introduce a year-round service.

The service will operate four times a week using an Airbus A330-300, supplementing Batik’s daily flights between Melbourne and Bali.

The announcement comes as the airport continues to focus on delivering its new terminal, airfield, and road infrastructure, to cater for demand.

Melbourne welcomed a total of 2.7 million travellers last month, with domestic passengers down to 930,000 - attributed to no Taylor Swift concert this year.

International pax soars



INTERNATIONAL passenger numbers for the year ending Dec 2024 have eclipsed the previous year by 5.58 million according to the latest BITRE figures.

Last year ended with passenger traffic at 41.354 million while Dec alone recorded 4.089, up from 3.661 in Dec 2023.

Qantas remained the number one carrier with a steady 16.2% share of passengers, but of the top 10 airlines, gains were made by Jetstar (+1.6%) and Cathay Pacific (+0.7%), while Singapore Airlines (-0.8%) and its subsidiary Scoot (-0.6%) both dropped.

Total seats available on

international scheduled operations to and from Australia in Dec 2024 was 5 million.

This represented an increase of 7.1% compared to the previous year, with the overall seat utilisation percentage sitting at 83.4%. *DF*

Africa roadshow '25

AGENTS are invited to register for The Africa Safari Co.’s 2025 Australian roadshow, which kicks off on Mon 31 Mar in Brisbane.

Attendees will be informed of all the latest updates out of Africa, with each evening to include canapes, beverages and expert advice on the destination.

The series will make its way to Sydney on 02 Apr, followed by Melbourne on 03 Apr, Adelaide on 07 Apr, and Perth on 09 Apr.

Places are limited and in high demand - sign up **HERE** for Brisbane; **HERE** for Sydney; **HERE** for Melbourne; **HERE** for Adelaide and **HERE** for Perth.

VA fares from \$45

VIRGIN Australia has launched one million sale fares starting from \$45 across its entire network, including Bali, Hamilton Island, and Fiji - see **HERE**.

The fares are available until 26 Mar, for travel dates between 30 Apr 2025-11 Feb 2026.

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Essence of Phuket

SAii Laguna Phuket has strengthened its reputation as a premier luxury destination after welcoming 150 luxury travel advisors during the Serandipians and Takumians event earlier this month.

The annual gathering, which was held under the 'Essence of Phuket' theme, is the first such event to be held in Asia.

Taking place over three days, the event saw member agencies from around the world connect with regional partner suppliers in the luxury travel sector.

It was an opportunity for the recently transformed SAii Laguna Phuket, which has been inducted into the Serandipians Luxury Travel Network, to showcase its world-class event centre, brand-new facilities and renovated rooms.

"This collaboration highlights our commitment to delivering exceptional experiences that resonate with luxury travellers worldwide," said Bart Callens, Cluster General Manager of SAii Laguna Phuket and SAii Phi Phi Island Village.

"We are delighted to welcome industry leaders to our resort and offer them a true taste of Thai hospitality in our idyllic beachfront setting," he added.

The luxury event will return to the resort in 2026.

HOW VALUES SHAPED A LUX LEADER

PONANT Asia-Pacific CEO Deb Corbett has revealed the personal and professional lessons she has gathered during the Luxury Travel Collection's Global Luxury Business Owners Soiree on Mon.

The presentation gained a standing ovation with a few tears spotted in the packed crowd.

Corbett (pictured) shared three key learnings, beginning with leading by your values.

Her father, Warren Adcock, was a savvy entrepreneur who previously owned manufacturing giant King Gee.

He was a man of a different generation, where men worked and women stayed at home.

However, he instilled in Corbett a value system which she uses daily, both at work and at home.

As her career developed, she



began to create the building blocks of what would become a highly successful career.

On his deathbed, the pair continued to talk about business.

"He said, 'Darling, I don't care if it's a person putting the garbage out, or if you're sitting with the queen having tea, speak and treat people the same,'" she recalled.

Corbett also shared the importance of developing cultural intelligence, describing how she

learnt how to navigate different forms of business etiquette across different cultures while at Garuda Indonesia Holidays.

"I had to adapt and learn traditions, and the biggest one of all was trying to read non-verbal cues to understand what wasn't being said directly in the negotiations," she recalled.

Finally, Corbett insisted that there was value in going back to basics, describing how whenever she feels overwhelmed, she asks herself: 'What am I doing now?', 'What should I continue?', 'What should I stop?', and 'What should I start?'.

"Every time I answer these honestly and take action, things move forward, faster, smarter and with real impact," she said. *JHM*
To read more, click [HERE](#).

Virgin's Mallorca retreat reopens for 2025

SIR Richard Branson's Son Bunyola Hotel & Villas, situated within the 810-acre estate in Mallorca's Tramuntana Mountains, has reopened for a new season with an expanded offering of activities.

Guests can enjoy a meet-the-bees encounter, where they join a local beekeeper to harvest honey, as well as gourmet vineyard picnics, cooking classes, and immersive experiences such as private ice baths.

"After an amazing opening in 2023 and a fantastic first full



year, we can't wait to reopen in 2025 with even more incredible experiences," said the property's GM, Vincent Padioleau.

The 27-bedroom boutique hotel also offers a unique vineyard dining experience, painting classes with a local artist, and perfume workshops.

Saudi gets premium

PLAZA Premium Group (PPG) is bringing its lounge services to Saudi Arabia for the first time, after signing a partnership with daa International and Red Sea International Airport.

PPG will manage four premium lounges for travellers, five F&B outlets, and seven dining rooms catering to airport staff.

In a first for the Middle Eastern country, the lounges will offer a fully a la carte dining experience for all pax.

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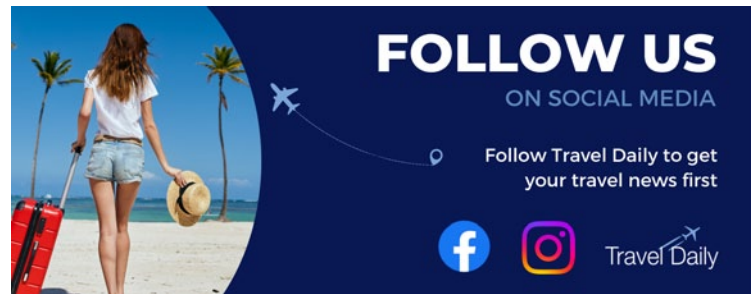
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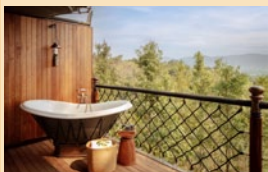
For the first time, the Ritz-Carlton has landed in the historic city of Suzhou, in China's Jiangsu province near Shanghai. Located within walking distance of iconic attractions such as the Lingering Garden, Xiyuan Temple, and Shantang Street, **The Ritz-Carlton, Suzhou** features 190 spacious guest room and suites, four restaurants, a 24-hour fitness centre, and offers cultural experiences, including traditional tea master performances.



Hyatt Place Nairobi Westlands and **Hyatt House Nairobi Westlands** have opened as the first dual-branded Hyatt project in Africa. Situated close to the city's top attractions, the hotels provide guests with the unique flexibility of two distinct accommodation experiences under one roof. The 168-key Hyatt Place Nairobi Westlands is ideal for leisure travellers seeking comfort, while Hyatt House Nairobi Westlands offers 57 apartments for extended stays.



A new glamping-inspired hotel has opened in Tahiti, in the far southwest of the island of Raiatea. Nestled in coconut groves, **Apatoa Beach & Garden Villa** offers accommodation in lodge tents inspired by glamping and specifically designed for the Polynesian climate, along with a restaurant, spa, outdoor swimming pool, fitness centre, and lush gardens. Free cabanas and beach umbrellas are provided for guests along the hotel's private beach.



Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp & Resort has unveiled a new luxurious accommodation option - the Mekong Explorer Tent. The hillside retreat offers views of the jungle, the Mekong River, and the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation's 20 rescued elephants roaming below. It also features two bedrooms and private terraces with an outdoor bathtub.



Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour has introduced a cutting-edge check-in solution with the installation of five new assisted self-service kiosks from global technology leader Liverton. Designed to streamline the arrival experience, the kiosks reduce queues and wait times by allowing guests to independently complete their check-in, get keys, and make payments.

Dining out before flying out



EVENT Hospitality has signed on to operate a new multi-storey dining and entertainment venue in Wellington Airport which will overlook both the runway and nearby Lyall Bay.

With seating for around 130 customers, the two-storey venue will serve cook-to-order meals including burgers and baked goods, and will also include a bar and a function space.

Wellington Airport CEO Matt Clarke said the new facility is sure to be a popular place to eat, drink and wait for flights to board.

"Very few airports can match our stunning local environment, and this development makes the most of it," Clarke said.

Cambodia retreat

A NEW private island retreat will open in Cambodia on 01 Apr, on the island of Koh Russey.

JATI will offer 82 villas, some with their own pools, as well as leisure and sports facilities, events venues, several dining options, and a kids club.

Construction of the facility is now underway, with temporary hoardings in place, and is expected to be complete before the end of the year, with no changes to usual departure gates.

Existing food and beverage outlets will be extending their trading hours during the construction process. *ML*

A render of the new facility is pictured above.

Aegean fleet grows

GREEK airline Aegean has placed an order for eight new Airbus A321neo aircraft as part of ongoing growth objectives.

It marks the third expansion of an order placed initially in 2018 by the Star Alliance carrier, which sees the model ordered vary to a larger model of the variant.

Aegean's order now comprises 25 A321neos, 21 A320neos and four long-range A321neos.

Deliveries of the order first began five years ago, with Aegean taking 34 of the total 58 aircraft so far ahead of the remaining 24.

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Machu Picchu, Iguazu Falls and Christ the Redeemer, three wonders of the world bound to be crossed off their bucket list, in just one trip. A fascinating journey through the treasures and nature of Peru, Argentina, and Brazil.

Why this tour sells itself

This is a meticulously crafted experience designed to take travellers through a culture-rich journey across South America's most iconic cities and wonders. An all-encompassing journey through this continent's rich history, culture and nature.

Sacred Valley of Cuzco:

Peru's hidden cities

After arriving in Lima and visiting its historic city centre, along with the iconic districts of Miraflores and San Isidro, your customers will travel to Cuzco, the

former Inca Capital for a hike up to the Sacred Valley that leads to the ancient city of Machu Picchu.

Iguazu: Argentina's natural wonders

In Buenos Aires, your travellers will take a tour of the city's landmarks before transferring to Iguazu. Here, they will take the train to the "Devil's Throat" where they can enjoy the falls' rainbows, birds and exotic plants.

Rio de Janeiro:

Brazil's rhythm and flavours

Stepping into Brazil through Iguazu Falls is the best way for your customers' to enjoy a panoramic view spanning two different countries. From there, they will embark on a journey to Rio de Janeiro, to enjoy the local cuisine and end their adventure atop Corcovado Mountain to meet Christ the Redeemer.

Easy to sell, hard to forget

From landscapes to landmarks, from cities to flavours, and through rich cultural traditions, this complete tour takes customers through the essence of South American essentials. From Exoticca, we've prepared every detail – flights, hotel, activities and transfers – so that your customers enjoy a seamless experience.

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