



Current State of Tourism Development in the Republic of Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Tourism in Uzbekistan is an important component of the country's economy, and its development is closely linked to the legal and regulatory framework that governs this sphere. The legal framework includes various laws, regulations and policies that are aimed at ensuring sustainable and effective tourism development.

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Introduction

Tourism in Uzbekistan is an important component of the country's economy, and its development is closely linked to the legal and regulatory framework that governs this sphere. The legal framework includes various laws, regulations and policies that are aimed at ensuring sustainable and effective tourism development.

The regulatory framework plays a key role in shaping the structure and functioning of the tourism industry by defining the rules and procedures to be followed by all participants in the tourism process. It also serves as a basis for creating a favorable and attractive environment for tourists.

The importance of the legal and regulatory framework for tourism development in Uzbekistan cannot be underestimated. It provides a framework for the management and control of tourism activities, and sets quality and safety standards for tourism services.

The basis of the legal and regulatory framework for tourism in Uzbekistan is the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Tourism", adopted on July 18, 2019. This law defines the basic concepts and principles that regulate tourism activities in the country, including rules and procedures to be observed by all participants in the tourism process. It also establishes quality and safety standards for tourism services.

An important element of the legal framework are the decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. For example, Decree No. UP-5781 of 13.08.2020 "On Measures for Further Development of Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan"¹ and Decree No. UP-5611 of

¹ <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/4474549>

05.01.2019 "On Additional Measures for Accelerated Development of Tourism"² were adopted to accelerate the development of the tourism industry in the country.

Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan also play an important role in regulating tourism. For example, the resolution № PP-4095 05.01.2019. "On Measures for the Accelerated Development of the Tourism Industry" and Resolution No. 904 of 05.11.2019. "On Measures to Organize the Annual Tashkent International Tourism Fair Tourism on the Silk Road" were adopted to stimulate the development of tourism and attract more foreign tourists.

In 2022, 274 thousand people were employed in the tourism industry. This is a significant increase compared to 2017, when 187 thousand people were employed in this industry. This demonstrates the growing contribution of tourism to Uzbekistan's economy and its role in job creation.

One of the key legislative acts that have contributed to this growth is the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-5781 dated 13.08.2020 "On Measures for Further Development of the Sphere of Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan". This decree was aimed at accelerating the development of the tourism industry in the country.

As part of this decree, measures were taken to improve the quality of tourism services provided by the population in the regions and to improve the qualifications of personnel. Halal, Kosher and Vegan standards were also introduced in catering establishments, restaurants and accommodation facilities for pilgrimage tourism tourists.

As a result of these measures, more than 5.2 million foreign tourists visited Uzbekistan in 2022, 2.5 times more than in 2017. The volume of tourism services exports in 2022 amounted to \$1.61 billion, which is significantly higher than in 2017.

In 2022, there were 1,838 tour companies - tour operators in Uzbekistan. This is almost 2.5 times more than in 2017, when there were 749 of them. This indicates the expansion of tourism infrastructure and an increase in the number of tourist services offered.

On January 16, 2024, a protocol on mutual exemption from visa requirements between the governments of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the UAE was signed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to this document, citizens of Uzbekistan are exempted from the need to obtain a visa when traveling to the UAE for up to 30 days.

In 2023, 119.45 thousand citizens of Uzbekistan visited the UAE and spent 9.2 million dollars on visas.

The protocol of intergovernmental cooperation was signed by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the UAE, Abdulaziz Akkulov, and UAE Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Khalid Abdullah Belhoul.

The document will come into force from February 16, 2024. The signing of this protocol expanded the list of visa-free countries for Uzbek citizens to 29 and raised Uzbekistan to 71st place in the Global Passport Power ranking³.

Not required	Up to 30 days	Up to 90 days
Russia	Indonesia	Haiti
Belarus	Kazakhstan	Azerbaijan
Niue	Malaysia	Kyrgyzstan
Ukraine	Tajikistan	Moldova

² <https://lex.uz/docs/4143186>

³ https://uza.uz/ru/posts/chislo-bezvizovyx-stran-dlya-grazhdan-uzbekistana-uvlechilos-esche-na-odno_558208

Cook Islands	Turkey	Namibia	
	Qatar	Ecuador	
	Philippines		
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		
Up to 180 days	Up to 360 days	Up to 28 days	Up to 21 days
Antigua and Barbuda	Georgia	Barbados	Dominica

Table 1 - Visa-free countries for citizens of Uzbekistan

In addition, it is important to improve mechanisms to support and stimulate investment in tourism. This may include the development of special investment programs, tax incentives for tourism enterprises, as well as the creation of a favorable investment environment.

To improve the quality of tourism services and increase the country's competitiveness in the global tourism market, it is necessary to intensify the work on standardization and certification of tourism enterprises and services. This will improve the level of service and provide a better experience for visitors.

Presidential Decree No. UP-9 dated 12.01.2024 "On measures to significantly increase the flow of foreign tourists to the country and further intensify domestic tourism" was adopted⁴.

It is planned to build tourist centers, including modern hotels and shopping and entertainment complexes with an area of more than 5 thousand square meters, in districts and cities with high tourism potential, as well as large shopping complexes "Luxury tourism village", including duty-free stores and retail outlets of well-known international brands, on the territory of the tourist and recreational zone "Zomin", International all-season resort "Chimgan" and ski resort "Amirsoy".

A credit line of \$200 million will be available to finance tourism projects. Of this amount, \$50 million will come from funds intended to finance projects under family enterprise development programs, and \$150 million will be secured by funds raised by the Tourism Committee and commercial banks from international financial institutions and foreign government organizations.

According to the International Trade Administrative Division, the number of foreign tourists visiting Uzbekistan nearly tripled from 1.88 million in 2021 to 5.2 million in 2022. Exports of tourism services reached \$1.6 billion in 2022. However, despite these successes, the industry has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels in 2019, when 6.75 million international tourists visited the country.

This is indeed impressive growth, but it is important to remember that tourism is an industry that is subject to many external factors such as economic conditions, political stability and, as we have seen, global health crises. It may be important to continue to invest in sustainable and long-term strategies for tourism to ensure its sustainability in the future. This

⁴ https://nrm.uz/contentf?doc=743542_ukaz_prezidenta_respubliki_uzbekistan_ot_12_01_2024_g_n_up-9_o_merach_po_znachitelnomu_uvelicheniyu_potoka_inostrannyh_turistov_v_respubliku_i_dalneyshey_aktivizacii_vnutrennego_turizma&products=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana&ysclid=lv1blouou706493658

may include improving infrastructure, increasing marketing efforts to attract new markets, and preserving and promoting the country's cultural and historical heritage. It is also important to consider that recovery from the pandemic may take longer than expected and will require patience and flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

Analyzing and forecasting the tourism industry plays an important role in its development, marketing and operations management. It helps in making effective business decisions, planning a year ahead, improving customer satisfaction and monitoring and benchmarking. Better forecasting of tourism demand at all levels is crucial for investors, local and national policy decisions to prepare infrastructure, investments and recruitment of operators to receive tourists.

Tourism in Uzbekistan has always been an important component of the national economy. This Central Asian country welcomed 2.1 million visitors in 2016, and before the pandemic, in 2019, 6.7 million. In 2020 was a disastrous year, as in the rest of the world: the country was visited by 1.5 million tourists⁵.

In 2021, Uzbekistan's tourism industry generated a profit of about 679.00 million dollars. Tourism revenue as a percentage of GDP was 0.98% in 2021. It reached its maximum in 2019 at 2.79%⁶.

Year	Tourism revenues in Uzbekistan (US\$ million)	GDP (billion USD)	Income from tourism as a % of total GDP
2021	679	69.6	0.98%
2020	395	60.22	0.66%
2019	1,679	60.28	2.79%
2018	1,314	52.87	2.49%
2017	835	62.08	1.35%

Table 2 - Revenues of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan⁷

Since 2022, Uzbekistan's tourism exports have reached 1.6 billion dollars, and the targets for 2024 are 7 million foreign tourists and 2.5 billion dollars from tourism exports⁸.

Overall, the development of tourism infrastructure in Uzbekistan should lead to the creation of new jobs in the country. This includes positions in various service sectors, such as hotels and restaurants, as well as small businesses related to the broader tourism industry, such as artisans and other craftsmen⁹.

In 2020, Uzbekistan had planned to increase the number of tourists visiting the country to 7.5 million by the end of 2020; however, COVID-19 likely had a significant impact, delaying expected progress in the tourism industry. In early 2020, important decisions were taken in Uzbekistan to support the industry during such a difficult

⁵ [Tourism in Uzbekistan in 2021 and beyond - Travel Tomorrow](#)

⁶ [Uzbekistan Tourism Industry Statistics 2024 \(tourcentralasia.com\)](#)

⁷ [Uzbekistan Tourism Industry Statistics 2024 \(tourcentralasia.com\)](#)

⁸ [Uzbekistan - Travel and Tourism \(trade.gov\)](#)

⁹ [Tourism in Uzbekistan: After the Pandemic, a New Strategy – The Diplomat](#)

period¹⁰.

According to the "Key Tourism Statistics Indicators" graph, the number of persons arriving in the country for tourism purposes has declined over the past five years, amounting to significantly less in 2022 than in 2018. This is due to a sharp drop in 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there has been a recovery since 2021.

The number of citizens traveling abroad also fell in 2020, but the figure in 2022 is still lower than in 2019. This indicates that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on outbound tourism is still being felt.

Domestic tourism, on the other hand, has almost fully recovered by 2022, indicating that confidence in domestic travel has recovered.

Overall, the data show that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted tourism in 2020, but recovery began in 2021. However, by 2022, inbound and outbound tourism levels are still not at 2019 levels.

These data point to some interesting trends in Uzbekistan's tourism industry. On the one hand, the decline in tourist arrivals can be attributed to a variety of factors, including economic conditions, the political environment, or even changes in tourist preferences. On the other hand, a decrease in the number of citizens traveling abroad may indicate a change in attitudes towards domestic vacations or an increased interest in domestic tourism. In any case, these data emphasize the importance of continued research and monitoring of the tourism industry to better understand these trends and to develop effective strategies to sustain and develop tourism in Uzbekistan.

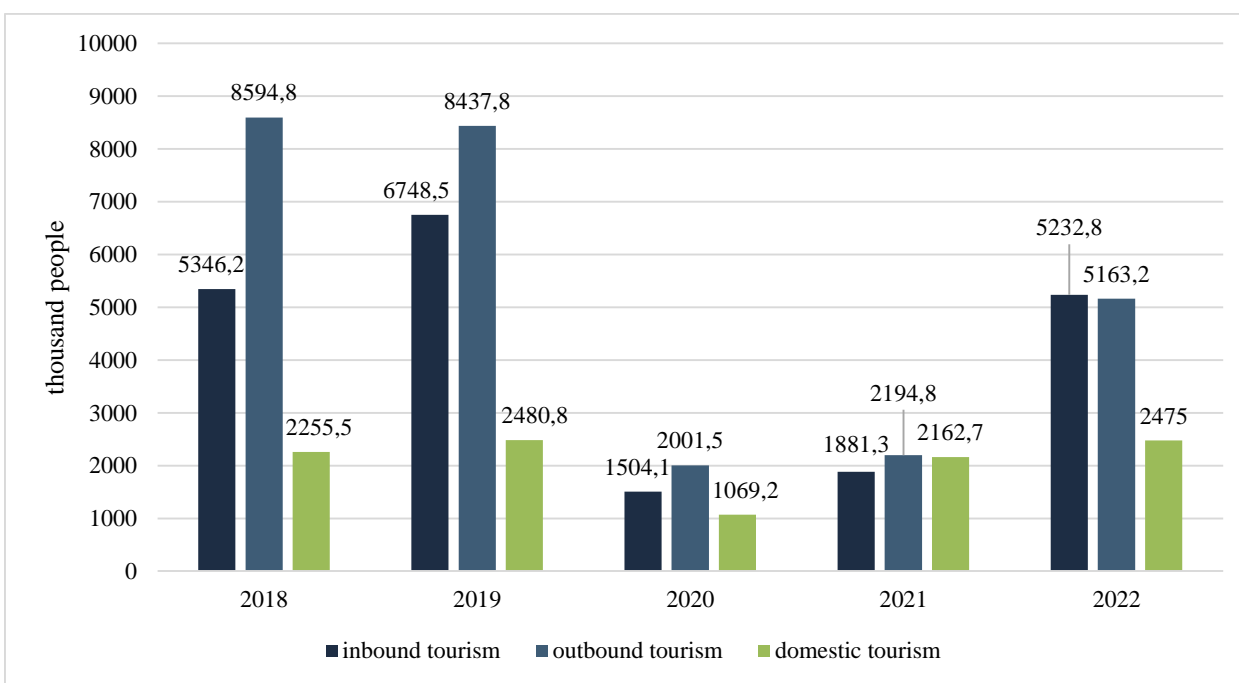


Figure 1 - Main indicators of tourism statistics¹¹

The number of tourist firms and organizations in 2021 was 288 units, of which 61.8% operate in Tashkent city, 14.2% in Samarkand and 7.0% in Bukhara. In 2021, 577.8 thousand visitors were served, 90.1% were received, and 9.9% thousand people were sent on excursions to foreign countries and Uzbekistan¹².

According to a study published in the journal Sustainability, security and welfare

¹⁰ [Tourism in Uzbekistan: After the Pandemic, a New Strategy – The Diplomat](https://stat.uz/images/uploads/reliz-2023/turizm_press_reliz_2022ang_zgarishi.pdf)

¹¹ https://stat.uz/images/uploads/reliz-2023/turizm_press_reliz_2022ang_zgarishi.pdf

¹² https://www.stat.uz/images/uploads/reliz2021/turizim_28_07_22_en.pdf

significantly affect the inflow of foreign tourists to the country. The impact of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is expected beyond 2026¹³.

This emphasizes the importance of crisis management and recovery planning in the tourism industry. The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of how unforeseen events can have long-term consequences for tourism. It is important that countries such as Uzbekistan develop strategies that not only focus on attracting tourists, but also on ensuring their safety and well-being. This may include measures to improve health, infrastructure and services for tourists. In addition, recovery strategies should consider the potential for long-term impact of crises, such as a pandemic, and be prepared to adapt and innovate in response to these challenges.

According to Statista, the travel and tourism market in Uzbekistan is expected to generate revenue of US\$480.30 million by 2024. This is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6.27% annually (CAGR 2024-2028), leading to a market size of USD 612.50 million by 2028¹⁴.

The authorities expect the country's services to triple, creating 3.5 million new jobs in the tourism sector. The number of local tourists is expected to reach more than 12 million and the number of foreign tourists is expected to reach 9 million¹⁵.

However, despite significant progress, much work remains to fully recover from the pandemic and achieve development goals for 2024. These goals include attracting 7 million international tourists and generating 2.5 billion dollars from tourism exports¹⁶.

Compared to past periods, there has been a significant change in the tourism industry, driven by both external environment events and internal changes within the industry itself. It is particularly important to note the impact of COVID-19 pandemic events on travel trends and methods.

In 2023, Uzbekistan's tourism infrastructure continued to actively develop. According to the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, more than 5.2 million tourists visited the country in 2022¹⁷. In the first half of 2023, 3.1 million tourists visited Uzbekistan, which is 60% more than in the previous year¹⁸, and for the whole of 2023 this number increased to 6.6 million tourists¹⁹, of which 1,116.8 thousand people (16.9%) arrived by air, 95.7 thousand people (1.4%) by rail, 28.8 thousand people (0.5%) by road, 5,386.4 thousand people (81.3%) crossed the border on foot²⁰. This indicates a significant increase in the tourist flow.

¹³ Safarov, B.; Al-Smadi, H.M.; Buzrukova, M.; Janzakov, B.; Ilies, A.; Grama, V.; Ilies, D.C.; Csobán Vargáné, K.; Dávid, L.D. Forecasting the Volume of Tourism Services in Uzbekistan. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 7762. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14137762>

¹⁴ <https://www.statista.com/outlook/mmo/travel-tourism/uzbekistan>

¹⁵ <https://thediomat.com/2022/04/tourism-in-uzbekistan-after-the-pandemic-a-new-strategy/>

¹⁶ [Uzbekistan - Travel and Tourism \(trade.gov\)](https://uzbekistan.travel/ru/o/intervyu-s-direktorom-nacionalnogo-pr-centra-kak-uzbekistan-prodvigaet-svoj-turisticheskij-brend-za-rubezhom/)

¹⁷ <https://uzbekistan.travel/ru/o/intervyu-s-direktorom-nacionalnogo-pr-centra-kak-uzbekistan-prodvigaet-svoj-turisticheskij-brend-za-rubezhom/>

¹⁸ <https://novayaepoxa.com/uzbekistan-razvitie-turizma-i-neogra/457115/>

¹⁹ <https://uz.kursiv.media/2024-01-10/skolko-turistov-posetili-uzbekistan-v-2023-godu/>

²⁰ Социально-экономическое положение Республики Узбекистан UZSTAT

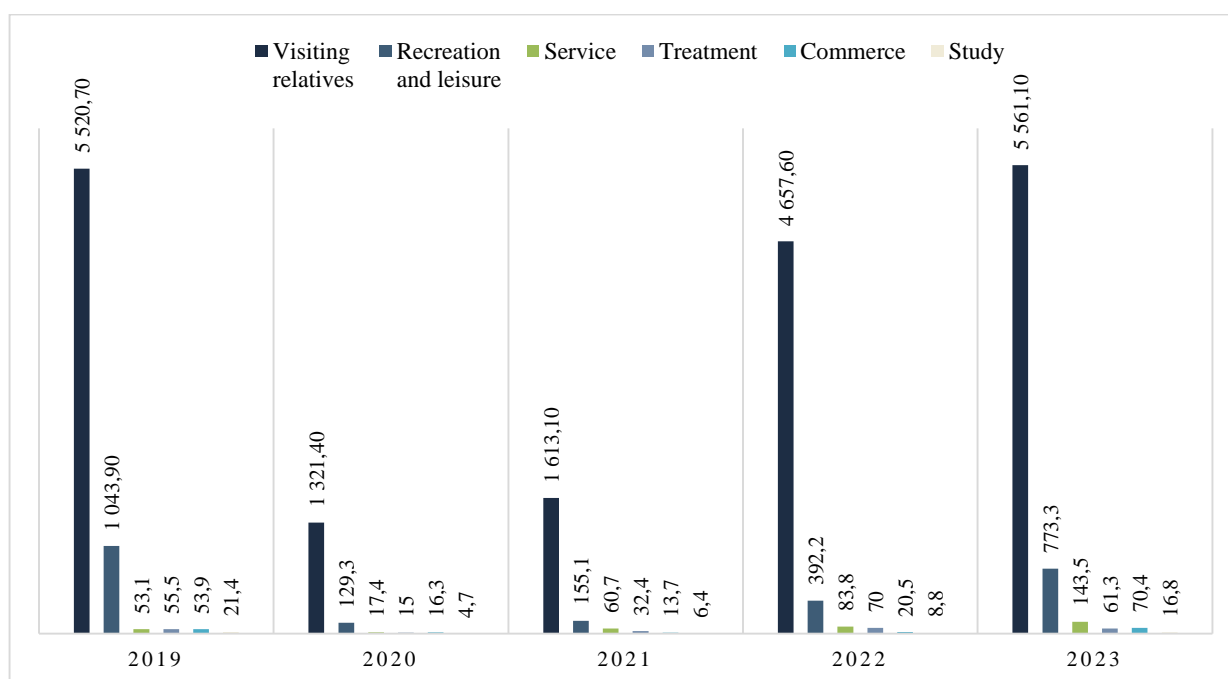


Figure - 2. Distribution of the number of foreign citizens who arrived in the Republic of Uzbekistan by purpose of travel (January-December of the corresponding year, thousand people)²¹

According to this graph, the number of foreign nationals arriving in Uzbekistan for different purposes varies.

For example, the number of foreign nationals who came to Uzbekistan for the purpose of medical treatment is rather low. This may be related to the problem of counterfeit medicines in Uzbekistan. A study conducted by the Federation of Consumer Protection Societies in Uzbekistan found that 35% of pharmacies in the country sold counterfeit medicines²². This may discourage foreign citizens from receiving medical treatment in Uzbekistan.

Various types of tourism are popular in Uzbekistan, each offering unique opportunities for travelers:

1. Historical and Cultural Tourism: Uzbekistan is attractive for its rich cultural and historical heritage, unique architecture and art. Ancient historical monuments of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz, Khiva, Urgench, Termez, Karakalpakstan are the main foundation of historical and cognitive tourism in Uzbekistan²³.

2. Ethnic tourism: This type of tourism allows tourists to immerse themselves in the unique culture and traditions of Uzbekistan.

3. Active tourism: For those who prefer active vacations, Uzbekistan offers many opportunities, including sports tourism.

4. Ecological tourism: Uzbekistan has a rich natural diversity, which makes it attractive to ecotourism enthusiasts.

5. Gastronomic tourism: Uzbek cuisine is known for its unique dishes that attract gastronomic tourists from all over the world.

6. Medical Tourism: Uzbekistan also attracts tourists looking for medical services.

7. MICE industry: Uzbekistan is becoming an increasingly popular destination for international conferences, exhibitions and corporate events²⁴.

Each of these types of tourism contributes to the development of Uzbekistan's

²¹ Социально-экономическое положение Республики Узбекистан UZSTAT

²² [Центр безопасности фармацевтической продукции предупредил о продаже поддельных лекарств \(knp.uz\)](https://knp.kun.uz/)

²³ <https://uzbekistan.travel/ru/v/kulturniy-turizm/>

²⁴ <https://uzbekistan.travel/ru/i/vidi-turizma/>

tourism infrastructure and attracts tourists from all over the world. Uzbekistan is actively developing its tourism infrastructure, which makes it an attractive destination for tourists of various interests.

Uzbekistan's tourism-related transportation infrastructure has developed significantly in recent years²⁵.

Uzbekistan offers various modes of transportation for tourists, including cars, minivans, minibuses and buses of various capacities. This ensures a comfortable journey for tourists, regardless of their number²⁶.

Due to the favorable customs clearance policy in Uzbekistan, Uzbek tourist companies and transport companies are importing more and more buses, minibuses and vans from South Korea, Japan, Turkey and China²⁷.

An important step in the development of transportation infrastructure was the opening of the Angren-Pap railway line, electrified high-speed train lines to the cities of Bukhara, Karshi, Shakhrisabz and Khiva²⁸.

However, despite significant successes, there are also problems. For example, underdeveloped infrastructure in some cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, which are the main tourist centers of the country²⁹.

In general, Uzbekistan is actively working on improving its transportation infrastructure to ensure comfortable and safe travel for tourists from all over the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of tourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The study also confirms the growth of the tourism industry based on statistical data and emphasizes the importance of developing tourism infrastructure and improving relations with neighboring countries for further tourism development.

These lofty goals emphasize Uzbekistan's aspirations to play a significant role in the global tourism industry. The creation of new jobs in the tourism industry contributes to the growth of the economy and opens up opportunities for social development and improving the living standards of the population. Increasing the number of domestic and foreign tourists can also improve relations between countries and promote intercultural exchange. But achieving these goals will require a concerted effort from all levels of government, as well as the active participation of local communities and the corporate sector. It is also important to remember that a country's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and obstacles in the tourism industry will play an important role in whether or not these goals are successfully achieved.

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