EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Ancient Nubia Explorer (BSU 2014)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOUR DURATION **12** DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Busy
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Code: BSU

Tour Highlights - Ancient Nubia Explorer

- ✓ Temples & Pyramids Discover the amazing Phaoronic architecture of nothern Sudan - there are more pyramids here than in Egypt!
- ✓ Nubian hospitality Enjoy a traditional welcome as guests in the village of Soleb.
- ✓ Desert landscapes Get off the beaten track in this little visited tourist destination.
- ✓ Nile - Take an exhilarating cruise along the world's longest river to discover its hidden treasures.

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	3 nights Standard Hotel 2 nights Standard Tented Camp 3 nights Standard Guesthouse 2 nights Basic Camping 1 night Simple Village House
Included Meals:	11 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 8 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Khartoum
End Point:	Tour ends: Khartoum
Transport:	4WD, Boat
Countries:	Sudan

Ancient Nubia Explorer

Travelling through the scenic Nile Valley and into the desert we uncover Sudan's unspoilt cultural and historical heritage. We visit well-preserved sandstone temples, tombs engraved with images of the pharaohs and the many pyramids of the Royal Necropolis of Meroe. We also experience the warm hospitality of the Nubian people and stay in a traditional village house.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Busy

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

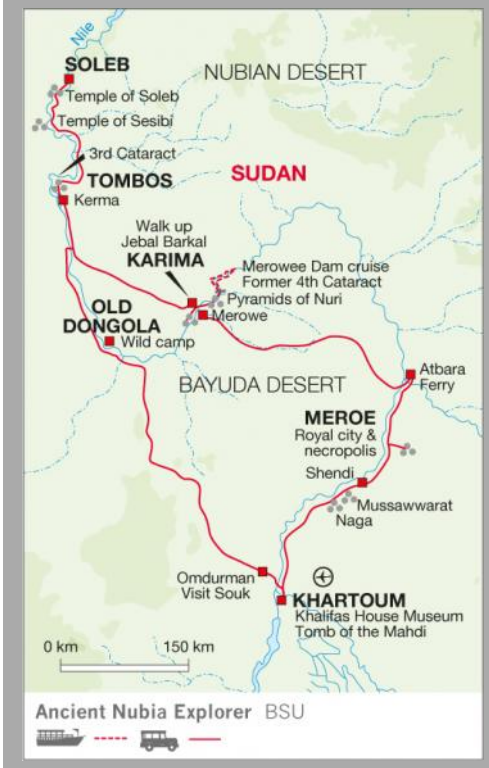
DAY 1 Join tour in Khartoum

Our tour begins in Khartoum, Sudan's vibrant capital city which comprises of both a permanent and nomadic population. Khartoum is located at the confluence of White and Blue Nile and the point where the two rivers converge is called Al- Mogran. It is said that the 2 different colours of the river branches can be seen before they meet to feed the iconic Nile river.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 2 In Khartoum

After an early morning arrival there is the opportunity for those travelling on the group flight to freshen up. We then begin our exploration of the city with a visit the tomb and small museum of the Mahdi, the Islamic leader of the Sudan who fought in 1885 against General Gordon and English colonisation. After lunch, in a typical



local restaurant that overlooks the Nile, we make the short drive to Omdurman. Once the old capital city of Sudan, Omdurman is famed for its huge colourful souk.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 3 Leave Khartoum and drive to Meroe via Naga

Leaving behind the city of Khartoum we head north through a desert of strange rocky hills to the ancient site of Naga. Here we see the temple of Apedemak (1st century AD), a beautiful sandstone building with walls engraved with the images of the Meroitic kings and gods. Nearby is another temple, in Greek/roman style, called 'Kiosk', and another with the remains of statues of rams which was recently discovered in the sands by a German archaeological mission. After a short drive from Naga we reach Musawwarat El Sufra, where we'll visit the Elephant Temple – much bigger but less well preserved than those at Naga – and the Lion Temple before continuing to Meroe. On arrival we are greeted with the view of more than 40 pyramids, located on top of a hill, some of them perfectly preserved, that belong to the Royal Necropolis of Meroe. Accommodation is at a permanent tented camp, where the furnsihed tents, with en-suite bathrooms, have views onto the pyramids.

Overnight: **Standard Tented Camp**

DAY 4 Explore the royal necropolis and the royal city of Meroe

The Royal necropolis of Meroe is located at about 3 km from the Nile on some hills covered by yellow sand dunes. Several pyramids stand out with their sharp shapes against the clear sky. Nubian pyramids have no mortuary room inside, the real tomb is dug inside the rock below and is connected with the outside with an inclined tunnel with a small temple at its entrance. The walls are fully decorated with bas-reliefs that show the King's life and the gods. There's the opportunity here to take a camel ride (optional). In the afternoon we move along the Nile to visit the ruins of the royal city. The excavations confirm that the town of Meroe used to cover a large area and the royal city was located in a central position, surrounded by suburbs and a boundary wall. Most of the area where the city is located, formed by many small hills covered by red clay fragments, has still to be excavated by the archaeologists.

Overnight: **Standard Tented Camp**

DAY 5 Crossing the Bayuda desert to Karima

We proceed north to the small town of Atbara. After crossing the Nile, we enter the Bayuda desert, an area bounded by the loop formed by the Nile between the 4th and 6th Cataracts and characterised by sharp black basalt mountains, most of them volcanic and typically cone-shaped. These dramatic mountains alternate with flat stony terrain in a landscape giving rise to large valleys with dry wadis and little vegetation. Dorcas gazelle can be sometimes seen on this journey. We may also come across the camel and donkey caravans of the Bisharin nomads. These isolated desert people live in family groups in small huts made of intertwined branches covered with large blankets made from camel wool, close to the rare water wells in areas where surviving seems almost impossible. We complete our crossing of the Bayuda Desert and in the town of Merowe, we cross the Nile again. Then we reach the small town of Karima at the foot of the Jebel Barkal.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**

DAY 6 Exploring Karima

The small town of Karima lies at the foot of the Jebel Barkal. This landmark in the Nubian desert, Jebel Barkal (Jebel means mountain in Arabic) can be seen from many kilometres away whilst still in the open desert. We spend this moning exploring the area. At the foot of this wonderful isolated red sandstone mountain, considered holy since the ancient times, there is a large temple dedicated to the Pharaohs of the New Reign and to their patron, Amon. Amon's ancient Pure Mountain, the Olympus of the Nubians, was the religious Nubian heart for more than 1000 years. Beside the ruins of the big temple there are still several sculptured granite rams that were said to border a long avenue that probably led to the pier on the Nile. In the mountain wall there is a large room decorated with basreliefs. The Royal necropolis of the ancient city of Napata, the Nubian capital (from 800 to 400 BC) before the Meroitic period, had a large number of pyramids, located in three different places: few hundred metres north of Jebel Barkal; a dozen kilometres southwards from the holy mountain, in El Kurru and in Nuri, which is located on the other bank of the Nile. Heading southwards to the village of El Kurru where there is one of the necropolis of the ancient capital, Napata. Here we can visit two tombs, which are excavated in the rock under pyramids - partially collapsed - and are totally decorated with images of the Pharaoh, of the gods and multicolour hieroglyphic inscriptions. Before returning to Karima we then continue through the Nubian desert and visit a petrified forest with thousands of fossilised trunks. This desert is completely different from others – sand dunes, flat sandy plains and red rocky boulders eroded by the wind – provide a real moon landscape.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**

DAY 7 Nile cruise and pyramids

After breakfast, we visit the market in Karima, where we get a real insight into the everyday life of the Sudanese people before heading through the Nubian Desert with its level evenness, its sand stretches and its soft undulation. It is an almost sterile area where no vegetation survives. Until 2008 this drive would take you to the beautiful granite rocky formations of the 4th Cataract where the Nile ran turbulently among rocks forming rapids and a beautiful wild landscape, making navigation of the river very difficult. However in April 2008 the new Dam of Merowee was completed and following flooding and artificial lake was created. We take a cruise on the Nile taking the opportunity to walk on the small islands to explore the sandy beaches along the river edges. In the afternoon we cross the Nile to and spend time at the Pyramids of Nuri.

Overnight: **Standard Guesthouse**

DAY 8 Into Nubia

Following the route of the Nile towards Egypt we head into the central part of the Nubian region. Here the population speaks a different language from the Arabs and the Islamic religion is not as 'strict' as in other regions of northern Sudan. The women don't cover their faces and readily speak to foreigners. The villages are beautiful, sandwiched between sand dunes and palm trees, the houses are painted and decorated with intricate patterns and flowers. Enthusiastic hospitality abounds – the local Nubian people will often invite visitors into their homes to share a meal or a cup of spiced tea. We eventually reach the granite boulders of the Third Cataract which used to be the third huge obstacle that the ancients Egyptians had to face when trying to sail on the Nile River. In Sebu, right on the river bank of the Nile it is possible to visit one of the richest sites of rock engraving of all Sudan with hundreds of images from prehistoric to Egyptian times. Not far from here, among the rocks near the village of Tombos, there are the granite quarries and the remains of a huge statue of the King Taharqa, simply left there in the desert 3000 years ago.

Overnight: **Basic Camping**
Your own tent available

DAY 9 Traditional Nubian hospitality

It's only a short drive today as we continue our exploration of this fabulous region. At the Temple of Soleb we spend time at what is considered to be one of, if not the most beautiful Egyptian temple of all Sudan. Standing as a testimony of the New Kingdom in Nubia, its many walls are rich in hieroglyphic inscriptions and bas-relief figures. In the nearby village we totally immerse ourselves in village life with a stay in a traditional house. This is a large Nubian house where one of the buildings has been allocated for the weary traveller. For those who prefer sleeping under the stars you are welcome to put up your tent in the courtyard.

Overnight: **Simple Village House**

DAY 10 Along the Nile to Old Dongola

After saying a fond farewell to our Nubian hosts we follow the river Nile south, passing picturesque villages on the way. Arriving in Old Dongola we visit two Coptic Christian temples decorated with marble columns.

Overnight: **Basic Camping**
Your own tent available

DAY 11 Return to Khartoum

An early start sees us return to Khartoum. Having experienced some of fabulous sites in-situ, this afternoon we visit Archaeological Museum where besides many beautiful objects and artifacts there are two beautiful temples which were rescued by UNESCO and moved from the Lake Nasser area when it was flooded with the construction of the Aswan dam.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Rooms Available

DAY 12 Tour ends

Our tour ends today in Khartoum after breakfast.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 10 lunches,8 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Meroe - Camel Riding US$ 10

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.
Accordingly you should allow US$ 35 tipping on this tour.

Foreign Exchange

Sudan

ATM Availability: Limited to Khartoum and for Sudanese registered cards only.

Credit Card Acceptance: Limited to Sudanese registered cards only.

Travellers Cheques: Not recommended.

Local Currency: Sudanese Pounds

Recommended Currency for Exchange: It is advisable to take your spending money in USD cash.

Where to Exchange: Airport and Khartoum.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on **'Land Only'** arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate **'Joining Instructions'** for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Visa Information

Sudan: Visas are required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, USA & Canadian citizens and must be obtained prior to departure from your embassy of residence. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

Visas for UK citizens may be obtained through the Sudanese Embassy in London, or, alternatively through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK; Visaswift, at http://www.visaswift.com/explore.aspx. Your passport must have 6 months validity, 2 consecutive empty pages and must not have an Israeli stamp.

An authorisation is necessary to obtain your visa. Passport details for each client are required by Explore 7 weeks prior to the tour start date. Our local partners then proceed to gain authorisation in Khartoum and provide a letter of invitation. Once authorisation has been obtained, passports should be sent to the Sudanese Embassy in London together with the completed visa form and 3 passport size photographs.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Sudan

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against Tetanus and Typhoid. During winter motnhs there are generally very few mosquitos in northern Sudan and the risk of Malaria is regarded as low. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against Malaria. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Sudan

Northern Sudan has a hot desert climate with a high variance between day and night. Winter months provide the best time to travel, from October to the end of April. The weather during this period is dry and sunny. October/November and March/April is around 30-35C during the day, dropping to 12-18C at night. December to Feburary is around 25-30C during the day and 5-10C at night.

Clothing

Take some warm clothes and a fleece for chilly desert nights in the winter, as temperatures drop sharply. Knee length shorts are acceptable for men in northern Sudan, but not for women. Nevertheless, dress sensitively in accordance with Muslim traditions and avoid wearing revealing clothing, particularly in rural areas. Legs should be covered when entering a mosque and women must also cover their heads.

Equipment

A 2/3 season sleeping bag, inflatable pillow, water bottle, insect repellent, sunhat, sunglasses, sunscreen and a head torch.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes/trainers or desert boots and sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage which should be a soft bag or holdall, not a suitcase, plus daypack. As you are expected to carry your own luggage, we recommend that you pack light.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive. The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Sudan

Lunch £: 5.00

Dinner £: 16.00

Drink

Sudan

Bottle of Beer £: 4.00

Water £: 1.00

Country details

Sudan

Population: 30,894,000

Size of Country: 1,886,068 sq km

Major Language: Arabic, English

Religion: Islam

Time Difference to GMT: +3

Electric Supply & Plugs

Sudan

3 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which support AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO_2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest. www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

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