

## Azores

### Overview:

The Azores are one of the two Autonomous Regions within the Republic of Portugal.

### Territory:

Archipelago of nine islands in the Atlantic Ocean, 1,500km from Lisbon, and 3,900km from the east coast of North America stretching over more than 600km from the north-eastern Atlantic south and eastwards. The Azores are divided into three groups. The eastern group consists of Sao Miguel and Santa Maria; the central group Terceira, Graciosa, Sao Jorge, Pico, and Faial; and the western group Flores and Corvo. The capital is Ponte Delgada. The islands are the upper sections of volcanoes, lying on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, on top of the meeting point of the North American, Eurasian, and African plates.

### Location:

Atlantic Ocean, between North America and Portugal

### Latitude and Longitude:

Between latitudes 36 and 39 north and longitudes 250 and 310 west

### Time Zone:

GMT -1

### Total Land Area:

2

### EEZ:

1100000

### Climate:

Moderate climate, however highly variable with high level of humidity—the islands lie in a high-pressure zone within a sub-tropical area. Average annual temperature between 13 and 22 degrees Celsius. Annual rainfall increases as you move westwards in the islands (700mm in Ponte Delgada on Sao Miguel, to 1,600mm in Santa Cruz on Flores).

### Natural Resources:

Very fertile, volcanic soils; rich marine resources; excellent source of geothermal energy.

### ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2000	4,004,652,513.34 USD
2001	4,219,486,730.02 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
2000	16,646.58 USD
2001	17,564.70 USD

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2003	0%	0%	0%

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2002	14%	29%	57%
2003	13%	28%	60%

### External Aid/Remittances:

The European Union contributes significant amounts of aid to the Azores. The islands are still dominated by rural economic activities such as agriculture and fishing, which are two areas in which the European Union is more visible at a local level. The European Union has donated a lot of funds to structural and public works projects, as well as large amounts to education, which had traditionally been neglected by the Portuguese government. The United States has also, over the years, donated significant amounts of aid to the islands both because of the high number of Azoreans living in the U.S., as well as because of the strategic geo-political location of the Azores for U.S. military operations. Private investments in local development initiatives have been numerous, both from wealthy Americans living in the Azores, as well as in the form of large sums of money sent to the islands in the form of remittances.

### Growth:

Historically the Azores derived most of their income from dairy farming, cattle raising, and whaling. With the cessation of whaling the islanders have tried to diversify their economy in order to reduce reliance on cattle and dairy. Fishing was seen as one alternative to reduce this dependency, but over fishing, mainly by other European vessels, has caused local fish stocks to drop dramatically. Tourism is being increasingly turned to as a second alternative

<b>Labour Force:</b>	
2001	99,974
2002	102,813
2003	103,600
2004	108,585

<b>Unemployment</b>	
<b>Year:</b>	<b>Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)</b>
2002	2.5%
2004	2%
2003	2.6%

**Industry:**

Transformative industries involved with canning smoked fish and tuna, as well as fruit; beverage production; tobacco; smaller lumber and cork processing industries. The majority of these are in Sao Miguel. Dairy farming is the main industry on the islands.

**Niche Industry:**

Dairy and cattle farming, fishing, tourism.

**Tourism:**

Tourism is a relatively new sector within the Azorean economy. Nevertheless it is one which is evolving quickly to meet the demands of the tourist. Although the majority of tourists are from mainland Portugal, an increasing number is coming from Sweden, Norway, Germany, the U.S., France, Holland, Canada, the U.K., Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Brazil, Austria and Finland. The main tourist activities are whale and dolphin watching (between June and September they feed off the waters between the islands of Faial, Pico, and Sao Jorge where the fish are plentiful); scuba diving; sailing; sportfishing (blue and white marlins, tunas, wahoos and some species of shark); hiking; horseback riding; mountaineering, mountain biking; paragliding; speleology; tennis; and golf. All of the islands have accommodations except for Corvo. In 2002 there were 62 establishments on the islands: 23 hotels, 25 pensions, and 14 other, with a capacity of 5,388. In 2002 there were 777,935 visitors staying in hotels, 730,356 of whom were from E.U. countries.



<b>Imports and Exports:</b>	
The Azores have had a negative balance of trade for at least the last five years.	
<b>Tot. Value of Imports</b>	48,867,000.00 euro (2002)
<b>From Eu:</b>	90 enterprises; value: 48,867,000 euro
<b>Import Partners (EU:)</b>	Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, Finland, Greece, Poland, and Sweden.
<b>Partners Outside EU:</b>	141 enterprises; value: 22,077,000 euro
<b>Import Partners:</b>	Cape Verde, Australia, the U.S., Canada, Japan, Brazil, Switzerland, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Morocco, China, and South Korea.
<b>Tot. Value of Exports</b>	13004000 euro (2002)
<b>To Eu:</b>	4 enterprises; value: 2,393,000 euro
<b>Export Partners:</b>	Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, the UK, and France.
<b>Partners Outside EU::</b>	118 enterprises; value: 10,611,000 euro
<b>Export Partners:</b>	The U.S., Canada, Cape Verde, Angola, Switzerland, Guinea-Bissau, Sao-Tome and Principe, Brazil, Australia, Japan, Norway, and New Zealand.
<b>Main Imports:</b>	Cereals, fuels, machinery, transportation materials, primary materials.
<b>Main Exports:</b>	Hand-embroidery, fish preserves (canned tuna), milk products (especially cheese, butter and powdered milk), fresh fish, lumber, pineapples, wine, and beef.

**TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS**

**External:**

**Number of Airports: 3**

The Azorean airline is SataAir Azores, and there are frequent, two-hour flights to Lisbon from Ponte Delgada (Sao Miguel); and Horta (Faial). Lajes (on Terceira) is connected to the US military base. Ponte Delgada also has flights to Funchal (Madeira), and to Oporto and Frankfurt during peak season. Charter flights link the US and Canada to Ponte Delgada and Lajes. In 2003 there were 770,191 arrivals on the islands by air. In 2004 this number rose to 822,925.

**Number of Main Ports: 3**

Horta, Ponte Delgada and Praia da Vitoria.

**Internal:**

**Air**

Inter-Island flights are also serviced by SataAir Azores.

**Road:**

Buses are infrequent, and taxis are expensive. In 2003, 4,247 vehicles were sold. In 2004 4,354 were sold. There are numerous car-dealerships as well as moped agencies.

**Sea:**

Acorline Ferries connects all the islands except Corvo during the summer. Regular ferries between Faial, Pico, and Sao Jorge; and between Terceira and Graciosa are provided by Transmacor.

**Other Forms of Transportation:**

Bicycles can be rented.

**Economic Zones:**

The Azores have reduced port taxes in order to compensate for remoteness and insularity. International investment from offshore industry, tax-free industrial areas, etc. are not yet a part of the Azorean economy.

**Energy Policy:**

The main energy source is thermal, although geothermal energy accounts for 16% of production on the islands, and there are plans to increase this to 35% by 2006. Portugal is in 17th place in geothermal power production (out of 21 countries), and the power stations in the Azores are the only ones in the country. The islands are also in the experimental phase of developing wind and hydro energy stations.

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)
2003	646,249	511,778	95,719	38,752	623,461	0	0	0	0	0
2003	646,249	511,778	95,719	38,752	623,461	0	0	0	0	0



**Official Currency:**

Euro

**Banking and Insurance:**

Number of Banks and Credit Unions: 148

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions: 15

Number of Insurance Companies: 31

About 6% of all deposits in local banks are being made by Azoreans living abroad.

**Financial Services:**

The Azores has financial consultants and can provide modern financial services – it is not however a centre for offshore financial business and these services are therefore currently operating on a small scale.

**Communications/E-Commerce:**

Both Portuguese and international television is available on the Azores. A fibre optic cable links all the islands, providing good telephone and internet communications. E-commerce is not a notable contributor to the local economy, but may be a good means of economic diversification for such a remote location.

**Public Ownership:**

Most of the land is privately owned, although much of it had been abandoned due to emigration.

**Land Use:**

The islands were once covered with evergreen forest which was cleared by early settlers for agriculture and settlement. As a result of emigration and land abandonment, much of this has been reforested in an effort to curb erosion. The Azores have more than 850 plant species, only 300 of which are native, and 60 possibly endemic. There are 11 species of native trees, 8 of which are endemic. The majority of the plant species on the islands were introduced. The largest area of undisturbed forest is on Terceira. There are about 150 species of birds, 35 breeding species (of these 35, 10 are endemic sub-species, and one an endemic species). Only 45 of the 150 are present on the islands year-round. Seven are introduced species.

**Agriculture/Forestry:**

Many households in the Azores are involved in subsistence, commercial, or both forms of agricultural production. Commercial producers supply the local tourist market and export to Portugal, the E.U., as well as other countries. The islands have historically followed a boom-bust agricultural cycle, many crops failing due to disease or price crashes on the world market. The Portuguese government had promoted monoculture crop production, emphasizing wheat and beef for export to the mainland. Sugar cane, pastels (for making dyes), citrus, and grapes have also been grown on a large scale. This has often created a great deal of bad feeling on the part of the islanders as if the crop fails they would not be able to feed themselves. Today the islands produce cereals, tobacco, corn, beans, pineapples, oranges, apricots, and grapes for wine. The principal industrial crops are sugar-beet, chicory, tea, passion fruit, and pineapple. All of these except the pineapple are processed in the transformation industry and then sold locally or exported. Domesticated animals are also raised on a large scale: sheep, hogs, chickens, and especially cattle both for meat and for the production of cheese, milk, etc. Livestock constitute a major contribution to the local economy, beef being exported to both the mainland and Madeira. A major problem on the islands is the lack of any large, unobstructed tract of available land appropriate for cultivation. Rocks and lava deposits form obstacles to agricultural development throughout the islands, and plots are therefore small fields separated by areas that are impossible to cultivate.

**Marine Activity:**

**Fishing:**

Fishing is considered a major potential growth area for the region due to their large EEZ. A few companies are smoking fish for export as well as local consumption. The most important species economically, and the one sought by the commercial fishing fleets is tuna. The main species for the non-

industrial fishery are herring, sea bream, conger eel, fork beard, and mackerel. One very salient, ongoing issue on the islands is the problem of European vessels over-fishing in Azorean waters and exhausting the fish stocks while local fishermen who do not have such mechanized equipment are suffering the consequences. The islanders filed an official complaint with the E.U. over this issue, but their case was dismissed.

**Marine Life:**

The upswelling of cold-water currents meeting the warm waters of the gulf stream produce nutrient-rich waters which attract high numbers of whales and dolphins. The most seen whale is the sperm whale.

**Critical Issues:**

E.U. vessels fishing in Azorean waters have seriously depleted fish stocks and continue to do so despite the islands' efforts to prevent this destruction of their marine resources. This is an on-going issue and no solution has been reached thus far.

**JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES****Capital:**

Ponte Delgada (Since autonomy, the executive section of the local authority has been located in Ponte Delgada, the legislative in Horta, and the judicial in Angra do Heroísmo.

**Political System:**

The Azores became an Autonomous Region of the Republic of Portugal in 1976 and obtained its constitutionally mandated autonomous status in 1980, establishing its government. The islands have a regional legislative assembly and an executive. The legislative assembly is elected by universal suffrage by electoral circles – each island is its own electoral circle, electing two deputies (plus additional deputies depending on the population). There is also a circle representing Azoreans living in mainland Portugal and one representing those living abroad. Each of these elects one deputy. The executive or regional government is responsible politically to the regional legislative assembly. The region elects five deputies to the national parliament in Lisbon. The regional parliament has 51 deputies elected every four years and meets in Horta. The president of the Azores is the leader of the party with the greatest number of elected deputies, and resides in Ponte Delgada. He is nominated by the minister of the republic. There is also a vice-president as well as secretaries and sub-secretaries, all of whom are nominated by the minister of the republic under recommendation by the president of the region. There are nine regional secretaries, each in charge of a department. The secretaries, or ministries, are in Ponte Delgada, Angra de Heroísmo, and Horta. Each island is divided into distinct councils (more on larger islands, fewer on smaller islands). The councils are composed of the president of the municipal assembly, and municipal "camaras", two representatives of the business community, two representatives of the syndicate, and two representatives of the agricultural association. The deputies of the respective islands can participate in council meetings, without the right to vote. The islands are divided into municipalities which are in turn divided into parishes. A Minister of the Republic, chosen by the Portuguese Prime Minister and appointed by the President of the Republic represents Portuguese sovereignty in the Azores. The Minister performs a coordination role between the regional and central governments. Drafts of political and administrative statutes are prepared by the Regional Legislative Assembly and submitted to the Assembly of the Republic for approval.

**Political Parties:**

Two political parties dominate: the PSD (Partido Social Democrata) who are social democrats, and the PS (Partido Social) who are socialists. The PSD is considered centre right and the PS centre left. Although leaning to the left prior to the 1974 revolution, since autonomy, the Azores have voted consistently in favour of the conservatives, in contrast to the mainland which has moved towards the left.

**Important Legislation:**

Section VII of the Portuguese Constitution, articles 227 through 236, lays out the general competencies of the regional government as the power to legislate concerning areas not within the exclusive authority of the Republic; to enact enabling legislation with reference to basic laws that do not concern matters falling within the exclusive powers of the Republic; to regulate the implementation of laws adopted by the organs of supreme authority; to administer and dispose of their assets and perform acts and enter into contracts where it is in their interests to do so; to exercise the powers of taxation and allocate these revenues to the region's expenses as well as to adapt national fiscal laws to the regional environment; to set up and abolish local authorities; to supervise local powers; to raise localities to the status of towns or cities; to supervise departments, public institutes, state-owned and national businesses whose activities are exclusively or predominantly confined to the region; to approve the regional economic plan, regional budget, as well as the accounts of the region and participate in the preparation of national plans; to create regulatory offices and sanctions; to participate in the definition and implementation of the fiscal, monetary, financial and foreign exchange policies in such a way as to secure funds for the investments necessary for the region's economic and social development; to participate in the definition of policies concerning the territorial waters, the EEZ and adjacent sea beds; to participate in negotiations concerning international treaties and agreements of direct concern to the region and to share in any benefit derived therefrom; to engage in cooperation with other foreign regional entities and participate in organizations aimed at further inter-regional dialogue and cooperation. The region does not have the power to restrict any occupation or public office to persons born or resident in the region.

**Principal Taxes:**

There are a number of fiscal policies in place to attract firms wishing to invest in the Azores, or locals wishing to start up businesses. In order to overcome the handicaps of remoteness and insularity there is a reduction in personal income tax of 20% and a reduction of corporation tax by 30%. The Regional Assembly is authorized under the constitution on the Portuguese Republic to reduce rates of income and corporation tax by up to a maximum of 30% of the rates laid down by national legislation (Law No.B/98 of the 24th February, 1998 – on the finances of the Autonomous Region). There are also tax credits for profits reinvested in hotels (new or existing); the acquisition of fishing boats; or investments in scientific research and experimental development. The government of the Autonomous Region has control over local taxes, and adapts national taxes to local reality.

**Associated Power:**

Republic of Portugal

**Citizenship:**

Azoreans hold Portuguese citizenship and are free to live, work and vote in mainland Portugal. Due to the high number of Azoreans in the United States, and the strong link between the islands and the U.S., Azoreans have special visa concessions when visiting that country.

**Paradiplomacy:**

The U.S. Consulate in Ponte Delgada, Sao Miguel, is the oldest continuously operating U.S. Consulate in the world. Originally the main American Consulate was on Faial, with branches in Ponte Delgada and a Consular Agent on Flores. In 1917 all consular operations were moved to Ponte Delgada. The consulate promotes trade, cultural exchanges, and deals with immigration and non-immigrant visas. There is a British Honorary Consul in Ponte Delgada, a Finnish Honorary Consul, as well as a Canadian Consulate. The Greeks have two Honorary Consulates in the Azores: one in Angra de Heroísmo, Terceira; and one in Ponte Delgada; and there is an Italian Honorary Consular Office in Horta, Faial, as well as an Italian Honorary Consulate in Ponte Delgada.

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

There are 19 concelhos and 156 freguesias in the Azores.

Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
Sao Miguel	759	130,154	53%
Pico	446	14,579	6.4%
Terceira	403	54,996	23.5%
Sao Jorge	246	9,522	4.3%
Faial	173	14,934	5.1%
Flores	143	3,949	1.8%
Santa Maria	97	5,490	2.5%
Graciosa	62	4,708	2.2%
Corvo	17	435	0.2%

In 2002, the population density in the Azores was 102.8 inhabitants per square kilometre.

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
2002	49241	39,771	86,762	32,464	30,524
2001	51970	42,334	84,035	31,176	29,370

#### Migration:

For centuries emigration has played a major role in the Azores. Initially to escape the heavy taxes levied on the islands, emigrants would get passages on passing whalers, later to escape the depressed economy after the Napoleonic wars, and to avoid the military service. Other reasons for emigration have been major crop failures which marked the Azorean agricultural story, as well as disease, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Between 1877 and 1888, more than 11.000 Azoreans left the islands. By 1930 there were 300,000 Portuguese living in the U.S.. Today there are 100,000 Azoreans in California, 150,000 in Southeastern New England, and 20,000 in Hawaii. Migration to Canada started in the 1950's, and by 1980 there were more than 160,000 Portuguese living there, the majority of whom were Azorean. Other countries that the islanders emigrated to in large numbers were Bermuda and Brazil. Today the connection between the United States and the Azores is very strong, and most people on the island have relatives in the U.S. and/or have lived or worked there at some point. Remittances have made a significant contribution to the local economy. The result is that today, unlike most of Europe, the Azores have a higher percentage of young people than other age groups. Emigration is still common, but to a much lesser degree than in the past.

Crude Birth Rate:	
2000	14.5%
2001	13.2%
2002	12.9%

#### Life Expecltancy:

There are no statistics on life expectancy for the islands as separate from mainland Portugal. Life expectancy for Portugal as a whole is 76 years old.

Crude Death Rate:	
2000	10.9%
2001	11%
2002	11.2%

#### Ethnicity:

The Azorean Population is composed mainly of Portuguese immigrants from southern Portugal and Madeira, but with a significant population from Flanders, as well as smaller groups of Jews, Africans, Spaniards, Bretons and Moors.

#### Class Division:

Class divisions are still quite strong in the Azores although this is changing. Class divisions are based upon formal education. As a greater percentage of the population has increased opportunities for being educated, class divisions are becoming less and less evident, but a large percentage of the older population still lives within the constraints of not having obtained more than three or four years of education.

#### Languages:

The Official language on the Azores is Portuguese, but there are strong regional dialects.

#### Religion:

The main religion on the islands is Catholicism. There was a strong Jewish presence from the early settlements originating in Africa, but most changed their religion or emigrated to avoid persecution during WWII.

#### Literacy:

Literacy figures for the Azores are not available, but mainland literacy is 93.5% (2003), and the islands (due to the neglect of education) have always had much lower literacy rates than the mainland (\*see Education System).

#### Education System:

Education on the Azores was severely neglected by the Portuguese government who sought to perpetuate the class differentiations present in society by keeping the poor uneducated. The lack of attention given to education for the islanders is reflected in the fact that until 1960 Azoreans were only required to attend three years of elementary-level education. In 1950, 41.2% of the female population and 47.7% of the male population in Angra were illiterate. In Ponte Delgada these figures were 49.2% and 56.6% respectively. In 1960, 37% of the inhabitants of Angra, 28.9% of the population of Horta, and 44.2% of the population of Ponte Delgada were illiterate. Educational reform had started in the 1950's, but did not really show any concrete examples of change until the late 1960's and 1970's.

<b>Total Pre-schools:(2002)</b>	248
<b>Total Primary Schools</b>	
<b>First Level:</b>	258
<b>Second Level:</b>	32
<b>Third Level:</b>	30
<b>Total Secondary Schools:</b>	17
<b>Total Professional Schools</b>	12
<b>Universities:</b>	3

<b>Number of Schools per Island:</b>										
	<b>Pre-school</b>		<b>Elementary</b>			<b>High-school</b>		<b>Prof.</b>	<b>University</b>	
	<b>Pub</b>	<b>Priv</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Pub</b>	<b>Priv</b>		<b>Pub</b>	<b>Priv</b>
Sao Miguel	85	28	99	14	13	6	0	7	1	0
Terceira	47	13	58	6	5	2	0	2	1	0
Graciosa	7	1	8	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Sao Jorge	13	4	23	3	3	2	0	1	0	0
Pico	17	4	31	3	3	3	0	1	0	0
Faial	13	2	22	2	2	1	0	1	1	0
Flores	4	2	8	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Santa Maria	6	1	8	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Corvo	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Students Enrolled:</b>					
<b>Year:</b>	<b>Pre-School</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>High-school</b>	<b>Prof.</b>	<b>University</b>
2001.2002	7,318	2,927	8,743	1,411	2,927

<b>Teachers</b>							
<b>Year</b>	<b>Pre-School</b>	<b>Elementary</b>			<b>High-School</b>	<b>Prof.</b>	<b>University</b>
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>			
2001	447	981	1,027	2,012	1,558	510	285

(if a school offers more than one level it is counted more than once).

#### **Medical Services:**

In 2003 there were 3 hospitals on the Azores (one on Sao Miguel, one on Terceira, and one on Faial), five specialty centres, and seventeen health centres (13 with overnight facilities and four outpatient clinics). All of the islands except Corvo have some sort of healthcare facility. Santa Maria has one overnight facility; Sao Miguel has four overnight clinics and two outpatient clinics; Terceira has one of each. Graciosa has one clinic with overnight facilities; Sao Jorge has two overnight clinics; Pico has three overnight clinics; Faial has one outpatient clinic; and Flores has one overnight clinic. The total number of hospital beds was 1,557, and there were 3,006 medical employees, 1,655 on Sao Miguel. There are 770 nurses and 426 doctors (149 non-specialists and 277 specialists). There are 46 pharmacies on the islands, and 6,399 pharmacists. The ratio of doctors to inhabitants is 1.7 to 1,000. The ratio for pharmacies is 1.9 per 10,000 inhabitants, and there are 7.8 beds per 1,000 islanders. The healthcare facilities are 67.2% full.

## **HISTORY AND CULTURE**

### **History:**

The Azores were discovered in 1432 by Prince Infante Dom Henrique (1394-1460). From the beginning, the purpose of the Azorean colony was to service mainland Portugal with commodities and tribute. The islands were seen as a stop-over location for re-supply and repair of Portuguese ships, and as a centre for crop production for trade. Slaves were shipped off to Brazil and the Caribbean to avoid a slave insurrection. After a revolt in Flanders a large group of what were considered some of the more unruly Flemings to the Azores, which had a significant cultural impact on the islands.

**Referenda:**

There have not been any major referenda in the last five years in the Azores

**Recent Significant Events:**

The Azores' history has been wracked with natural disasters – volcanic eruptions and earthquakes destroying towns and displacing the population. The islands have not had a volcanic eruption recently, but earthquakes – quite often rather strong – are still frequent. There was an earthquake in 1996, three in 1997, fourteen in 1998, and one in 1999, 2001, and 2002 – none of which were strong enough to effect the economy, although they did cause damage to buildings and roads.

**Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:**

Azoreans are talented artisans and are well known for their ceramics, woodwork, weaving, wicker and embroidery work, as well as their tapestry, lace work, sheep's wool sweaters from Santa Maria, woven blankets, bed-spreads and crochet work. The textile sector represented 3.4% of the islands' exports between 1993 and 1995.

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