

SECTION 6:
ALPANDEIRE – RONDA



125

6

Alpandei Ronda

10

DURATION: 7 h

Total ascent: 1.622 m

Total descent: 1.561 m

1050-IV (Benaoján) | 1051-III (Ronda) | 1064-II (Cortes de la Frontera)



12%



50%



38%



59,51%



1



2

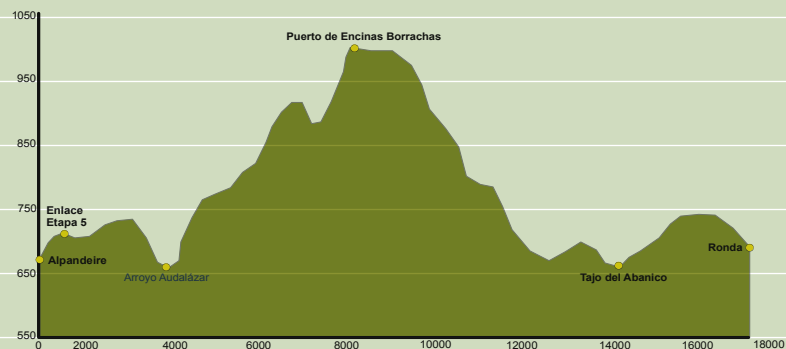


2



4

PROFILE OF THIS SECTION



LINKS TO OTHER APPROVED TRACKS



GREAT TRACKS



SMALL TRACKS



LOCAL TRAILS

PR-A 229 Alpandei re – Atajate

SL-A 40 Ronda - Abanico

PR-A 251 Ronda – Montejaque

SL-A 36 Ronda - Cabeza

PR-A 221 Ronda – Cartajima

SL-A 35 Ronda - Ventilla

PR-A 71 Ronda - Pilar de Coca

SL-A 37 Ronda - Planilla

SL-A 39 Ronda - Pilar de Cartajima

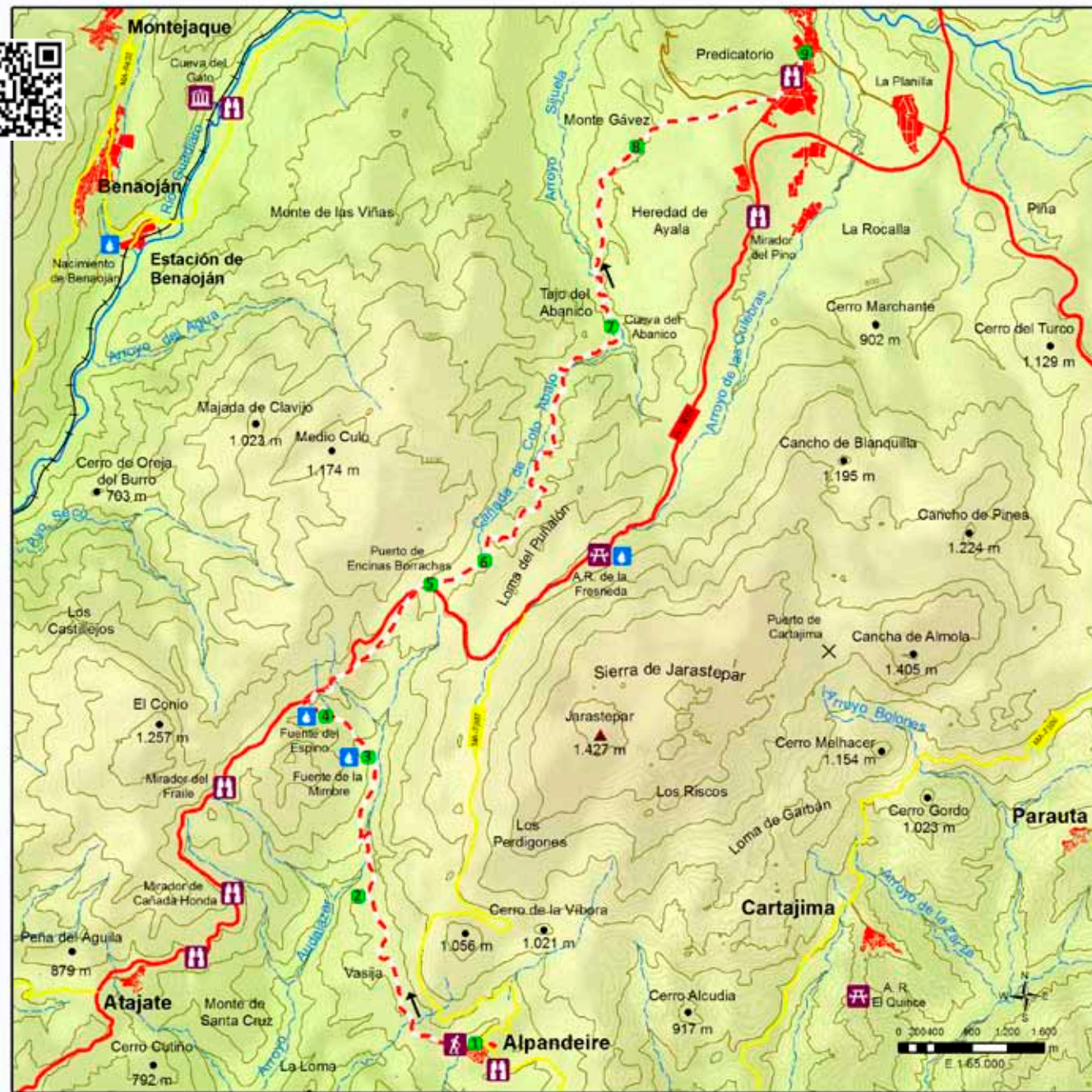
SL-A 38 Ronda - Molinos

This guide does not offer information regarding the state of conservation of the tracks since it can vary at any time.

6



ITINERARY OF THE TRACK



SUMMARY OF THE SECTION

The sixth section of the Gran Senda (Great Track) runs through two areas of great geographic and historic importance to the region. On one hand, we have the river basin of the **Audalázar stream**, one of the main sources of the river Genal, and on the other, the **Meseta rondeña** (Plateau of Ronda), surrounded by all the mountain ranges that make up the Serranía de Ronda. The first stretch of this section includes the **Vereda de la Fuente del Espino**, which crosses the valley of the Audalázar stream to get to the **Vereda del Camino de Ronda**, and which we already know from the previous section. From the puerto de las **Encinas Borrachas** (Drunken Holm Oaks pass), the highest point of this part of our journey, we will enjoy great panoramic views of the Sierra de las Nieves Natural Park and the hollow of Ronda, which is surrounded by vast holm oak forests. Before we arrive in Ronda, we will go through the spectacular setting of the **Tajo del Abanico**, moulded by the **Sijuela stream** and by other weathering agents. Finally, amongst farming grounds and cortijos (country houses), we enter the town of Ronda through the popular **barrio de San Francisco** (San Francisco neighbourhood), and finish our journey through the GR-141.



Black wheatear

© Juan Luis Muñoz



Going up to Fuente del Espino

© Rafael Flores

MAIN SPOTS OF THIS SECTION			
1	Alpandeire	30S x: 303052 y: 4056548	688 m
2	Mirador del Audalázar	30S x: 301855 y: 4058207	737 m
3	Fuente de la Mimbres	30S x: 301804 y: 4059888	766 m
4	Fuente del Espino	30S x: 301280 y: 4060250	867 m
5	Puerto de Encinas Borrachas	30S x: 302523 y: 4061651	1.008 m
6	Mirador de la Meseta de Ronda	30S x: 303192 y: 4062156	987 m
7	Cueva del Abanico	30S x: 304467 y: 4064712	653 m
8	Colada de Cortes de la Frontera	30S x: 305003 y: 4066664	693 m
9	Ronda	30S x: 306684 y: 4067489	700 m



◀ THIS SECTION ONLINE

KEEP IN MIND
This section is not difficult at all, but you should perhaps keep in mind the weather, looking out for the strong winds or the fog that may be present during your ascent to the Encinas Borrachas (Drunken Holm Oaks). We will also have to cross or walk along the A-369 road, so watch out for the passing vehicles. Although we will always walk down livestock trails and public paths, some go through private ranches dedicated to stock breeding, agriculture or hunting; therefore, we must never abandon the road nor bother the cattle. It is important that you bring along enough water because, although there are several fountains along the way, they may be dry. As in previous sections, we remind you that you must close the several gates you will encounter as you cross them on your way.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ITINERARY

1 ALPANDEIRE – km 0

We exit the old town through **Barranco street**, which goes down from the La Casa Grande hotel to the riverbed of the **arroyo de la Fuente** (de la Fuente stream), where we find a fork on the road. We follow the path going upwards, instead of the one leading to the old washing place, to the **Pozancón** and to other locations like that of los **Huertos**. We are now walking down the livestock trail of the **Vereda de la Fuente del Espino**, surrounding the steep mountainsides of the Despeñaderos. The height at which we stand offers us one of the most beautiful images of Alpandeire and its towering parish church. The view is equally attractive from South to West, as it includes important landmarks like the sierra Crestellina (Crestellina mountain range), the Reales de Sierra Bermeja, the string of towns on the ridge (Benarrabá, Algotocín, Benalauría and Benadalid) and, later on, Atajate and the bare summits of Martín Gil and sierra de los Pinos that surround the Valle del Guadiaro on its western side. After less than a kilometre walking, we arrive at Junta de las Vereas, a crossroads with the road to Atajate. We had already seen this part of the trail in the previous section.



▲ La Cruz Chiquita (The Little Cross)



▼ Panoramic view of the ridge and the towns of Algotocín, Benalauría and Benadalid, located on the right bank of the Genal



© Rafael Flores

characterised by the limestone pavement on its peak, and the **cerro de los Frailes**, with its bare summit surrounded by holm oaks. In this part of the track, the surrounding vegetation is mainly formed by olive trees, almond trees, fig trees and vines, with their grapes hanging from the adjoining walls. The number of holm oaks will increase as we follow our way down the path. After a bit more than two kilometres walking we will find, to one side of the road and covered by a small dome, the **fuelle de las Vasijas**, where we can refill our bottles with water. After another 500m we get to a point where the path ends and a livestock trail begins.

2 MIRADOR DEL AUDALÁZAR (lookout of the Audalázar) – km 2,7



From this exceptional **natural lookout of the Audalázar** we can see the valley of the same name, in between the sharp limestone walls of the **tajo de los Castillejos** and the steep mountainside of the cerro de los Frailes. The path descends leaving behind the white **rancho del Infierno**, also known as rancho de las Pellejas or rancho de Vasijas. The track is quite deteriorated but can be easily walked, sometimes over its ancient stone pavement. Due to the abrupt terrain, we will basically see retamas (a species of broom brush), ardiviejas (a type of rockrose), terebinths and some wild olive trees. However, on the opposite side we will see a holm oak forest with **several clearings**. It



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- ▲ A holm oak points the way
- The narrow valley of the Audalázar stream



© Rafael Flores

- Berries of the Mediterranean buckthorn



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fostered farming activities and the existence of several cortijos (country houses), like the ones of de Marquez, Rozas Bajas, Las Rozas y Roza Llana, which are currently abandoned.

During our journey we will come across an odd holm oak that stretches out from the slope; a perfect place to take a picture. After this, we will continue onwards to reach the **vado del arroyo Audalázar** (ford of the Audalázar stream), also known as **Laza**. The stream is normally dry, specially in summer. Nevertheless, a small spring called **Chorillo Barrera**, normally pours into a small pool visited by the local birds. The ravine downstream is covered by a thicket of osiers and rosebays. However, at its source it is more open, thanks to the installation of a pipe that supplies water to Alpandeire.



During the following ascent we will cross a wooden gate and pass through a normally muddy area. After a couple of short zigzags, we will reach the top of the cutting and we will find a crossroads. The trail progresses placidly under the shade of the holm oaks, although in slight ascent. On our way, under a small holm oak and on the slope that looks over the ravine, we will find the megalithic **sepulcro del Gigante** (sepulchre the Giant). It is also known as **sepulcro de la Mimbre** and it can possibly go unnoticed. In any case, we will encounter several other properly waymarked **dolmens** and ceramic remains (Roman tegulae) that prove the presence of human beings in this area since prehistoric times.

We make a trip back in time to the 20th November 1941 and within the context of the Spanish Maquis guerrilla warfare against Franco's regime. That very day there was a fight in the cortijo del Espino. It was regularly occupied by guerrilla fighters, who felt relatively safe there. That day, the seven men of the Fermín Galán group were hiding there. The owner of the country house excused himself saying that he was going to check on some snares. But he had gone to call the Guardia Civil (a police corps with responsibilities outside towns and cities) instead, tired of the unending and distressing situation. Several were killed or wounded during the exchange of shots. Finally, the Maquis managed to escape and hid in the mountains. The boss of the party, Pablo Pérez Hidalgo, also known as the El Rubio de Bobadilla, decides to give up the fight in 1949. He then hides near Genalguacil, in the cortijo del Cerro property of Ana "La Oveja" Trujillo, with whom he had a relationship. A couple of days later, some of his comrades-in-arms we taken down by the Guardia Civil in the mountains of Benarrabá. During the identification parade, El Rubio's father said that he recognised his son among the bodies. El Rubio de Bobadilla sprung a surprise turning himself in to the police with the coming of democracy in 1976. He died in his home town in 1992.

At a distance, we catch sight of the place where the five passes of the narrow valle del Audalázar meet. The black poplars indicate the location of the vegetable garden and the ruins of the **cortijo de la Mimbres**, where the GR-141 is headed. This area is abundant with Mediterranean buckthorns.

3 FUENTE DE LA MIMBRE – km 5,1

The most striking thing, apart from the location in between walnut trees and fig trees of the vegetable garden, is the **small reservoir pool** that was used to wash the iron that was extracted from the mines at los Perdigones. In 1795, during the rule of Philip V, a great iron and steel factory was installed in the surroundings of Júzcar: the Real Fábrica de Hojalata de San Miguel. The project was conceived by the engineers Emérico Dupasquier and Pedro Enrique Meurón. After arduous operations of industrial espionage, they obtained from the Germans the formula for the processing of iron to make tin. There were several reasons for which the factory was installed near the river Genal: the rich forests, vital for the blast furnaces; the presence of nearby iron mines; the proximity to various sea ports, which were necessary to take the tin to the Latino American market and, finally, the motive force of the river Genal, which was used to power the factory. For several reasons, the factory was shut down fifty years later. We resume our journey down the trail (which is held by a stone wall) towards the riverbanks of the stream of Fuente del Espino. Although it is normally dry, it runs fast when it rains, as shown by the smooth rocks of the riverbed, smoothed by the erosion.

4 FUENTE DEL ESPINO – km 5,8

The short but continuous ascent will take us to the Fuente del Espino, old meeting point for mule drivers, travellers and the "people from the mountains" (as smugglers, bandits and Maquis were known) who travelled the roads going to Benaolán, Atajate, Ronda and Alpandeire. The track leads to the cortijo de la Fuente del Espino and finishes at the A-369. Immediately after leaving the fountain, we turn right to the

► Fuente del Espino



© Rafael Flores

steep slope that takes us to the road. First, we will follow the path leading to the A-369 for 600m. Then, we will continue the path up the steep mountainside. From here, we can see the itinerary that will take us to the **puerto de las Encinas Borrachas** (Drunken Holm Oaks pass). The trail then takes you to a wider path below the A-369 and the impressive **tajos de Montero**, another important landmark to the history of the Serranía de Ronda. In 1811, when the Napoleonic troops

▼ Walking under the Tajos de Montero



© Rafael Flores





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► Dolmen of Montero



where moving from Ronda to Gibraltar, they were surprised by a guerilla from the area, inflicting a heavy defeat and numerous casualties. A French general gave this place the name of "Street of Sorrow" and "Cemetery of France". The revenge was terrible for the people of the area, specially for the locals of Atajate: the French only left standing the cross that dominates the square today. During our journey we will find the dolmen of Montero, dating from the Bronze Age, that is, 6000 years ago. The following ascent will take us to the puerto de las Encinas Borrachas, at an altitude of 1000m, the highest in the entire GR-141.

5 PUERTO DE ENCINAS BORRACHAS (Drunken Holm Oaks Pass) – km 8,8

The name of this pass is due to the presence of several holm oaks that have been ruined by the cattle and bent by the strong winds of the area, giving the impression of being drunk. The GR-141 continues down the verge of the road up to the pass. From there we will admire the **massive Jarastepar**, that seems to be recovering its lost holm oak forest, and the deforested **sierra Carrasco**, to the West. On the wide plain lies the cortijo de Encinas Borrachas and, a little bit further on, the dolmen of the same name. The ancient road runs parallel to ours. If you pay attention you will see its old stone pavement, its gutters and its counterforts on the side.



► Dolmen at the Encinas Borrachass



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▲ Walking to Ronda

6 MIRADOR DE LA MESETA DE RONDA (lookout of meseta de Ronda)– km 9,7

When we get to an electric pole, where the path starts to descend, we should make a stop to admire the marvellous views of the **hollow of Ronda**, with the town sitting above the famous Tajo. We are in the border between the municipalities of Alpendeire and Ronda, and we start to descend to get to the entrance of the estate of **Coto Alto**.



From here, in front of the vereda del Camino de Ronda, we turn left to the camino del Coto, which goes through the estate and continues the GR-141. Instead of crossing directly the first gate, we will have to walk for a while down the livestock trail before reaching another. We will then cross this gate to the left in order to descend to a narrow pedestrian pass that will later take us down to the trail. We must never leave the road, there is livestock in the area that we should not bother. The holm oak forest that covers these red mountainsides where we can easily find **deer**, introduced in the area as game. We leave behind a wide pool where two enormous columns stand, giving it the appearance of a Roman temple.



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▲ Mirador de la Meseta

At the following crossroads, we take the path that goes down to the cortijo del Coto, now partially in ruins, but that must have been quite important, taking into account its size. We walk along the **arroyo de los Chopillos** (stream of los Chopillos), normally dry unless it has rained heavily. In some parts of the road we will distinguish the old stone pavement, now partially covered by the soil of the track. We will have to pass another trail to the right before the path widens and leaves the estate through another pass, similar to the one mentioned before. We are getting nearer to the **cueva del Abanico**.

► Gaining sight of Ronda and its plateau



© Rafael Flores

© Rafael Flores



▲ Cueva del Abanico

► Trail by the Sijuela stream



© Mateos

7 CUEVA DEL ABANICO – km 13,8

We are at the source of the **arroyo de Sijuela** (stream Sijuela). Its is the main modeller of the landscape through which we now walk. Its waters have dug the ravine for years, carving the walls and digging large caves like the cueva del Abanico. This place is frequented by mountain climbers. We can see a smaller, darker cave by the first. We can get to the back of the cave, walk a couple of metres and return going around some rocks. Some scenes of the film Carmen were shot here some years ago. The leading actor was the tenor Plácido Domingo.

Following the trail that overlaps the SL-A 40, we ford the stream and continue over the ravine. The river source is located under a fig tree; its waters pour down a hidden fall. We can see the old stone pavement in some sections

► Erosion on the molasse formed by the Sijuela stream

►► At El Coto we find remains of the old road



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▲ Tajo del Abanico

of the path. Although some say it is from Roman origin, it was actually built in the Middle Ages. The name of the area, **Abanico** (Fan in English), was given to the area due to the large rock of the same shape that seems to keep a fragile balance on the ground.

We resume our journey going up a steep slope. We then cross a wooden gate and get to a widening on the path that offers us a great sight of the ravine. We leave the arroyo de Sijuela and penetrate into a **lovely holm oak forest**, guarded by sandstone walls and with views to the valley through which the emerging Guadiaro runs. Before we reach the next gate, we will have the chance to see a threshing floor and a renovated cortijo on our way. The country house reminds us of the old Roman granaries located on the plateau of Ronda. We leave the trail and follow a track that will lead us through fields of **olive trees**.

Without any doubt, the beauty of the **torre de la Cazalla** (tower of la Cazalla), similar to the one we saw before,

▼ Sifting olives



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will certainly catch your attention. Unfortunately, both the cortijo and the tower are very badly preserved. The last spur of the ravine that has accompanied us is called the **tajo de los Aviones**. It has quite a spectacular shape, as it forms a natural patio with balconies. We continue in slight descent until we get to the beginning of a concrete slope and the diversion going left, merging with the **colada de Cortes**.

8 COLADA DE CORTES DE LA FRONTERA – km 17,2

We leave the colada to the left and go up the **cuesta del Cascajal** (slope of the Cascajal). We are getting closer to the town Ronda, as we can see by the numerous country houses and the olive fields, predominating over the holm oaks. In one of the ranches to the left of the road, we will see the **torre de la Cañá**. It is similar to the previous ones and built for the same purpose. Before reaching Ronda, the trail regains its normal width and continues placidly to get to the setting of the Virgen de la Cabeza. This is another of the idyllic sites of the outskirts of Ronda. Here we will find an **Early Christian church of the 9th century** dug into a sandstone wall. A traditional *romería* (religious pilgrimage) is celebrated here in the month of June. In front of the aforementioned widening of the roads there is a small roundabout and the road from Ronda to Gaucín.



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► Torre de la Cazalla

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9 RONDA – km 18,8

We are now in the historical centre of Ronda. This street is part of the Camino de Ronda, the old road that we have already met in previous sections and that serves as link between Ronda, the towns of the Valle del Genal and the region of Campo de Gibraltar. As we begin to go down the street, and to the left, we can enter a tourist facility called **el Predicadorio**. From the great adjacent terrace we have splendid views of Ronda. Here we will also discover the remains of a

▲ Panoramic view of Ronda from el Predicadorio



Roman canalization and the tower that supplied water to the ancient forum of Arunda (Ronda). After passing the convento de las Franciscanas (Franciscan convent) we enter Ruedo Alameda square. This is the centre of the traditional neighbourhood of San Francisco, inhabited by the farmers of Ronda. We end our journey through the GR-141 near the **medieval wall**, by the puerta de Almocábar (of Andalusí origin), and the puerta de Carlos V (Renaissance).



▼ Puerta de Almocábar



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