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TRIP NOTES

**BELIEVE
ACHIEVE
INSPIRE**

**VIETNAM TREK - SAPA HILL TRIBE
VIETNAM**

Fri 05 Oct - Tue 16 Oct 2018





In aid of your choice of charity

05 Oct - 16 Oct 2018

12 DAYS | VIETNAM | TOUGH

Sapa is a rugged northern Vietnamese area, with terraces, rolling hills, deep valleys and vibrant paddy fields. Our challenge begins in Vietnam's capital city Hanoi, an eclectic mix of old colonial streets and traditional culture. We head north from here taking the overnight train to Lao Cai. Venturing into the hills, our challenge takes us along scenic trails and off the beaten path, through the remote villages of Nam Ket, Red Sin Chai, Nam Cum, Thanh Phu and Seo Mi Ty where we will meet local tribes along the way; staying in homestays and trekking on trails which are used for cardamom harvesting deep in the forest. Heading to the Topas Ecolodge where you will be amazed with breath-taking views of towering mountains, before heading back to Lao Cai for returning to Hanoi.

- Trek through Vietnam's mountainous north
- Visit indigenous hill tribes
- Stay in local home-stays and experience the rich culture of Vietnam
- Travel on the overnight train from Hanoi
- Explore Vietnam's capital Hanoi and its old colonial quarter

YOUR CHALLENGE DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 Fri 05 Oct

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International departure from London Heathrow to Hanoi

Our journey begins at the airport where we'll meet our teammates and Charity Challenge representative. Any last minute nerves will turn to excitement as we touch down in Hanoi after the overnight flight.

DAY 2 Sat 06 Oct

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Arrival in Hanoi

Arriving into Hanoi at Noi Bai International Airport you will be greeted by one of our local team and transferred to the hotel. If time allows take a stroll through Hanoi's old quarter and the Hoan Kiem Lake before heading out for a delicious welcome dinner and challenge brief.

DAY 3 Sun 07 Oct

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Hanoi and the night train to Lao Cai

Today spend time getting to grips with some of Vietnam's rich culture and history by visiting some of the city's famous sites; the Temple of Literature; The One Pillar Pagoda, one of Vietnam's most iconic temples and the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh, the father of modern-day Vietnam. Break for lunch at one of the city's most favoured restaurants and then continue your educational tour of both historic and modern traditions. Tonight after dinner board the train to Sapa where the trek will start.

DAY 4 Mon 08 Oct

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Lao Cai to Muong Hum

Arriving at Lao Cai railway station very early in the morning (at around 5 am), there is the opportunity to freshen up with a simple but clean guesthouse. After breakfast at local restaurant transfer our to stunning Muong Hum enjoy lunch with your host before starting the trek. The trek starts up a narrow dirt track before a downhill section to the bottom of Ky Quan San valley. Whilst trekking admire the breathtaking views of high mountains, deep valleys, stream and stunning terraced rice paddies before returning back to your homestay in the Muong Hum.

DAY 5 Tue 09 Oct

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Nam Pung to Mong Xoa

After breakfast visit Nam Pung and the Ha Nhi people who are famous for their beautiful clay houses and then continue the trek up through plantations and terraced rice fields before reaching a village of Red Dao people. Lunch will be taken next to the cooling waters of the river that flows through the Kji Chu Phin valley; crossing the stream continue up through the bamboo plantations to your homestay with Mong people located among mountains in Ta Giang Phinh.

DAY 6 Wed 10 Oct

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Mong Xoa, Kim Ngan & Suoi Thau

After yesterday's tough trek today's will be a little easier. As you walk through the village meet local people and get a snapshot of the lives that they lead in the mountains. Picnic on the top of Ta Giang Phinh Mountain where the view stretches far and wide over the lower land of Sapa and Bat Xat districts along the Chinese border. Tonight stay at the Suoi Thau homestay.

DAY 7 Thu 11 Oct

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Suoi Thau, Lao Chai, Can Ho Dao & Sapa

The trek today is hard continuing back down towards Sapa tracing the river back through the beautiful mountain valley. Lunch on the route with a local family and continue the trek through a spectacular bamboo forest before the final part of your trek to Can Ho, from which you transfer back to Sapa.

DAY 8 Fri 12 Oct

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Sapa, Ban Den, Nam Tong & Nam Sai

Start the trek at Ban Den village, on the transfer to Ban Den admire the marvellous scenery of Hoang Lien mountain range and Muong Hoa valley. From Ban Den trek up a steep trail for 1.5 hours to Nam Toong Village of the Red Zao. Leaving Nam Toong for Nam Sang along a narrow trail up into the mountain range trek a series of short ascents and descents. After a picnic lunch trek through Nam Sang village of the Xa Pho people; and end the day with an easier walk through the charming village of Nam Sai valley heading to Ban Sai village.

DAY 9 Sat 13 Oct

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Nam Sai, Nam Nhiu & Sin Chai B

Trekking today offers stunning views of the Nam Sai and Nam Cang valleys and a chance to understand the lives of mountain tribes living in the remotest part of the Sapa region. The paths are rocky and with ascents through the terraced fields and rainforest; in the afternoon the trail passes through the cultivated hilly land of Suoi Thau Commune to Sin Chai B Village of the Red Zao. The evening will be at the homestay.

DAY 10 Sun 14 Oct

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Sin Chai B, Nam Lang A, Ta Thang & Lao Cai. Overnight train

Leave Sin Chai B after breakfast to trek along a narrow dirt trail to the bottom of the valley before gradually heading uphill to Nam Lang A, enjoying several visits to local homes. Post lunch trek, up to the top of the mountain range before gradually descending to Nam Ket village and arrive to Ta Thang Village with a view of the Red River which runs through the Bao Thang District. From here transfer to Lao Cai for a farewell dinner before taking night train back to Hanoi capital.

DAY 11 Mon 15 Oct

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Hanoi to London

You'll arrive in Hanoi very early morning, where you'll be picked up and taken to the hotel for a quick shower before

being transferred to the airport for your onward flight back home to London.

DAY 12 Tue 16 Oct

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Arrival back in London

Today you'll arrive back to London Heathrow and ready to share all your stories with friends, family and supporters.

NB

The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, the strength of the group and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary, however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your challenge leader will have the final say

HOW TO FUND YOUR CHALLENGE

This page provides you details of the costs of your challenge.
The costs below are per person.

SELF FUNDER

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Pay a registration fee of £375.00 when you book

Then a balance of £1838.00 (8 weeks before your challenge)

Raise as much as you can for your charity.

MINIMUM SPONSORSHIP

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Registration fee of £375.00 when you book

Raise a minimum of £3750.00 for your charity.

FLEXI

-

Registration fee of £375.00 when you book

Then £375.00 towards challenge costs (8 weeks before your challenge)

Raise a minimum of £2985.00 for your charity.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Before you go

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- Members only benefits and discounts at a wide range of clothing and equipment suppliers including Outdoorhire, Cotswold Outdoor, Runners Needs, Snow + Rock, Water to Go, The Altitude Centre, Sporttape and Nomad & MASTA.
- Access to your own password protected account including support materials and training schedules

On your challenge

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- International flights to and from the UK (including all known UK air taxes, and fuel surcharges, at the time of costing)
- Accommodation during the challenge (usually in twin share)
- Three meals a day (unless otherwise stated in the itinerary)
- All ground staff including English speaking guide, drivers, cooks, and porters
- Activity equipment such as bikes, tents and rafts as per the challenge activity
- A Charity Challenge T-Shirt
- All internal transfers

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

Before you go

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- Travel to and from the UK airport of departure
- Visa
- Vaccinations (please check Trip Notes for requirements)
- Travel Insurance (you can buy at time of booking or in your Account Area, or provide your own policy details)

On your challenge

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- Tips
- Departure Tax (if applicable)

THE DETAILS

Fundraising deadlines

You will need to send your sponsorship money to the charity as you raise it. At least 80% of the minimum sponsorship required must be sent to the charity 10 weeks before departure (by 27/07/2018), and the remaining 20% within 4 weeks of completing the challenge (by 13/11/2018). If you have raised the necessary funds, the charity will then pay the balance of your challenge costs. The charity benefits by keeping the remaining sponsorship money and every pound over and above that you raise.

Prices include all known air taxes

We include ALL known air taxes (including fuel) at the time of costing. Many companies do not include air taxes at all, and clients are therefore hit with a surcharge of three or four hundreds of pounds just before departure. Our aim is to provide you with transparent pricing and clear instructions as to what is included in our prices and if applicable what isn't.

Typical group size

The typical group size is 16 - 30 participants

Small group supplement

The costs and sponsorship levels on our website are based on a minimum of 16 participants. We can run this trip with 11-15 people, but there will be a small group supplement of £50. This is payable by your charity if you book under the Minimum Sponsorship or Flexi options, and by yourself if you choose the Self Funder option. We will notify you 12 weeks before departure if this is necessary.

Optional extras

Extensions at end of trip*
Single room supplements*
Business class upgrades*
(*subject to availability)

Travel insurance

Your safety when travelling with Charity Challenge is our main concern, which is why it is a booking condition that you have a suitable travel insurance policy, which covers you for the adventurous nature of your challenge, the activities you are undertaking, and the altitudes. We have chosen to partner with specialist travel insurance providers Campbell Irvine, who offer cover for an extensive number of adventurous activities. Cover is available directly from Campbell Irvine for most European residents and includes cover for emergency medical and repatriation and for your cancellation or curtailment of the challenge. Full details including costs may be found at <https://www.campbellirvine.com/charitychallenge>.

Level of Difficulty

The Sapa Hill Tribe Trek is graded as tough. A “tough” trip should be undertaken by someone with previous experience and interest in the activity – whether cycling or trekking. It will usually involve camping, and will certainly be in a remote environment, where facilities are not what you would expect at home. A tough challenge will test you both physically and mentally. Both cycles and treks will be hilly, and training is essential to ensure you are well prepared.

You can tell your supporters that on your Sapa Hill tribe challenge you will be:

Trekking for around 6-8 hours per day over 6 days.

Battling the heat, humidity and tropical rain of the jungle.

Trekking through remote villages, up jungle-covered mountains and trekking for 3 days on very slippery, muddy terrain.

Enjoying nights spent sleeping altogether (male and female) in one room during the homestay sections of your challenge.

Attempting steep climbs and descents on muddy slopes.

Typical day

During your trekking days, you will wake at around 7 am, have breakfast, make your packed lunch and pack your daypack for the next section of the walk. You will be given enough water for the day and your packed lunch to carry. The rest of your luggage will be transported for you to the next destination. At around 8.30/9am we will begin the day's walk, stopping for lunch at a scenic spot around midday. You will be walking for 6-8 hours each day and arriving in the late afternoon at your next accommodation. Specific hours of activity for each day are given in the itinerary.

Safety

Charity Challenge considers the safety of all of our participants and staff to be a top priority, and as such we have set up Challenge Safe, one of the most advanced and thorough safety management systems in the industry. Challenge Safe formalises our ethos when it comes to safety, and brings together the procedures and risk management strategies that we use to audit all aspects of our challenges, from vehicles to accommodation to the challenge activity itself. Your welfare is absolutely paramount.

In terms of your Sapa Hill Tribe trek challenge, there are a couple of important points that you should be aware of:

- The trekking route is based in a mountainous jungle area, where, even when raining, the temperatures will be hot and humid. You should ideally be wearing a sun hat, sun cream, and hydrating constantly!
- Smoke alarms are not present in all the accommodation during your challenge, as you will occasionally be staying in basic homestays with the local community. Your leader will explain the emergency fire procedures to you.
- Vietnam is a region where still today, a high number of unexploded land mines are being found every day. Don't wander off well-trodden paths. Never touch a leftover grenade or mine, and alert your trek leader to anything that you are concerned about.
- There may not be vehicle access throughout the challenge, and as such evacuation procedures will take longer. Be aware of this if you have any medical conditions that may restrict your ability to do the entire trek.

Responsible Tourism

At Charity Challenge we are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism and work closely with bodies such as the International Porter Protection Group and Climate Care to ensure that our challenges benefit the local environments and communities in which they take place. We ensure that all rubbish is disposed of responsibly, and following local guidelines on cultural and environmental protection and respect, we aim to limit our impact on the natural environment. In addition to taking these practical steps to ensure that our challenges are sustainable, we also make a contribution each year to a number of local community projects, so as to give something back directly to the communities that we visit. Since 2000 we have donated almost £200,000 to such projects, supporting a range of initiatives, including schooling for children in Africa, shelter for street children in Brazil, and Orang-utan conservation in Indonesia. We recommend that any gifts brought over for children are given to the UK challenge leader and distributed where needed by them and our local Ground Agent. If you wish to do more, you should consider buying drinks, postcards and souvenirs from the local vendors. For many, it is their sole source of income. For more information, please visit our Responsible Tourism pages, where you will be able to view a list of the projects that we currently support.

Flights

You will be flying from London Heathrow to Hanoi. The flying time is approx. 14-15 hours with one stop. Your flight tickets will be issued to you upon departure at the airport. If you choose to book your own flights please confirm with the Charity Challenge office first, otherwise you may be liable for your included group flights (please contact flights@charitychallenge.com for further assistance). For more general flights questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

Visa

Until 30 June 2018 'British Citizen' passport holders travelling for tourism or business can enter Vietnam for up to a maximum of 15 days (inclusive of dates of entry and exit) without a visa. If you have a different type of British nationality – for example 'British national (overseas)' you'll need to get a visa or an e-visa before entering Vietnam.

For visits of up to 30 days, you can get an [e-visa online](#) before you travel. Use of the e-visa is limited to certain entry/exit points which you must select at the time of application. If you don't have fixed travel plans, consider applying for a regular single entry visa from the nearest Vietnamese Embassy, which allows more flexibility.

For visits of longer than 30 days you must get a visa from the nearest Vietnamese embassy before travelling to Vietnam.

Insurance

It is a condition of booking that you have a suitable travel insurance policy whilst participating on the challenge. We have a special policy which covers among other things, medical (emergency, evacuation and repatriation) arrangements, cancellation and curtailment of the challenge, and more specifically for the adventurous activities undertaken on this challenge. If you have your own travel insurance policy, you must ensure that it provides at least the same level of cover as our recommended policy, including protecting the charity in the event of your cancellation 56 days or less prior to departure. If you choose not to purchase our recommended policy when you book we will send you a disclaimer which you should complete and return.

For more general travel insurance questions, please refer to our main [FAQs page](#).

Vaccinations

For up to date vaccination information please check the NHS 'Fit for Travel' website:

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>. Although the Charity Challenge team are travel professionals, they are not medical experts and we would encourage you to visit your GP or travel nurse to discuss vaccination requirements. Your GP may ask questions about the specific locations that you are visiting in Vietnam, and as such it may be useful to take a copy of your itinerary with you.

Climate & Terrain

Climate

While hot and often humid, Vietnam has a tropical climate, and so you may experience tropical rain and very occasionally storms. During the wet season it can be very humid. Generally speaking, the hot and dry season is from December to April, with the rainy season from May to November. However, in the jungle there can be rain at any time, and you should be prepared for this with your clothing and equipment. Also be ready for the challenge leader to amend the itinerary at short notice if there are any safety concerns about the condition of the usual route.

Terrain

You will be trekking in the Lao Cai province, a mountainous jungle region, famous for its rice plantations, where you will experience 6 days of which 2 will be in prime rainforest. You will encounter steep and slippery ascents and descents, for which you will need a lot of core strength. The trails can vary from well worn paths to barely visible breaks in the undergrowth, and you will be battling all of this in the humidity of the jungle. This trek should not be underestimated, and it will test you both mentally and physically.

Training

The event is not run as a race and there is always a large discrepancy in people's trekking abilities. We allow for this. There will always be a staff member at the back of the group to ensure you are not left behind and can take things at your own pace. However, due to the nature of the jungle trek and the remote nature of the location, if for any reason the trek leader feels that someone is unable to trek then their decision is final.

Training is definitely required. It is important that you work specifically on your stamina, leg and joint strength, and balance in order to get as much out of the challenge as possible. Don't forget that the temperature and climate is different to the UK and that you will be exercising constantly for a number of days – the heat, humidity and distance will be your biggest challenge. You need to be able to sustain around 6-8 hours of trekking in slippery terrain in some cases for 5 continuous days.

Challenge Training

If you would like to get a feel for our challenges ahead of your departure, why not consider booking on a 1 or 2 day UK Challenge?

We have a variety of challenges, covering all levels of difficulty, taking place in stunning National Parks across the UK that are led by highly qualified and experienced expedition and mountain leaders. These challenges will give you the perfect opportunity to monitor fitness levels, test out your kit, meet people in the great outdoors, share fundraising stories and gain valuable advice and support for the challenge ahead. We encourage participants to make use of our highly knowledgeable leaders and ask them any questions you may have about clothing and equipment, expedition health and wellbeing, trekking skills, walking techniques and teamwork!

We are offering all participants **50% off** the registration fee when you book on one of the UK challenges listed via the link below. Just use the code **TRAINING** when booking. T&C's – you must have an active booking on a challenge to avail of this offer. Discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Find out more [here](#)

Luggage allowance and valuables

The luggage allowance will depend on the airline we are using for your challenge, but in general it will be one piece of checked baggage at around 23 kg. However, we suggest that for our Sapa Hill Tribe challenge you should only need around 15-17 kg. If you don't need it, don't bring it, is a good rule. For any valuables, a deposit box will be found at the hotel on your first and last night of the challenge. However, during the trekking section and your overnight train, keep valuables with you. It's also a good idea to use a padlock on your luggage when in transit to reduce any risks. Carry your passport with you and make sure you have a photocopy of your documents (travel insurance etc.) in case they get lost or damaged.

Leadership

There will be an English-speaking challenge leader who will be responsible for the logistics and co-ordination of your challenge. There will also be numerous local support staff to assist them. The challenge leader will be ultimately responsible for the running of the itinerary and the safety of your group.

Group Size

Each group is intended to be 16 people minimum in order to run and a maximum of approx. 30 people. We will be able to run this challenge for 10 to 15 people by charging a small group supplement of £75 which will be added to your final balance invoice (self funders) or charged to your charity (minimum sponsorship or flexi).

Clothing & equipment

Good quality, durable kit could mean the difference between a fantastic challenge experience and an uncomfortable one. For this challenge, waterproof, well-worn in boots will be indispensable, particularly coupled with some really good quality walking socks. The benefits of a comfortable day sack cannot be underestimated, so make sure that you train with this. Other essentials are a high quality gore-tex waterproof jacket and technical/wicking t-shirts rather than cotton shirts. Walking poles are also highly recommended, as the steps on this challenge are very tough on even the fittest

knees, and descents can be tricky. A full kit list for this challenge can be found [here](#), and once you book you will have access to kit discounts with our partners The Outdoor Shop, Outdoorhire and Cotswold Outdoor.

Accommodation & toilets

Your accommodation will be a mix of overnight trains, homestays and hotels. In your hotels at the start and end of your stay, you will be sharing in twin rooms, and the eco-lodge is a particular highlight. However, the overnight trains are 4-berth, and the home-stays will be around 4 people in one room with shared facilities. These may be mixed sex depending on the demographic of the group. If you are travelling with a friend or partner who you wish to share with, please let Charity Challenge know in advance when booking or email challenges@charitychallenge.com

Toilets

These range from very basic ('communing with nature' on the trek itself) to normal western standards in the accommodation. There will be en-suite toilet and washing facilities at the hotels; however, depending on the season hot water may be limited in the homestays. Remember to bring some tissue with you for both homestays and camping.

Food & Drink

Food in Vietnam is a delight. It is a blend of Thai and Chinese food and is always freshly cooked with plenty of vegetables. Food is usually prepared with only a little oil and served with the ubiquitous fish sauce called nuoc mam. Typical Vietnamese dishes include pho, a type of rice noodle soup eaten for breakfast, cha gio, deep fried spring rolls and goi ngo sen, a delicious salad made with lotus stems, shrimps and peanuts. Hanoi Beer is the local brew. Wines are very expensive unless you want to sample locally made rice wine – 'Roau' (pronounced zeeo). Please let Charity Challenge know prior to departure if you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies.

Money

Currency: The currency in Vietnam is the Vietnamese Dong (VND). For up to date currency exchange, go to www.xe.com. We recommend exchanging currency before you go; however there are ATM's and currency exchanges available at Hanoi airport to exchange.

Credit Cards: Visa and Mastercard are now accepted in many hotels and shops, but cash is still preferred. Visa and MasterCard credit-card holders can get cash advances in some banks. ATMs are available in provincial capitals; please check any charges with your bank. Many hotels, shops and restaurants will accept credit cards.

ATMs: You will only have access to ATMs in Hanoi and Lao Cai city.

How much to bring: All accommodation and meals are included within the price of the trip, as well as water during the days of your trek. You will not need to carry a lot of money with you during the challenge, but as there are daily opportunities to buy soft drinks, alcohol and snacks on the days before and after your jungle trek we would suggest a maximum amount of about £15 a day (in local currency). Bring more if you intend to buy souvenirs and take up the opportunity of the additional things you can do during your time in Vietnam. You may have the opportunity of enjoying a relaxing post-trek massage (about £30) in Hanoi at the end of your challenge. There are plenty of great tribal craft

souvenirs, silk and cotton clothing, and silver jewellery in Vietnam. Keep this in mind!

Tipping: Tipping is at your sole discretion and all staff are paid a fair wage. However, tourism is a tipping culture, and Vietnamese and Cambodian guides will generally receive a tip at the end of a job well done. If you choose to tip, we would suggest an amount of £45 - £50 per participant for the duration of the challenge. For those on Charity Challenge organised extensions, we would suggest between £5 and £6 per person per day.

Phone and WiFi

The accommodation you will use in Hanoi will have limited WiFi signal, but you will not have WiFi at all during your trekking days and during you travelling to and from Lao Cai. You will have phone signal in almost all places on the challenge, with limitations while you are in the jungle area. You should look upon this trek as an opportunity to escape the grind of day-to-day life and enjoy the group dynamic!

Emergencies

Throughout the challenge, your H'mong support team will be close by. When vehicle routes are accessible, the support staff will maintain close contact with the vehicles to ensure swift evacuation. The team carry water & snacks and the first aid kit at all times, as well as radios. If for any reason any injury should occur, or continuation is not possible, a relief vehicle will be made available. The relief vehicle will be a private air-conditioned bus, minibus or jeep that will support the trek. The support vehicle is there for clients who need to rest for medical reasons, and will often contain refreshments such as water, snacks and soft drinks to make trekking more enjoyable.

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Any more questions?

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