

VIVACIOUS CUBA TOUR



MY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

www.mytravelxp.com

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1300 168 910



Vivacious Cuba Small Group Tour & Flights

Duration: 14 days

Stay: 11 nights local Casa B&B, 1 night hotel, overnight flight

Travel style: Escorted small group tour - max. 15 people

Booking code: CUBAV14M

Call 1300 168 910 to speak to experts at My Travel Experience

Email hello@mytravelxp.com

14 Days Cuba Escorted Small Group Tour

About the holiday

This small group tour helps you discover the real Cuba, with local accommodation and uniquely Cuban experiences!

The exquisite cultural history of contemporary Cuba will be on proud display and your senses will be stimulated as you gain a unique overview as to what makes Cuba so magical. The island nation is in a fascinating state of transition, simultaneously embracing its past while looking towards the future.

You can look forward to ambling along the cobble-stoned streets of gorgeous Trinidad and discovering the delights of Havana's Old Town. Perhaps you'll be most enchanted by the rustic charm and red-soiled farmland of Viñales. Get ready, because days of pure joy are about to begin. Bienvenida! Cuba welcomes you with open arms.

Why you'll love this trip...

Experience Cuban hospitality at a Casa Particulares, Cuban B&B's or guesthouses

A Local English-speaking Cuban guide accompanies our Cuba group tours

Lose yourself in the winding colonial streets of Havana

Dance the local beats in Trinidad or Vinales

Soak up the picturesque underwater landscape at the Bay of Pigs

Visit the final resting place of the immortalised Che Guevara

Take in the historic French-influenced architecture of Cienfuegos

Travel dates

Departs Saturdays

2024 - 01 August to 15 September & 10 October to 30 November

2025 - 01 to 31 March; 20 April to 10 June; 25 July to 15 September;

10 October to 30 November

Departures are subject to confirmation at time of booking. Price may vary depending on your travel date. Please contact us for travel at other times of the year.

Call our office on 1300 168 910 for current rates & travel deals.



Escorted tour includes:

Flights

- Return economy class airfares to Mexico City from Australia
- Fly from Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane (contact us for other cities)
- Return economy class airfares from Mexico City to Havana

Accommodation

- 1 night Mexico City airport hotel
- 12 nights local Casa Particulars (Cuban B&B)

Meals

- 12 breakfasts

Transport

- Private air-conditioned transportation between destinations
- Havana airport arrival & departure transfers

Small group tour

- Minimum 2 & maximum 15 passengers
- Local English-speaking tour guide

Package excludes:

Visa fees

Luggage fees on Mexico, Cuba & USA domestic flights - pay airline US\$30 at check-in

Meals & sightseeing not specified in the inclusions or itinerary

Optional tours & activities

Video & camera permits

Personal items, such as drinks, snacks, laundry, WiFi access etc.

Gratuities for guides, representatives & drivers

Travel insurance is essential & entry to Cuba is not permitted without proof of valid comprehensive travel insurance

Prices are based on twin share, please contact us for single rates

Subject to confirmation by airlines, hotels, tour company & local operators.

Booking conditions & cancellation fees apply.



Tour Highlights:

Guided orientation walks at each destination visited

Swim/snorkel - Bay of Pigs

Museum Giron - Playa Giron

A drink at the Palacio de Valle - Cienfuegos

Che Guevara Memorial and Museum - Santa Clara

Informal salsa lesson - Trinidad or Vinales

Tobacco farm and drying house - Vinales

Lunch at an organic farm - Vinales

City tour in a convertible classic car - Havana

Mojito-making class - Havana

Roof-top farewell dinner - Havana

Rum museum - Havana

Partagas cigar factory - Havana

Visit Callejon de Hamel- Havana

Old Havana walking tour - Havana

Itinerary:

DAY 1: Fly from Australia to Mexico City

Arrive Mexico City and make your way from the airport to the hotel, by calling the hotel airport shuttle.

Fiesta Inn Aeropuerto Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico City

Boulevard Puerto Aereo 502, Mexico City,

CDMX, 15500 Mexico

+52 (555) 133 66 00

DAY 2: Fly Mexico City to Havana - Bienvenido! Welcome to Cuba

Today, fly from Mexico City to Havana. Your Cuba tour begins with your airport transfer on arrival from Havana's José Martí International Airport to your accommodation in the city.

You'll be joining a very long list of people who have become enchanted with Havana and who have wanted to experience all that the city has to offer. Havana is a city that has been coveted, again and again, filled to the brim with the wealth and prosperity of the New World. Granted, much of this wealth was in the natural resources of the region which were pillaged and exported back to Spain. The city has been an alluring target for invading forces, namely the Dutch, the British, the French, and various pirates. But this prosperity during colonial times is what gave Havana much of its undeniable visual character - namely its achingly beautiful architecture.

Havana is the jewel in the crown of Cuba (and the entire Caribbean in our opinion). She's a dishevelled beauty, and while this is all part of her charm, the burgeoning tourist trade is allowing more and more of the city to be restored to its former beauty, courtesy of those tremendously timely tourist dollars. The heart of the city (Havana's Old Town) is a UNESCO World Heritage site, helping to solidify Havana's ongoing maintenance efforts.

You'll have plenty of time to explore Havana during your tour, although we expect that you'll want to get her know her as soon as possible. Your first evening in Cuba is an ideal time to get acquainted with the city, even if it's just the streets immediately around your accommodation. You will quickly see that many of the things you assumed to be true about Cuba are just as you thought, although these are more than superficial charms. You will wander past enticing doorways with salsa music wafting out, intermingled with the pungently sweet aroma of cigars. Bold characters will march down the street, clad in luridly beautiful colours while having passionate conversations with each other. And everywhere those antique cars prowl the streets, crunching their gears as they sail past you. Havana can be a beautiful sensory overload, and it's a lot to take in on your first day.

During this first part of your Cuba tour, you will have the chance to meet your guide and discuss the finer details of your tour itinerary before they escort you on an orientation walk of the local area.

Your guide will also arrange a classic convertible car to take you to El Morro Fort and El Cristo de La Habana. This is the perfect opportunity to learn a little more about Havana's turbulent history and to take some impressive photos of the city and iconic Malecon as the sun sets.

DAY 3: HAVANA

Today is free to continue to explore Havana at your leisure. While a walk around Havana's Old Town will have your eyes bulging with excitement (it's said that daily life in the Cuban capital resembles street theatre), just to the west you will find the gritty working-class district of Centro Habana (a picture of ruined, yet haunting beauty), and the comparably well-heeled districts of Vedado and Miramar. All these pieces come together to form modern Havana in all her glory and contradictions. There's a true cultural wealth in the city, with realms of museums and cultural spaces. Havana is a city that literally dances, and you can enjoy virtuoso ballet, Afro-Cuban dance, flamenco, jazz and timba. The Cuban dining scene was rather fairly reviled for many decades, but this is changing at a rate that is nothing less than astounding.

Havana fizzles with life, her buoyant, joyous energy is infectious, and it's a stunning start to your Cuba small group tour. After a rather turbulent several centuries, Havana has settled into a rhythm that just seems to work. After the collapse of the USSR, a lot of the international aid that Cuba relied upon simply disappeared, and this was the catalyst for the country to recognise its own attributes and open itself open to tourism in a way that hadn't been seen for decades. Upon arrival, you will want to get out and about to explore the city, and this bustling city never feels overwhelming.

The government eased the once tight restrictions when it came to operating a private business, and new restaurants are expanding Havana's culinary borders with innovation and aplomb. Depending on your time of arrival, you can even join your guide and fellow tour group members for dinner in a gorgeous setting - an authentic Cuban Paladar (privately operated restaurant) close to your hotel or casa particular.

DAY 4: CIENFUEGOS VIA BAY OF PIGS

Your guide will meet you first thing in the morning, and then it's time to set off on your Cuban odyssey. Travelling in comfortable private transportation, you will arrive at your first destination in two to three hours. The Bay of Pigs/Playa Girón has a certain infamy due to its association with the USA's first military failure in Latin America. The military machinations that took place on this very spot are but a distant memory, far removed from the stunning natural beauty on display, with cave systems, coral formations and an abundance of sea life making it a must for snorkelers, divers and ocean lovers alike. You will enjoy a sumptuous lunch at a local Paladar, before setting off on the second stage of today's journey. It only takes approximately 1.5 hours before you arrive in Cienfuegos.

This pearl of a city (it has in fact been dubbed the Pearl of the Caribbean) demonstrates many of the cultural influences that have shaped contemporary Cuba. Many of the city's early settlers were French, generally coming from other French territories in the New World.

Of course, your guide will take you on a detailed tour of the city with its grand, crumbling architecture, culminating in a relaxing cocktail. The grandness of Cienfuegos is fascinatingly contrasted by one of the city's more unexpected pleasures - the Palacio de Valle, which seems to have taken Arabian Nights as its inspiration. This upscale restaurant dates back to 1917, and it's a tremendous (and indeed, amusing) sight to behold.

Something to look forward to tonight- it's your first time staying at a Casa Particular outside of Havana. You might find this to be a truly memorable part of your Cuban experience. You are welcomed into a local Cuban's home and are made to feel like one of the family. It varies, but many of these authentic homestay experiences can accommodate between six and ten guests. Our carefully selected Casas are all conveniently located in a central location at each destination. The rooms are well-cared for, and there's always a group area and/or veranda to relax in and meet other travellers. You can also take full advantage of the proprietor's insider knowledge and can help to arrange any activities or excursions in the area. It's a truly authentic experience, providing an unbeatable level of service and attention in a supremely comfortable setting. After you have settled in, you can your guide and fellow tour group members for an evening cocktail.

DAY 5: TRINIDAD VIA SANTA CLARA

You'll start the day with a hearty Cuban breakfast before setting off to a place that pays homage to Cuba's best-known adopted son - the Che Guevara Memorial and Museum. This is where the remains of this hero of the Cuban Revolution were interned after decades in a lonely, unmarked grave in Bolivia where he died. Here you will learn about how Guevara played a pivotal role in the demise of the dictator Batista and the rise of Fidel Castro, a turning point in the Cuban revolution. After time to explore and reflect, it's time to hit the road again, voyaging to the favourite destination of many a traveller to Cuba. The town of Trinidad was founded in 1514 by Diego Velázquez and is considered a jewel in Cuban colonial architecture. Many people are struck by how the town feels like a living museum, seemingly stuck in the era of Cuba's first War of Independence (one of the many struggles that shaped the nation). The relatively small size of the town is deceptive, since Trinidad has a vibrancy that will take your breath away. You will have almost two full days to explore the town and its lush surroundings. After your induction walk around the town, your guide will make a number of suggestions as to the best optional activities to do at this time of year.

DAY 6: TRINIDAD

You might well wake up on your first morning in Trinidad to the sound of horses clip-clopping along the narrow cobbled streets, emphasising the feeling that you have stepped back in time. The horses of Trinidad are often used for treks in the countryside around the town. It can take a few moments to remind yourself that you are in fact still in the 21st century.

Trinidad is a near perfect example of preserved colonial settlement, and the tourists milling around are about the only reminder that time has in fact moved on. The town flourished as the heart of Cuba's sugar production, which remains one of the country's key industries, albeit under a different model that was utilised in Trinidad. The adjacent Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills) was a source of great wealth, with the riches amassed during the early 19th century on display in the town's illustrious colonial-style mansions bedecked with Italian frescoes, Wedgwood china and French chandeliers. Just like Havana's Old Town, Trinidad was declared a World Heritage site in the 1980s, and in addition to the Valle de los Ingenios, there is much to see just beyond the town's boundaries. Some twelve kilometres to the south lies platinum-blond Playa Ancón, the south coast's best beach, while 18km to the north you'll see the rugged 90 km-long north the Sierra del Escambray (Escambray Mountains) loom dramatically over the countryside. If you opt to head to the hills to explore, there's a convenient hike of 2.5 km to the Salto del Caburní, a 62m waterfall cascading into cool swimming holes. This is a round trip of around two and a half hours, although if the mountains don't appeal, you might just want to spend time by the beach. The beach is less than 15 minutes from Trinidad by car, or if you so desire, around 40 minutes on a bike.

Your time in Trinidad would not be complete without at least one evening sitting on the steps outside the Casadela Musica. Every night the area beside the Cathedral in Plaza Mayor (Trinidad's main square) comes alive with a live 'Salsa' band. Entrance is free, the music and atmosphere is great, the mojitos are cheap, and what's more... you get one of the most beautiful starry skies thrown in for nothing! Don't forget to take advantage of the included informal salsa lesson in Trinidad. These lessons are suitable for all skill levels and are a whole lot of fun!

DAY 7: VIÑALES

The next day of your Cuba tour sees you hitting the road and making your way from Trinidad to the dramatic limestone pin-cushion hills of the Pinar del Rio province and the rural town of Viñales. This veritable definition of a sleepy village is set in a beautiful, lush valley, and it's arguably one of the most breathtaking locations in the entire country. The rare and dramatic pin-cushion hills that draw the eye are karst hill formations, also known as mogotes. The plains between the mogotes are rich and fertile, and Viñales sits in the heart of Cuba's prime tobacco growing region. Much like Trinidad, Viñales feels like a part of Cuba that has been un-touched by modernity, and as you near the town you will see farmers working the fields with oxen and ploughs as they tend the tobacco crops. To call it a relaxed pace of life is an understatement here, and Viñales is a wonderfully traditional settlement that occupies one of Cuba's most beautiful natural corners. You will revel in the hospitality on display, and chances are that you'll be eating more than your fair share of fresh, locally-grown fruit. Ask your guide about the numerous outdoor activities available to you. The views are stunning, the locals are charming, the nightlife is surprising - all these things come together to ensure that your stay in Viñales will be a memorable one.

DAY 8: VIÑALES

After breakfast, your guide will take you on orientation walk around the Viñales township, concluding with a sumptuous lunch on an organic farm. There is one key crop grown in these parts. Even if you're not a smoker, you will be enchanted to learn about the local tobacco growing process. Your guide will take you to a tobacco plantation, including a fully operating secadero (drying house) in which tobacco leaves are cured from February to May. You'll come away with a thorough understanding of the process, with staff on hand to detail the journey from leaf to cigar. You will also have the option to undertake a guided walk of the surrounding farmland of Viñales. Viñales is the perfect opportunity to experience the real' Cuba - away from the crowds.

DAY 9: HAVANA

It's a fairly short drive from Viñales back into the Cuban capital, with a stunning view to enjoy along the way. Watch as the rural plains of the countryside give way to the urban hustle and bustle of Havana. There will be more driving this afternoon, but it's probably something you've been waiting for. Your guide will take you on a tour of greater Havana in a classic car. This allows you to see the different sides of the city, giving you a greater understanding of all the parts that combine to make Havana. The estimates vary, but there are around 60,000 pre-1960 vehicles still proudly prowling Cuba's streets. This number is down from around 150,000 vehicles before the US slapped a trade embargo on Cuba, but of course, some of them have had to retire over the decades. This iconic mode of transport is the perfect way to see wider Havana and a very different side of the city. Here you will be chauffeured around some of the most famous areas of Havana including New Havana, Old Havana, the affluent neighbourhood of Miramar and the famous cemetery of Colon. And later in the day, we'll take you to a special rooftop terrace in Havana's Old Town that makes a sublime mojito (or a non-alcoholic alternative). You'll be taught how to make a classic Cuban cocktail before enjoying a scrumptious dinner with your group and guide, with an unbeatable view over the rooftops of the city.

DAY 10: HAVANA

Your guide will meet you after breakfast today, and then it's time to hit the streets for a walking tour of Havana's Old Town. One of the best-preserved old towns in the former New World, the streets are lined with colonial architecture, 16th century fortresses and countless churches. Your guide will be able to give you advice on what to see and do, but we think you'll want to see the four main squares - the Plaza de Armas, Plaza de la Catedral, Plaza San Francisco de Asis and Plaza Vieja. You will also pass by a number of museums including Museo de la Revolución and the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. There will be time to take a walk along the city's famous Malecón - a sprawling waterfront esplanade that dates back to 1901. This is the perfect place to soak up the atmosphere of the city and watch the eclectic characters who gather here - a true cross section of the city's residents.

The walking tour will culminate in a visit to Havana's iconic Callejon de Hamel. This is a true surprise in a city that's full of them. While many streets in the Cuban capital are a riot of different colours, the Callejon de Hamel takes it to the extreme. This is where a number of local artists have chosen to live and work. Not content to confine their work to their studios, it has spilled out onto the street, and the Callejon de Hamel is a brilliant sensory overload of street art.

DAYS 11-13: HAVANA

These three days give you the opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the delights that Cuba has truly made her own. The Havana Rum Museum is housed in a repurposed colonial mansion, and while it can be fascinating to learn about the history of rum and how it's properly made, you might be more interested in having the chance to taste a few of the beverages on offer.

The next stop is the Partagas Cigar Factory where the mystique behind cigar making will be revealed, allowing you to gain a sense of the significance of these beauties. You will also witness first-hand the amount of effort, care and tradition that goes into making these Cuban treasures (even non-smokers will find this tour very interesting).

Later, you might wish to sample some of that Cuban rum in the "real world" by going to one of the best-known bars in the city. El Floridita claims to have invented the daiquiri, and it's a claim you can easily believe when you sample one of their stunning concoctions. This was Ernest Hemingway's preferred watering hole in the city, and there's a life-sized statue of him standing at the bar.

DAY 14: DEPARTURE DAY

Your schedule for the final day will depend on the time of your departure flight, and it's important to arrive at the airport three hours before take-off. If time permits, you'll be able to check off anything in Havana that you still might want to see. The earlier parts of the day should be devoted to seeing as much of Havana as you can (or just sit in a plaza with a Cuban coffee and watch the world go by). You might wish to see how much time you have to play with on this last day before you need to get to the airport, and then ask your guide about the best activities that can comfortably fit into your schedule. And then it will be time to bid Cuba a fond farewell, until we see you on one of our future tours. Viva Cuba!

Please note: The day by day descriptions are intended as an indicative guide only. Travel by nature is unpredictable. Weather patterns, road conditions, public holidays, travel restrictions and many other factors may necessitate itinerary changes that are ultimately for the client's benefit. It is essential that clients are flexible in this regard.

Is this tour for me?

Our group tours are perfect for those who want the freedom and flexibility to travel at their own pace, along with the security, camaraderie and cultural insight that comes from travelling with a local English-speaking guide and small group. In order to fully enjoy your Cuba group tour, you will need an average level of fitness and mobility. Group travel can potentially be more demanding than a more conventional holiday. You should be able to walk without assistance from another person, climb flights of stairs in buildings without elevators, safely step on or off the tour bus (and other forms of transport), and carry your own luggage.

Accommodation

A Casa Particular is a Cuban Homestay or B&B. Staying in a Casa Particular is a brilliant way of immersing yourself in the life and culture of fascinating Cuba. When you choose a Casa Particular for your accommodation, you will meet the local people on a one-to-one basis and get a rare glimpse into the everyday life of ordinary people in Cuba. In addition, your host or hostess will be able to advise you on all things Cuban - the best restaurants, the best music and Salsa venues and any seasonal attractions that are only known to the locals!

At the end of your stay in Havana we like to use Casa Particular accommodation in Havana Centro or Havana Vieja. Please note that a lot of the best Casa's in these areas are up several flights of stairs. If these stairs are likely to cause you problems, just let us know ahead of time and we will source a suitable alternative.

You are welcome to request extra pre or post tour accommodation on any of our Cuba group tours. Please let us know at the time of booking and we can advise rates.

Tourist Visas

ESTA Visa is required for USA - apply online at [Official ESTA Application Website, U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(dhs.gov\)](https://esta.dhs.gov)

No tourist visa is required for Mexico for Australian passport holders.

A tourist visa is required for Cuba. Please call the Cuban Consulate in Canberra on +61 2 6290 2151 to obtain the relevant information to apply for this visa. Or please contact Visa Link and they can help you apply for the visa

[Travel Visas for Business Travel and Tourism | Fast, Easy, Secure \(visalink.com.au\)](https://visalink.com.au)

For more information phone 1300 168 910 or email
hello@mytravelxp.com

Airport transfers

We include an airport transfer on arrival for all of our Cuba group tours. On departure, your local Cuban guide will help organise your transfer at market rates (no commission).

Transportation

On our Cuba group tours, we use a mixture of private transportation, local Viazul bus, taxi and an internal flight (Baracoa to Havana). Please note that on occasions, due to flight availability, the group might need to be transported to Santiago de Cuba or Holguin to fly from there.

Estimated travel times

Below are the estimated travel times between destinations on this Cuba Small Group Tour. For the longer journeys on all of our tours in Cuba, our guides like to break-up the journey by stopping for lunch and at various points of interest along the way.

Havana to Cienfuegos via Bay of Pigs: 5 hours

Cienfuegos to Trinidad via Santa Clara: 3 hours

Trinidad to Vinales: 7-8 hours

Vinales to Havana: 3 hours

Evenings in Cuba

The tour operator and expert local tour guides would be happy to arrange a wide variety of evening activities for you, during your time in Cuba. Evenings are generally free time, allowing you to explore at your leisure. Although of course, if you become stuck for ideas, we would be delighted to make some suggestions, and your guide will be available to organise tickets, reservations and accompany you out if required. Your guide will have some fantastic ideas and recommendations based on your tastes and preferences.

Spending money on tour

Everyone is different in the amount of money they will spend on one of our Cuba group tours. Your main expenses will be food, drinks, souvenirs, optional activities, and tips. We estimate that you will need to allow USD\$40 - USD\$55 per day on average for expenses.

Book with Confidence!

Safety measures and greater peace of mind.

The wellbeing and safety of our passengers and staff is always a priority. My Travel Experience is committed to ensuring your peace of mind with customer-friendly booking practices and enhanced health & safety standards on our trips. We work closely with tour operators that have received the Safe Travels stamp by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), which enables travellers to recognise companies around the world that have adopted health and hygiene global standardised protocols. We are also able to offer our clients as much flexibility as possible when making bookings, will let you know of all travel operator conditions and will help you if any unexpected situations arise.

Affordable Holidays - How do we do it?

With over 30 years' in the business, we know the travel industry better than anyone and have tracked down the best experiences around the world. We go directly to local suppliers to source the best price and holiday for you. Dealing directly with local operators is why our holidays are more affordable. We work with reputable travel professionals that offer exceptional service and safe travel policies. If you think you are paying too much for your travel arrangements, please give us a call, we will work hard to find the ideal holiday for you - that's My Travel Experience!

My Travel Experience is a full-service travel agency

Want flights, car hire, escorted tours, airport transfers, travel insurance & more? My Travel Experience offers personalised service and unlike other online booking companies, we are not a one-size-fits-all travel agency. Our experienced travel consultants can design an itinerary or provide a quote for wherever you want to travel and include whatever travel services that you want to pre-book.

Plus, we are with you all the way - from your first enquiry, until your departure and when you safely return home. You will always be able to reach us. Email us today on hello@mytravelxp.com with your preferences for any of our travel packages!



MY TRAVEL EXPERIENCE BOOKING CONDITIONS

Please read the following information prior to making your reservation

Our full set of terms and conditions can be [viewed and downloaded on our website](#), or supplied on request from our office. We highly recommend you read My Travel Experience booking conditions prior to making your holiday reservations. This is the contract under which both parties enter, therefore we request that you only make a booking if you agree with these conditions.

This is a summary in brief for our customers:

1. Upon making a reservation with My Travel Experience you will receive a booking form, which needs to be filled out and signed to confirm that you agree to the terms and conditions.
2. Your booking will then be confirmed to you in writing and you will be required to pay a deposit to hold your reservation.
3. At this time, you must take out travel insurance for your holiday to protect you against any unforeseen circumstances.
4. Approx. 90 days prior to departure you will be asked to make the balance payment for your trip (the exact due date for your travel supplier will be advised at the time of booking).
5. 10 days prior to departure you will be sent your travel documents via email.

My Travel Experience manages a professional client operating account. All booking payments are held securely to pay for your travel services. We do not retain your money and funds are distributed promptly to travel service providers, including but not limited to, airlines, tour operators, cruise lines and hotels. We are required to pay the providers deposits and final payments and in some instances these items are non-refundable.

If you wish to cancel you must notify us of your cancellation in writing. We will then write to the Suppliers to cancel your booking and request a refund (if applicable) for any elements of your holiday that are refundable. You will need to make an insurance claim for any travel arrangements that are non-refundable. If you have any issues during the refund or cancellation process, you have 30 days to contact our office in writing to lodge a complaint so an immediate resolution can be found for you.

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