



ProjectsAbroad



# ***OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PROJECTS ABROAD CHINA***

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to the April 2014 edition of the Projects Abroad China Newsletter. This month has been as action packed as this newsletter! We have welcomed volunteers from the UK, France, the USA, Norway, Australia, Germany, and Namibia who are working in Chengdu and Shanghai. Not only have we welcomed new volunteers but also a new regional manager for Chengdu, Elaine Gao. Read Elaine's welcome article in this edition. Also included in this newsletter is information about Chengdu followed by articles from two volunteers who have been working there in April, Alex from the USA (business) and Sylvana from Holland (architecture) and an interview with a Projects Abroad law volunteer, Jonathan, a future solicitor from the UK.

In the beginning of April there was a public holiday for the 'Tomb-Sweeping Festival', and also read about the experience of our Danish Shanghai volunteer at her business placement.

Enjoy the newsletter, people of the world! Looking forward to experiencing the life memories/experiences and even laugh out loud experiences in May that inevitably happen every month in China!

**RICHARD EGAN**  
**INFORMATION MANAGER**



# Chengdu

## BLOG

► Rich Egan

Chengdu is the capital of the Sichuan province in Central/West China. It is home to the extinction-threatened panda bear and has a population of over 14 million people. The city is famous for spicy Sichuan food and by spicy I mean burn your mouth off hot; they are also known to have some of the most beautiful and friendliest people in China! It is sometimes referred to as 'The Land of Milk and Honey' because of the rich agricultural land and organic farming is becoming increasingly popular.

The city is quickly becoming similar to Beijing and Shanghai as a futuristic mega-city because it is massively expanding and skyscrapers seem to be arising by the day. However, although expanding at an almost terrifying rate, Chengdu has managed to keep its Chinese traditional charm which arguably other mega-cities in China have lost. There are hundreds of beautiful eloquently designed Buddhist temples and tea houses that seem to represent every dynasty within Chinese history. I think that this epitomizes everyday life in Chengdu - a hectic city with extremely relaxed and friendly people!

For a city with over 14 million people, it is somewhat surprising that Chengdu is only just getting international recognition. Many international companies are choosing to invest in projects in Chengdu, because it is cheaper than other places in China, and the majority of the world's iPads and Apple Macs are made there. It is fascinating to see so many international businesses developing and expanding rapidly. Therefore it is not a coincidence that Projects Abroad has many business placements in Chengdu.

Projects Abroad has been arranging internships for people of all ages and nationalities in Chengdu since 2010. Since then, we have had over a hundred volunteers living and working in the city. Our regional manager, Elaine works her socks off meeting the volunteers regularly, arranging socials and preparing work itineraries with the placement supervisors. We have three apartments for our volunteers and work with over 20 different placements, which include business and marketing, law, teaching and care, architectural, medical and even an animal care program where the volunteers look after pandas!





Most of Projects Abroad China placements in Chengdu are business and marketing related. A couple of examples include a company that creates apps and games for mobile phones where the volunteers will assist with game design, marketing, art, Photoshop, SEO and social media promotion. Another project is an organic farm vegetable company where the volunteers will speak with international clients and help the company to establish business connections, proof-read documents, push for international trade and even assist with events that take place on the farm!

We also work with a few different law firms in Chengdu. Our law volunteers' main duties at these placements are to research foreign jurisdiction and review English documents. These cases are

predominantly focused on real estate, construction and foreign investment. Check out the interview with Jonathan, our law volunteer from the UK, on page 13.

Projects Abroad China works with a few schools in Chengdu. As in most destinations across the globe where our organization works, our Chengdu teaching placements are in poor schools where most of the children have very under-privileged backgrounds. The teaching volunteers work with toddlers in kindergartens, or with primary and secondary school children. The classes generally have over 40 students so saying that teaching is hard work can be an understatement. Additionally we have sports classes for the children so our teaching volunteers can choose to teach additional sports lessons. We also have two placements where the volunteers care for children with mental and physical disabilities. Care volunteers help the children with day to day tasks, such as walking, holding pens and counting. They will provide one on one support for each child as well as playing games and teaching lessons with a group of children. Another care placement is for children who have minor mental disabilities and the volunteers work in a rehabilitation centre where the mission is to





help these children eventually go to a mainstream school.

Our architecture placement is based in central Chengdu. The company, Urban Hybrid, is relatively new, but it is expanding as quickly as Chengdu! The architecture volunteers can have responsibility in duties such as urban planning and interior design for government and private developments in the Sichuan province. These developments range from school buildings and hotels, to villas, offices, museums and office halls. If the volunteers have an interest and skills in marketing and sales then they can be heavily involved in this additional work.

Our medical placement specializes in Chinese remedy medicine, while at the same time incorporating western methods of treatment. The medical volunteers get to observe the traditional methods of Chinese medicine and see how this practice is incorporated into modern treatment.

A personal favorite placement is our animal care placement where our volunteers look after the panda bears! The panda base is in an area called Bifengxia, around two hours from Chengdu city. The base is primarily for captive breeding and the main responsibilities for the animal care volunteers are to prepare food, clean out enclosures and monitor panda behavior patterns while experiencing knowledge about panda breeding patterns and life cycles.

During my short week in Chengdu, I experienced so much and felt a real sense of authentic Chinese culture. The distinct aroma of the Sichuan spices entertained my nose wherever I went and I was so impressed by the city's fusion between the modern and ancient. The people in Chengdu are not as used to foreigners as the local people in other major cities in China. Therefore, most people were very happy to see me. People on the street asked to take pictures with me and little children excitedly approached me, keen to practice their English. A child at one of our care placements could not contain his excitement and he was literally screaming with joy and disrupting the class due to my presence. Our volunteers are all very close and regularly meet up after work to talk about the, often strange, events of the day and go on excursions together during the weekends. Altogether, Chengdu is an amazing place that has so many unique characteristics and I am looking forward to going back to see the city, our staff and the new international volunteers!



# STAFF INTRODUCTION

## Elaine Gao

Regional Manager - Chengdu



**H**i! I'm Elaine Gao, the new regional manager for Projects Abroad in Chengdu. I joined Projects Abroad in 2012 as a volunteer coordinator and was born in a small town, south west of Sichuan, where half of the people are Yi people. The Yi people are similar to Tibetan. They are famous for their hospitality and being very passionate. Most Yi people live in mountainous regions where the scenery is beautiful with very harsh living conditions and only a few continue to study after primary school!

During my spare time, I like to travel to different areas around my hometown to sight see, as well as bringing some second hand books, clothes

and stationaries to the underprivileged children in local schools. I have also done other types of voluntary work and this is how I initially heard about Projects Abroad. Since starting my work with Projects Abroad I have really enjoyed meeting volunteers from different countries around the world. They bring new ideas, new information, new life styles and new accents to this inner city of China called Chengdu and this gives me loads of inspiration. With over a year's experience as a volunteer coordinator, I now have a good understanding of what our volunteers need in this exotic journey which is thousands of miles away from their hometown.

# VOLUNTEER ARTICLE



## *Sylvana Van Baren (Holland) Architecture Project*

In Chengdu wonen is zó gaaf. Het is een geweldige en grote stad dat ervoor zorgt dat mijn eigen stad, Amsterdam, een klein dorpje lijkt. De accommodatie waarin ik verlijf is gelegen in het zuiden van Chengdu, in de wat chiquere wijk Tongzilin. Deze wijk heeft alle faciliteiten die je in het dagelijks leven nodig hebt zoals: goed openbaar vervoer, restaurantjes, café en pleinen, kleine winkeltjes, een hele grote supermarkt en vele sport mogelijkheden, zoals tennisbanen, sportscholen, openbare zwembaden en plekken om typische Chinese sporten te beoefenen, zoals badminton en pingpongvelden. Ik was behoorlijk onder de indruk van de compactheid van de stad, het verkeer, de high-rise en de vele bouwlocaties toen ik net was aangekomen en met de taxi naar mijn accommodatie werd gebracht. Het aantal bouwplaatsen lijkt oneindig, de stad groeit zo snel!

De flat waarin ik zit heeft drie slaapkamers, een keuken met gasfornuis, koelkast en een watertank, omdat we hier niet uit de kraan kunnen drinken. Het heeft twee balkons en twee badkamers, een grote en een kleinere. De woonkamer is erg ruim en er staat een comfortabele bank waardoor mijn huisgenoten en ik hier echt het thuisgevoel hebben. Het is heel leuk om de flat te delen met leeftijdsgenoten die ook een stage doen en die van over de hele wereld vandaan komen. Hierdoor ben ik niet alleen mijn Engels aan het verbeteren, maar werk ik onverwachts ook aan mijn Duits. Om mij op straat te redden, bijvoorbeeld tijdens het bestellen van eten, krijg ik lessenMandarijn in de 'Mandarin Club', in de buurt van mijn flat. Het is een goede school met geduldige onderwijzers dat individuele lessen aanbied aan hun studenten.

## VOLUNTEER ARTICLE

Normaal gesproken trekken mijn huisgenoten en ik er altijd samen op uit in onze vrije tijd. Ik houd ervan om nieuwe delen van de stad te verkennen, soms doe ik dat met mijn hun, soms met mijn Chinese collega's die inmiddels ook vrienden zijn geworden en soms ga ik alleen. Ik vind het bijvoorbeeld leuk om een interessante plek op de kaart aan te wijzen en daar op eigen houtje naartoe te gaan. Met het beetje Mandarijns dat ik spreek en een Chinese kaart die ik heb gekregen van Projects Abroad kan ik mijn weg wel vinden. Mocht ik echt verdwaald raken, dan kan ik altijd de Projects Abroad - Chengdu manager bellen, maar normaal gesproken is dat niet nodig, want de mensen op straat zijn heel behulpzaam en aardig. Behalve erop uit trekken met andere vrijwilligers, vind ik het ook heel leuk om Chengdu te leren kennen vanuit het perspectief van mijn Chinese vrienden die ik heb leren kennen op mijn project. Ze hebben mij een keer meegenomen om te pingpongen en zij hebben mij geïntroduceerd aan het verbazende fenomeen KTV. Het is vergelijkbaar met karaoke en een gegarandeerd avondvullend entertainmentprogramma. Het concept was totaal nieuw voor mij maar heel erg leuk om mee te maken. Ik heb daarnaast veel parken bezocht waar nog traditionele gebouwen en tempels staan en ik heb veel verschillende Chinese restaurants geprobeerd. Behalve bezienswaardigheden bekijken ben ik ook af en toe mee aan het trainen met het locale Sichuan University rugby team en wanneer ik een dojo kan vinden, doe ik ook graag mee met een training in Oosterse vechtkunsten.

Projects Abroad heeft een heel leuk project voor mij gevonden bij het bureau Urban Hybrid Architecture. Het bureau sluit goed aan bij mijn achtergrond en TU opleiding in stedenbouw. Urban Hybrid is gevestigd in het nieuwe High-Tech district, ook in het zuiden van de stad. Het is makkelijk te bereiken met de bus, en als je niet bang bent voor het verkeer, zelfs met de fiets. Ik krijg hier de mogelijkheden om nieuwe vaardigheden



te leren en om van dichtbij mee te krijgen wat het verschil is tussen Nederlandse en Chinese manier van werken, ontwerpen en bouwen. Het is erg leuk om te merken dat ik een belangrijke rol mag vervullen in het bedrijf en relevante taken uit mag voeren. Het helpt mij eraan herinneren dat ondanks de bouw in Nederland op dit moment lastige tijden kent, het voor mij wel de leukste tak van sport blijft.

Ik kan mij goed voorstellen dat Chengdu je kan betoveren waardoor je hier nog wel langer zou willen blijven dan de duur van je project. Ik zou het zelf geweldig vinden om meer tijd aan het einde van mijn stage vrij te hebben om rond te reizen in China, andere steden te zien en de oostkust te ontdekken. Ik denk dat ik daar een keertje voor terug zal moeten komen. Ik kan niet wachten!

# Alex Kitchie (USA)- Business Project - Chengdu



**M**y name is Alex and I am from Chicago, Illinois. I made the decision to do an internship and am very happy with the placement that Projects Abroad has provided me with. Working in the High tech area of Chengdu is very nice, as the city is so big and is only growing. Everywhere I travel, I see high rise buildings being built all around the city and it makes me want to come back and visit to see all the additions they have made. The company I work for is called Yoyousoft.com and I am working in their marketing department. The company is a software company that works with mobile apps and casino games. Since my time here, I have been working on market research for the company, along with promoting their products across a wide range of fields mainly in the UK and the US, which is where their target market is.

I live with three other flat mates right now who are all from different countries, one girl is from the Netherlands, and the other two boys are from Germany and the UK. Being in China is so much fun and learning about a new culture is a shell shock for me. I have never traveled out of the US and this being my first time, I'm glad that I came to China. Since being in China I have been able to meet such a wide range of people, this is something that I love to do, go around the city and meet as many new people as possible. Projects Abroad has other flats located very close to us where I have been able to make friends with the other three boys doing internships here.

My first weeks in Chengdu, my flat mates introduced me to the local rugby team. Being an avid sports lover I wanted to play. This is a sport I have never played before, I have only seen it on



TV and the movie *Invictus*. All I knew was that it is rough and tough and you need to understand the rules. I knew nothing but after weeks with the team, I was starting to get the hang of it. Everyone on the team is so nice and welcoming. There is a boys team and a girls team. So the more people we can get to the pitch the better. Our first game we had to travel out by the third ring in Chengdu which is far away for us. After my first game we lost by a lot but I loved the sport, I had so much fun playing. I was a little worried about the contact but I was alright after the game. Rugby is celebrated by a fun night out which we spent at a local bar,

called *The Shamrock*, to partake in various games. I loved the team comradery on both sides, enemies on the field but friends at the end of the day. This was an awesome experience for me and I feel so blessed to be a part of this team.

My time in China has been an experience I will never forget. I have had great roommates and the people in Chengdu are all so nice to foreigners as they try to help out as much as they can. Chinese is a hard language to learn. I want to go home and practice my Chinese so I can be able to have better conversations during my next trip to China.



**E**n kombination af fascination for kinesisk kultur, kærlighed for det pulserende storbyliv, samt ønsket om at få erfaring i en international organisation, var de primære årsager for mit valg. Jeg gik ind til dette projekt med forventninger om en udfordrende, spændende og lærerig hverdag. Ikke mindst forventede jeg, at den fysiske afstand mellem Danmark og Kina ville afspejle sig i kulturen. Derudover fandt jeg det faktisk svært at sætte ord på mine forventninger. Men efter nu 4 ud af 12 uger i Shanghai kan jeg med sikkerhed sige at være frivillig i Shanghai, overstiger alle forventninger, jeg måtte have haft.

Først og fremmest er jeg frivillig på et business-projekt. Altsåer jeg praktikant i en lokal organisation, som på nogle områder også opererer internationalt. GIGA, som er navnet på organisationen, driver blandt andet et online materialebibliotek for designere, arkitekter, udviklere, investorer osv. Udvalgelsen af de optimale materialer, altså mest miljøvenlige og

lokale materialer, er en tidskrævende proces. GIGA gør det muligt at spare fantastiske 86% procent af tiden i denne proces. Teamet består af lokale såvel som internationale medarbejdere hvoraf langt størstedelen taler godt engelsk. Atmosfæren på kontoret er enestående og teamet er ungt og dynamisk. Udstråler man vilje og værd, tillader de en at være kreativ, innovativ og tager glædeligt imod dine forslag, så længe de er velovervejede. Derudover har GIGA mange bolde i luften, eksempelvis har de hyppige aktiviteter i form af events. Jeg har været så heldig at være en del af to events allerede og har flere i vente. Her er jeg blevet introduceret for direktører, konsulenter og eksperter indenfor branchen fra hele verden. Endelig har GIGA daglige rutiner som er med til at skabe en følelse af, at man er inkluderet i det ellers veletablerede og engagerede team. Eksempelvis starter hver dag med, at alle står op og fortæller hvad de foretog sig dagen inden, samt hvad man har i sinde at foretage sig den pågældende dag.



At være frivillig i Shanghai er meget mere end det daglige arbejde på det projekt, man nu har valgt. Personligt elsker jeg den selvstændighed det kræver at begå sig alene i en by hvor befolkningen og sproget er så langt fra det man er vant til. Til tider vil det skabe nogle tålmodighedskrævende situationer, men det er også disse situationer, man lærer at sætte pris på. Jeg elsker Shanghai af mange grunde. Der er noget særligt ved rummeligheden i storbyer. Folket er nysgerrigt og det er da heller ikke usædvanligt, at de tager et billede eller to. Dog spørger de som regel først! På trods af byens ubegribelige størrelse gør den gennemførte infrastruktur byen overskuelig og nem at finde rundt i. Derudover har byen så mange forskellige sider og facader. Shanghai har alt, hvad hjertet begærer. Generelt er Shanghai også et trygt sted at være. Ikke mere end et par døgn efter min ankomst, fandt jeg mig selv alene i Shanghais enorme og brede gader med en uventet følelse af tryk og gåpåmod.

Også Projects Abroad personalet står klar til at hjælpe, uanset hvilket problem man måtte møde. Herudover tilbyder Shanghai et hav a

weekend- og fritidsaktiviteter. Med de andre frivillige i Shanghai tager vi også udenbys i weekenderne. Eksempelvis havde jeg fornyligt en uforglemmelig weekendtur til Beijing med de andre frivillige i min lejlighed. En anden ting jeg også sætter utroligt stor pris på, er det faktum, at man er tvunget til at tale engelsk hele tiden. Inden jeg forlod Danmark, følte jeg mig ret sikker i det engelske sprog. Men det gik hurtigt op for mig, at der var stor forskel på at skrive opgaver på engelsk og rent faktisk at anvende det i hverdagen. Efterhånden falder det mig mere og mere naturligt at både tale og tænke på engelsk, hvilket jeg ser som en yderst anvendelig fordel både nu og i fremtiden. Selv de andre frivillige kan mærke en enorm forbedring i mit engelsk. Hvilket indleder til et tredje emne.

Nemlig fællesskabet. Jeg havde ingen forventninger om et socialt fællesskab, da jeg besluttede at bruge 12 uger i Shanghai. Det ændrede sig, efter bare et par timer i selskab med de drenge jeg delte lejlighed med på daværende tidspunkt. Før jeg vidste af det, havde jeg mødt alle de Projects Abroad-frivillige i Shanghai. En flok på 15-20 mennesker fra hele verden. At alle er i samme båd berører noget i en flok unge og eventyrvirige mennesker. Man skaber hurtigt et bånd til især de mennesker man bor med, og nationalitet og alder spiller ingen rolle.

Indtil videre har min tid som Projects Abroad-frivillig i Shanghai været alt, hvad jeg forventede og så meget mere. Jeg føler mig ret sikker, når jeg siger, at mine første 4 uger i Shanghai har været de bedste nogensinde. Nogle gange, eksempelvis i metroen, slår det mig, at jeg faktisk er rejst alene til Kina – og jeg elsker det! I det sekund overvældes jeg af en følelse af selvtillid, selvstændighed, selvrespekt og en følelse af noget der giver mig sommerfugle i maven. Den følelse er der intet der kan konkurrere med, den er uvurderlig.



### LAW VOLUNTEER IN CHENGDU

## JONATHAN BEECH (UK)

Jonathan Beech (22) is a Projects Abroad China law volunteer from the UK who is carrying out his internship at Zhong Lun Law Office in Chengdu. He has just finished a law degree at Warwick University and in September he will start to study a Legal Practice Course at BPP Law School with the aim to become a solicitor. This trip in Chengdu is Jonathan's second time volunteering with Projects Abroad, having previously volunteered at a teaching placement in Ghana.

One reason why Jonathan came to China to work in a law firm was because he wanted to get some vocational experience in the field of his future career. "At university there is a lot of theory but not much practical experience. It is useful to get some real hands-on experience before I start

to study again." This trip is Jonathan's first time in China. He told me that volunteering with Projects Abroad is ideal because he was able to travel while learning about Chinese law practices. "I wanted to see China and was fascinated by the Chinese jurisdiction. It is great because I am doing something productive while at the same time experiencing a new working environment and culture."

Zhong Lun was founded in 1993. Since then it has been very successful and expanded rapidly. Now, Zhong Lun has six offices in mainland China and four international offices in Hong Kong, Tokyo, New York and London. Zhong Lun's major law practices include construction, corporate financing, capital markets, private equity and venture capital, banking and finance, dispute resolution and real estate (among a host of other

## VOLUNTEER STORY



disciplines). "I think I would like to go into real estate law so it is useful to get some experience in this field."

English speaking volunteers are very useful for the lawyers at Zhong Lun, because there is a selection of clients that only operate in English. "I have a lot of responsibilities and I'm always busy. There are limitations with the language barrier, so I help with all of the English speaking clients." Jonathan's main duty at Zhong Lun is research, but he is also involved in a whole range of additional duties. "I proof-read documents, review commercial contracts and Chinese codes of conducts and recently I did a presentation for my colleagues that compared English and Chinese law. They have civil law and we have common law

back home so it is very interesting to work in this environment. The lawyers are always asking me questions about law practice in the UK." Jonathan is also involved with English speaking telephone conferences where he is with a team of around eight lawyers.

While working hard, Jonathan has an active social life in Chengdu. He lives with two other Projects Abroad volunteers near the city centre and he regularly meets up with the rest of the team for social events. He also goes for lunch with his colleagues on a daily basis. "Chengdu is an amazing city. I feel as though I have learnt a lot for my future career aspirations and I have made some great friends, both Western and Chinese."

# FEATURE



From the 5th to the 7th of April there was a public holiday across China. This holiday was for the Qingming Festival (also known as 'Tomb-sweeping Day'). The festival signifies a time of joy, as well as a time of mourning. This is because the start of April is when most of China enjoys the blossoming of spring and also a time when family members remember their ancestors.

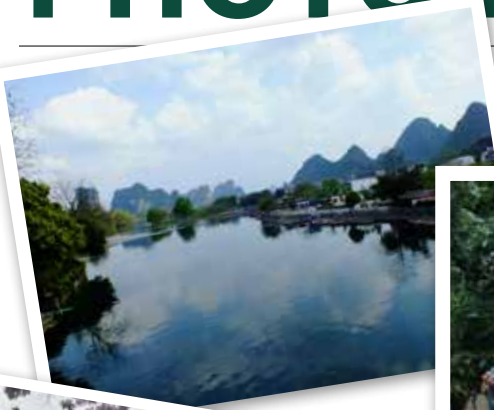
This time of year is a celebration of the blossoming spring and the end of the cold, harsh, winter that hits many parts of China. It is a time when families can get together and celebrate the changing of the season while enjoying each other's company, a time when many business people flock out of the city to be with their families and definitely not a great time to travel, which I learnt the hard way stuck in ridiculous traffic. Many say that after this weekend the days are considerably brighter (another name for this festival is 'Pure Brightness Festival'). Before Qingming weekend, Kay, our director for China, told me that it usually rains during the Qingming Festival and then afterwards spring will noticeably be upon us. Apparently prior to this year it had rained on nine out of 10 Qingming weekends! Perhaps not coincidentally it also rained this year and since then we have enjoyed an essence of greenery which stands in

contrast to the massive skyscrapers in many of China's mega-cities. This quick changing of the season seems to have added an extra spring to the city-people's step!

As mentioned earlier, April the 5th to the 7th is also a time of mourning for many of the Chinese people. Many of the families get together to visit the graves of their relatives. They will clean the memorial sites and decorate burial grounds with flowers. This is a way to honor and respect their ancestors. The people pray and sing while offering food and donations and burn incense. It is a tradition for Chinese families not to cook on this week, so they will only serve cold food. As well as a period to respect their own families, this weekend is a time to respect those who lost their lives in previous dynasties and events throughout Chinese history.

It was an interesting time to be in China during the Qingming Festival. It definitely meant a lot to the people and it was heartwarming to see the effort put in by the communities to preserve memories of those who have died. This time of year represented a time of transition, sadness, memories, celebrations, togetherness and a time of respect.

# PHOTO PAGE



# SOCIAL CALENDAR

## HELLO MAY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
				1	2	3	Labor Festival
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	A visit to the Shanghai Propaganda Museum Afternoon, meet at Changshu Lu (Line 7 Exit 2)
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Paint a school (Dirty Day)
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Morning, meet at East ZhouPu ( Line 16, Exit 1)
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
Tai Chi / Kung fu TBD				Picnic - China Style TBD			

\* Times to be confirmed. Contact Rich, on +86 (0)18221063387, for more info.

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