

# Hiking routes in Alt Camp

9



*Vine  
covered hillsides*



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**NB:** Any established written accounts are limited in terms of concrete time and space. The natural evolution of the landscape and human activity can mean that some accounts may become less reliable over time.

## 9. Vine covered hillsides

On this walk, we will not only discover hillsides literally covered with vineyards, but also the cellars where the fruit of these vines is transformed into excellent wines. We will also come across towns and villages with rich and varied architectural heritages and, more importantly, the locals going about their daily work in the fields: ploughing, pruning, grape picking, trimming, or simply making their way up and down the country lanes. This walk makes its way through a certain part of this district filled with hills and valleys, towns, and *masies*, fields and woodlands, but more importantly, it is the people themselves, who continue to work these lands to produce the best possible fruit and who, in the process transform this entire landscape into an authentic garden.

We begin in Vila-rodona, where a little of our time will be spent visiting monuments (the roman Columbari, the modernist Celler, the Castell, the pou de neu or snow pit, the bell tower and more...). For a delightful walk amongst the scent of cherry trees, we come to Bràfim with its modernist Ajuntament or town hall, the church with its golden altarpiece and the Ermita del Loreto. We will cross to the other side of the river Gaià, where our gaze will have already been powerfully attracted by the silhouette of the modernist shrine of Montserrat, in Montferri, where also of interest is the Castell de Puigtinyós and the Torre del Moro, which continues to keep watch over the valley from the summit of Tossa Grossa. We will make our way leisurely to Rodonyà with its old castle and on our return to Vila-rodona will make our way up and down through the gently undulating cultivations.





Roman Columbari

## 9. Vine covered hillsides

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*Time*

*Distance*

0:00



0:00

*Partial*

*Total*

0,000



*Partial*

0,000

*Total*

**Vila-rodona (260m).** *The municipality of Vila-rodona is located in the valley of the river Gaià. Apart from the town centre, there are also a number of masies and small population nuclei giving the landscape a rather pleasant and cultivated human dimension.*

*Like many of the towns in the district, this one has huge expanses of vineyards complemented by almond, olive and hazelnut groves and vegetable cultivations by the side of the river.*

*The local population has increased in recent years as a result of the industrial estate which has been built near to the motorway junction.*

*Immediately we enter the town we come across the modernist Celler de la Cooperativa, where we can admire one of the most majestic buildings designed by Cèsar Martinell, and where we can also purchase the wines and cavas made by the cooperative itself as well as various other locally grown and traditionally produced products.*

*Also at the entrance to the town, is the poplar grove, alongside the river, and also the 1st century Roman Columbari, or funeral site.*

*At the top of the town we can observe the castle, dating back to 1210, and of which there are remains of the walls and two towers.*

## Hiking routes in Alt Camp

*The large parish church of Santa Maria was constructed at the end of the 18th century and has a neoclassic façade. The church bell tower is visible from distant places due to its great height.*

*In Vila-rodona, we will find all services and facilities: restaurants, two “cases de turisme rural” (accommodation), and all types of shops. There is also a Centre d’Atenció Primària, or primary assistance centre.*

We set off from the Plaça dels Arbres, the square protected by the Església de Santa Maria church and in front of the Casa de la Vila, or town hall. We take the street by the name of Carrer d’Enric Benet, which heads south to meet up with the TP-2003 road, the main road into the town surrounded and shaded by large plane trees.

We cross the river Gaià on a relatively high bridge, from where we can make out the pretty woodlands alongside the bank of the river. Before continuing, to our left, we have the Camí de l’Albereda and the roman Columbari, five minutes away, to which we would highly recommend a visit. Shortly after crossing the river, we meet up with the track on the right leading to the pou de la nou, or snow pit, also only five minutes away. We make our way passing in front of the cellar and continue towards the crossroad where the TP-2002 road meets up with the Tarragona to Pont d’Armentera road.

0:11  0:11

0,850  0,850

**Crossroads.** Before arriving, we turn left, through an opening in a security fence, we make our way between the river and a house wall, at the end of which we come out on to the old cart road from Bràfim to Vila-rodona. The route is indicated by the GR 172-1 signs, from Renau to Santes Creus.

The track runs at mid height with the cultivations, in line with the raised embankment supporting the agricultural land above, and the one below supporting the path itself and which, in some sections has collapsed, making vehicular access impossible. Looking left, on the slopes on the opposite side of the river Gaià, we can see the roman Columbari, literally just a stones throw away. Three minutes down the track and we come to a very interesting dry stone construction, resembling a snow pit and behind an excellent view of Vila-rodona.

0:06  0:17

0,400  1,250

**Track from Mas de les Serres.** We make our way along this track heading southwest. To the left we have the yard and buildings. In front of the main entrance, we turn to face west, that is to say, right. The track is now surfaced.

## 9. Vine covered hillsides

0:03  0:20

0,250  1,500

**Camí de ca l'Espinac.** A little before joining up with the road, on the right, we take the dirt track in the opposite direction. Close to the track is a curious monument made from large paving stones, sinks, millstones and other forms of cut stone.

0:02  0:22

0,100  1,600

**Old road.** We leave the track and continue along the footpath, which makes its way over the top of the rock, parallel to the track. This is actually the old road, where our path is shaded beneath Holm oaks. Shortly, on the left, we come to a gate providing access to the Finca de ca l'Espinac and the Granja del Roc de la Serra or farm, where calçots are grown (a cross between a spring onion and a leek). The flat rock often appears on the surface. On the right we have a water tank and a lean to shed and on the left, another farm, the Granja del Guardià.

0:07  0:29

0,500  2,100

**Camí de la Serra.** Here we continue straight ahead towards the *masies*.

0:01  0:30

0,050  2,150

**La Serra (244m).** *A group of scattered masies, now uninhabited, which originally grew beneath the protection of the medieval castle and mountains.*

We continue heading south, with the Montferri bell tower directly in front. To our right there is a track and a farm, at the same point where the track surface becomes asphalt and drops down to pass beneath the AP-2 motorway.

0:02  0:32

0,150  2,300

**Autopista AP-2.** Once on the opposite side of the motorway we begin to climb back up and continue along this much improved track, from which various tracks lead off to the cultivations. Two hundred metres on and the asphalt is no longer.

0:05  0:37

0,300  2,600

**Forks.** We take the branch to the right and, immediately after, we once again take a right fork, which takes us back on to what was the old road, now a footpath. We leave the most well-trodden branch. At the beginning the appearance is that of a channel filled

## Hiking routes in Alt Camp

with vegetation. As we make our way, we see, on the other side of the valley, the village of Vilardida, next to the main road and in the middle of what was the old king's highway to Vilafranca. We continue walking with embankments either side of us.

0:06  0:43

0,450  3,050

**C-51 road from Valls to Vendrell.** We cross this road diagonally to the left, towards a billboard advertising the Santuari de Montserrat at Montferri, and we follow the road south. We leave the road at the point where, a little away to the right, is the roundabout where the four main roads meet up, a petrol station and two restaurants. Towards the left, past the bridge over the Gaià, is the village of Vilardida, where there is an allotjament rural (accommodation).

**Vilardida.** *A small village by the side of the C-51, split by the Vilafranca road into two different municipalities: Vila-rodona and Montferri, although we found it to be documented from 1009 as Villa Ardidam. Worthy of note is Cal Tudó with its old tower and a manor house of later construction, as is the church, Església de Santa Maria, initially of gothic construction and later reconstructed and finished in the 18th century. The church is of stone and mortar construction with external buttresses and a tiled roofed over wooden beamed supports, and with a single nave.*

*In Vilardida accommodation is available in a "casa de turisme rural" and there is also a farm produce shop.*

We come to the start of the cultivations. The traces of what was once the old road is to our right, now no more than a ditch. We begin to come across the first cherry plantations. In front, we see the tower rising above Mas d'Infants and to our left, the Santuari de Montserrat and the village of Montferri, at the foot of the mountains of the same name, crowned by the Torre del Moro.



Església de Vilardida

## 9. Vine covered hillsides

0:06 🕒 0:49

0,400 🏃 3,450

**Asphalted stretch.** We join the old road, now surfaced. We go round the bend and continue in the same direction. Looking back, we have a beautiful panoramic view of the village of Vilardida with a harmonious mixture of vineyards and woodland on the banks of the river Gaià. Underfoot the track surface is now compacted gravel, though rather dusty. Scattered amongst the cultivations we can see barns and water tanks.

0:05 🕒 0:54

0,400 🏃 3,850

**Turn-off.** A track to the left leads off to a small *masia*. A hundred metres beyond and we come across tracks both sides, the one downstream going to Molí de Vilardida, on the opposite side of the river Gaià.

0:04 🕒 0:58

0,300 🏃 4,150

**Footpath.** To the right a footpath tenaciously climbs up between the now neglected cultivation terraces, towards the Torre del Mas d'Infants. We continue ahead on the track.

0:02 🕒 1:00

0,100 🏃 4,250

**Fork.** Access to Mas d'Infants which we left below us, slightly hidden by the thick vegetation. On the right, another footpath also goes to the tower. Another hundred metres on and we pass another path going down to the cultivations. We make our way up a little until we come to the upper plain.



Marker indicating the GR 172-1, which we follow as far as Bràfim

## Hiking routes in Alt Camp

0:06  1:06

0,400  4,650

**Closed tip and track**, which we take to the right. The other branch goes to the *masia* de la Màquina and the river.

0:04  1:10

0,300  4,950

**Left turn**. We leave the path to the right, Camí Fondo, which goes to Planes and Rabasses Mortes.

0:03  1:13

0,200  5,150

**Asphalted track from Loreto**. We join the track in the direction of the village to which we are now very close. Once again, we find ourselves walking between embankments. We enter Bràfim by the Avinguda de l'Alt Camp.

0:06  1:19

0,400  5,550

**Bràfim (236m)**. *Set on a hillside in the river Gaià valley, surrounded by vineyards and cherry trees, this village consists of a group of houses and a disorderly collection of narrow streets around the late 17th century church, Església de Sant Jaume, the style of which varies somewhere between late gothic and baroque with a golden baroque altarpiece. Roman remains have also been discovered here. Also of interest is the Casa de la Vila, or town hall, in front of the church and built in 1929 by Cèsar Martinell.*

*In Bràfim it is possible to buy all we need and there is also a restaurant and a "casa de turisme rural" providing accommodation.*

We continue along Carrer d'Avall, which makes its way up to plaça de la Vila, the main square, where we find the Ajuntament, on the right, opposite the church. We pass beneath the Portal and make our way out, to the left, along avinguda del Loreto. On the right is the local Sant Jaume school. From the fence around the school grounds we turn around to find we are looking straight towards Loreto. The track is now asphalted and from time to time we come across some very conveniently located seats which allow us to relax and enjoy the views over the village and the *rasa* de les Hortetes, brook.

0:11  1:30

0,800  6,350

**Ermita del Loreto**. We make our way past the steps in front of the hermitage and cemetery gates.

**Santuari de Mare de Déu del Loreto**, *set on the hill by the name of Puig-rodó. The church is of neo-Romanesque style, originally constructed between 1889 and 1892 on land donated by the local people,*

## 9. Vine covered hillsides



Time



4 h 26'

Difficulty



18,850 km



Distance



## 9. Vine covered hillsides



River Gaià

having since undergone various transformations. Features include a wooden carving of the Virgin, some magnificent frescos and some impressive windows.

The asphalted road to Montferri sets off from the side of the cemetery wall. We continue along Camí del Trull, heading southeast, the track making its way down the left of the gully. The first few metres are asphalted but the track soon begins to narrow and, being little used, the vegetation is beginning to takeover.

0:08  1:38

0,600  6,950

**Fork.** We pass the access to a robust looking *masia*, the height and façades of which are rather eye catching. The *masia* however, is half way to abandon, as are the lands around it.

0:04  1:42

0,300  7,250

**Intersection with the road from Vilabella to Montferri.** Here we cross the road and continue straight on towards the river (east) along the side of a pond. The track surface is higher than the vine filled terraces. We leave a track, which on the left, links up to the surfaced road from Bràfim to Montferri and on the right, goes to Vilabella.

0:03  1:45

0,200  7,450

**Access to a barn.** We pass this track on our right.

# Hiking routes in Alt Camp

0:04  1:49

0,250  7,700

**Left turn heading north.** Here the route takes us north and closer to the pine forests.

0:01  1:50

0,050  7,750

**River Gaià.** Here we will cross the river and, there being no footbridges here, those of us on foot will simply have to remove our shoes. Once we are on the opposite side of the river, we enter a lush dense poplar grove. As we make our way through, we keep away from a house boundary and accesses to cultivations. Before very long we are at the bed of the Còdol gully with its surfaced base.

0:07  1:57

0,500  8,250

**Path and water channel stretching beneath Montferri.** This is actually the old road from Montferri to Salomó by the Polla-rossa *masia*, around three kilometres from here. From the *masia* we take the footpath which makes its way up to the Torre del Moro and Tossa Grossa de Montferri (387m), which rises majestically before us. We make our way to the left next to some farms. We leave the Còdol gully, which runs between the Montferri hills and the Castell de Puigtinyós.

0:02  1:59

0,100  8,350

**Intersection** with the surfaced road from Bràfim, two kilometres left of this point, on the opposite side of the river Gaià. Here we turn left and make our way up to the village crossing the Vilardida road.

0:03  2:02

0,200  8,550

**Montferri (229m).** *Set on a small hill sloping down towards the river Gaià, which cuts through the district, east of the village. The river water is used to irrigate vegetable plots and hazelnut groves. Other, dryer areas are used to cultivate vines, almond and olive trees.*

*The village's original main street has been preserved, along with houses with medieval arches and traditional portals. The church or Església de Sant Bartomeu includes a 12th century arch. In the corner, at the foot of the bell tower are two sundials with some interesting architectural and decorative features. Places of interest include the Castell de Puigtinyós, known also as the Castell de Rocamora; the remains of the Renaissance*

## 9. Vine covered hillsides

built *Santuari de Sant Marc*, and the *Torre del Moro* watchtower on the top of *Tossa Grossa de Montferri* (387m).

In *Montferri*, we can partake of a meal in the restaurant and sleep in one of the “*cases de turisme rural*”.

We enter by the main street or *Carrer Major*. 200 metres on and we see the church to the left. Before we reach the door, we pass beneath an archway. We turn to face east on the street by the side of the square and, on coming to a stone built wall which denies us access, we turn to the left (north) and leave by the main road.

0:03 🕒 2:08

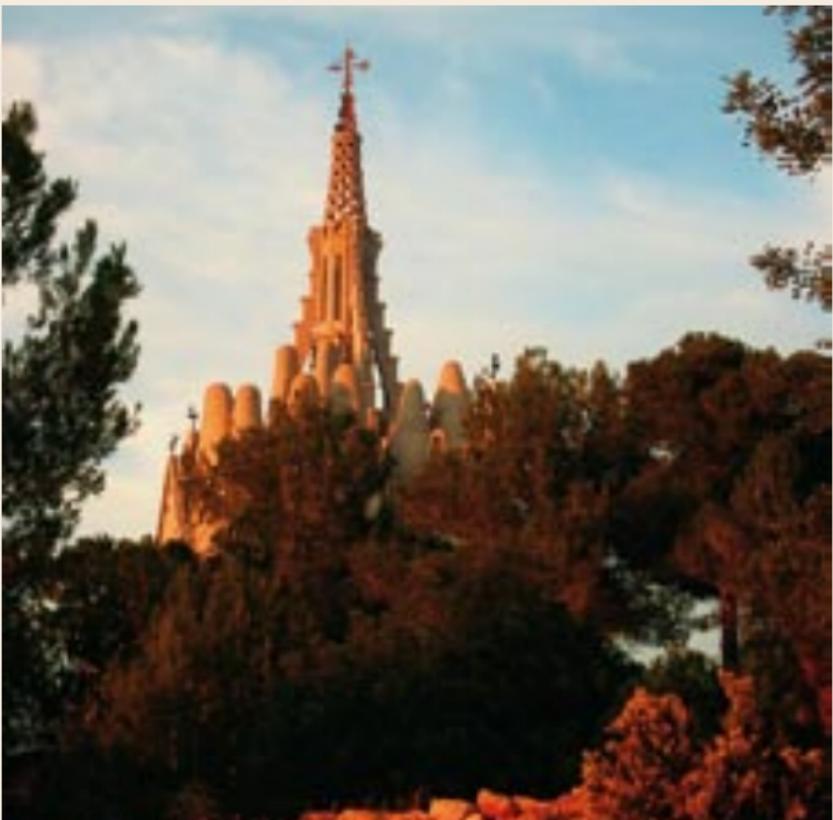
0,200 🚶 8,950

**Roundabout to the Montferri bye-pass.** Here we go straight ahead at the roundabout taking the road heading north or *Carretera del Santuari*.

0:05 🕒 2:13

0,300 🚶 9,250

**Santuari de la Mare de Déu de Montserrat (240m)**, a shrine set on a hilltop by the name of *Corralet*. A modernist construction designed by architect *Josep M. Jujol*, one of *Antoni Gaudí's* disciples, between 1922 and 1926. The project remained unfinished until 1985, when the construction work was finally resumed, to meet with popular demand. *Jujol*



*Santuari de Montserrat at Montferri*

## Hiking routes in Alt Camp

wanted to create a construction closely associated with the lands around it and which would evoke of the natural elements within these lands. The structure's outline is the apparent image of the mountains of Montserrat and inside we find a replica of the Moreneta.

Before we actually come to the shrine, we leave the car park on our left and make our way along the paved road to the square or plaça. To our right we have the solitary bell tower.

We leave the shrine by the main door to the left (west), we make our way down the embankment and past a cypress hedge. We head north surrounded by vineyards.

0:04  2:17

0,300  9,550

**Track from Montferri to Rodonyà**, known as Collfarners. This track is asphalted in places and in others paved although it retains its original width throughout. We take this track to the right and stay on it all the way to Rodonyà. In these parts, the vineyard is owner and master of these lands.

0:18  2:35

1,200  10,750

**Intersection**, with a poorly defined track on the left. This being the track from Rodonyà to Molí de Vilardida and to Mas d'Infants, currently neglected and virtually impassable. On the right, there is an access to what appears to be the entrance to a mine but is actually a shelter dug out of the land. We continue making our way straight ahead.

0:13  2:48

0,900  11,650

**Intersection** with the road from Vilafranca, which goes right to Vilardida and left to Casetes and Masllorç. Signposted as a ruta turística or scenic route (Camí de Vilafranca) from Fontscaldes to the Ermita de Santa Cristina. We continue straight on along the asphalted track.

0:04  2:52

0,300  11,950

**Rodonyà (312m).** A municipality literally on the borders of the district with Baix Penedès. This is a rugged area made so by the rocky composition of the Serra de Montmell. The main activity here is agriculture, with vineyards, almond and olive groves, etc., although there is also a little industry. This municipality was an obligatory stop, located as it is by the side of the old Vilafranca road. We know of its existence from the year 1214, on account of the Castell.



View of Rodonyà

*Of the municipality, the Castell is well worth a mention. There remains nothing of the original castle but above this the existing Renaissance style castle was constructed, now a residència senyorial or stately home. The castle is of a square design and the walls topped with ramparts making this a very attractive building. The church, dedicated to Joan the Baptist is an 18th century neoclassic construction, square, with three naves and a transept and an octagonal tower.*

*Here we find shops, a restaurant and accommodation in a “casa de turisme rural”.*

We enter by turning left into the street by the name of Carrer d'Àngel Guimerà, which takes us to the village centre. Here in the square or Plaça Major, we find the Castell or castle and the Ajuntament or town hall. We continue by taking Carrer d'Anselm Clavé, which takes us to the outskirts of the village.

0:11  3:03

0,800  12,750

**C-51 from Valls to Vendrell.** We cross this road continue straight on through along the road which goes through the industrial estate. A hundred metres on and we come to a crossroad where we continue straight on, heading north, along Camí dels Cucons, surfaced.

0:04  3:07

0,275  13,025

**Cemetery road**, also asphalted and which we take in the direction of the cemetery.

0:01  3:08

0,025  13,050

**Cemetery.** Here we turn left, leaving the main entrance to the cemetery on our right. We continue along camí ral the so-called king's highway, asphalted but with the original stone verges.

0:08  3:16

0,650  13,700

**Autopista AP-2.** We pass beneath this motorway. Previously we will have left the service road to the motorway on our right,

## Hiking routes in Alt Camp

with the yellow arrows marking the long distance route, Camí de Sant Jaume, now a dirt track. From here we make our way into the woods or bosc del Mas d'en Guerra.

0:03  3:19

0,150  13,850

**Fork.** We leave the king's highway and take a left turn, close to the motorway, on to a much minor road, or cart track. Dotted amongst the terraced cultivations we see some dry stone shelters. Here the terrain is very stony and rocks appear everywhere, something which helps to explain the presence of more than the usual raised terraces and lean-to shelters.

0:08  3:27

0,600  14,450

**Carretera de Can Ferrer de la Cogullada.** We cross this road diagonally and continue along the opposite side (southeast) to follow the rather neglected track, leaving the track opposite, which goes directly to a barn.

0:04  3:31

0,300  14,750

**Track and motorway barrier.** Here we turn right; the left branch would take us to the road.

0:01  3:32

0,100  14,850

**Access to Mas de la Pansa,** closed with a padlock. We begin to descend a little and, in front, we have Montagut (north-northeast). From this point, there is an excellent view of the mountain amphitheatre encircling Alt Camp: The Muntanyes de Prades, Serra de Miramar, Voltorera, Cogulló, Comaverd, Collada de la Rovira Seca, Montagut and Montmell. We continue, making our way between both the old traditional vineyards and the new style vineyards with vines trained over metal frames. Further on, we come to the Pinetelles brook and the *masia* Mas d'en Serra, and on into the woods. After, the path starts to zigzag and descend more steeply. The ground is now clay, with a fair amount of ditches created by rainwater.

0:13  3:45

1,000  15,850

**Torrent de les Pinetelles.** We finally come to the valley floor, literally covered with vineyards. On our right, we pass the road from Cal Llarg and Ca la Garsa. Twenty five metres on and we cross the brook, trying not to get our feet wet in the process,

## 9. Vine covered hillsides



Torrent de les Pinetelles

there usually being water here, providing it hasn't been a particularly dry year. Once over the gully, we find a few metres of the track have been surfaced, with a view to preventing the track from eroding as it makes its way straight up.

0:04  3:49

0,300  16,150

**Fork.** On our left, we pass by a track heading towards the cultivations. We continue to make our way up and 200 metres on come to another, on the same side, which we also ignore. We have now left the woods behind us, having finished shortly after we crossed the brook and we return once more to a landscape filled with the ever-present vineyards.

0:07  3:56

0,500  16,650

**Camí de cal Nofre.** A paved track leads off to the right towards this *masia*. We continue to make our way straight ahead. Twenty metres on and we pass the track to Ca l'Adroguer, on our left.

## Hiking routes in Alt Camp

0:04  4:00

0,300  16,950

**Intersection.** We make our way straight ahead (northeast) without leaving the Camí de les Pinetelles track. The branch off to the right goes to Mas de la Magina and the one on the opposite side to Pinetelles. Before long, we come to an asphalted section and we follow the track as it descends to make its way across the land depression. We ignore some even lesser tracks leading to the cultivations.

0:05  4:05

0,350  17,300

**Torrent dels Abellons.** We cross this brook by the bridge. The asphalt is now no longer and we return to a dirt track, actually more comfortable underfoot.

0:02  4:07

0,150  17,450

**Right branch,** leading to a nearby barn. We continue straight ahead. A deep ditch collects the waters from the track and the cultivated terraces at the head of the Abellons gully. Some 200 metres on and we pass another track, to our left, leading to barn. Another 200 metres further and we find, once again, the track surface is now asphalt.

0:07  4:14

0,500  17,950

**Hill and track.** We continue along the asphalted track, now dropping steeply down between the cultivated terraces.

0:03  4:17

0,200  18,150

**Vila-rodona cemetery.** We pass by the main cemetery gates. Further ahead, on the left hand side, we come across a school, Col·legi Bernardí Toldrà.

0:04  4:21

0,300  18,450

**Carretera de Can Ferrer de la Cogullada.** We take this road to the left. Above, we can see Castell de Vila-rodona. We make a sharp turn, slightly downhill and we are facing Carrer de les Hortes, the street we take to the village centre.

0:05  4:26

0,400  18,850

**Vila-rodona, Plaça dels Arbres.** We come to the main village square and the end of our hiking excursion.



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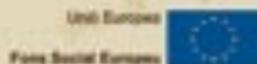
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