

The **Big Hole Valley** is a spectacular, spacious, high mountain valley located in **south-western Montana**. The Valley is approximately 76 miles long and around 35 miles wide (at its widest part), based on it's watersheds. The Big Hole Valley's **average** elevation is around 6245 ft., which puts it at nearly 1.2 miles above sea level.



The **Big Hole** sits at an elevation nearly twice as high as the average elevation of Montana, (which is around 3400 ft.).

Average ANNUAL high temperatures of around 53° F.

(**Record high** temperatures of less than 100° F.)

Average ANNUAL low temperatures of around 22° F.

(**Record low** temperatures of near minus 60° F.)

Average ANNUAL snowfall can be over 100 inches, and the area's **average ANNUAL** rainfall is over 6 inches.

The mountains surrounding the **Big Hole Valley** range from nearly 7600 ft. above sea level, to over 10,600 ft..

The "Shining Mountains" of the Bitterroot Range are especially spectacular. The highest point in the Valley is Homer Youngs Peak, south and west of Jackson (10,621 ft.). The lowest elevation in the Valley is at Wise River (about 5620 ft.).

In order to get into the **Big Hole Valley**, the traveler must come up the Big Hole River, or cross over a mountain pass. The lowest pass, Gibbons Pass, has an elevation of around 6941 ft.

The **Big Hole Valley** is uphill from "everywhere." All of the surrounding communities have a lower elevation. (Butte, some 478 ft. lower at around 5767 ft.. Dillon, nearly 840 ft. lower at around 5406 ft. Hamilton, about 2730 ft. lower at 3534 ft. Salmon, ID, over 2240 ft. lower with an elevation around 4004 ft.)

The nearest communities having hospitals are: Anaconda (about 53 miles from Wisdom), Butte (about 72 miles from Wisdom), Dillon (around 66 miles from Wisdom) and Hamilton (around 70 miles from Wisdom).

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Jackson Old Timer's Celebration

1st Sunday following July 4th weekend

Bannack Days Celebration

3rd weekend in July

Big Hole Battlefield Celebration

the weekend closest to Aug. 9 & 10

Wisdom Gun Show

First Weekend in August

Big Hole Valley Cow Pasture Open Golf Tournament

Fourth Saturday in August.

Dillon J.C. Labor Day Rodeo

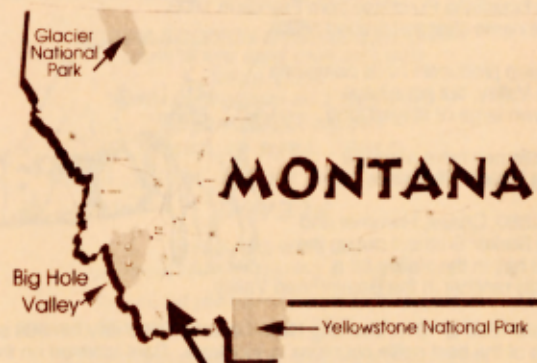
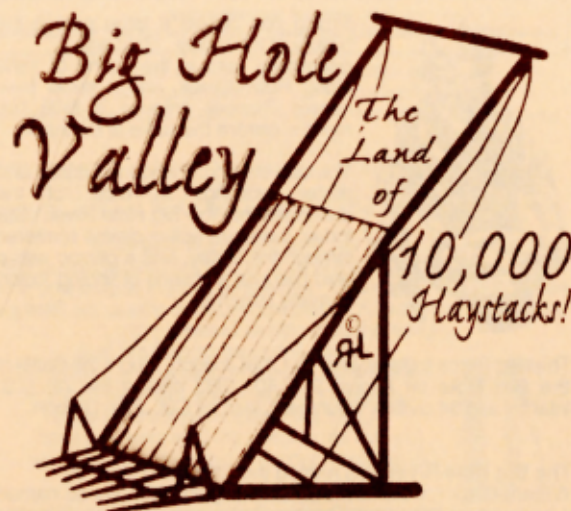
Labor Day Weekend.

Jackson's V.F.W. "Turkey" Shoot

the 1st Sun. in Nov.

Having Season

From about the 3rd week in July into late August.

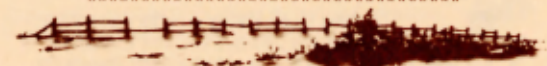


Area of Detail.



Thanks to Rich Lawson for his illustration of the Beaverslide!
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911 - Ambulance / Fire Department / Sheriff - 911



2002 BIG HOLE TOURISM MEMBERSHIP:

(area code 406)

Antler's Saloon - Kristie LaTray	689-9393
Avon - Femke Knudson	689-3313
Beartooth Plateau Outfitters - Ronnie L. Wright	1-800-253-8545
Big Hole Crossing Restaurant - Diane Havig	689-3800
Big Hole Petroleum - Ed & Sharon Stede	689-3225
Conover's Trading Post - Pat & Judy Mohr	689-3272
Delightfully Yours - Dorothy Tucker	689-3319
Fetty's Bar & Cafe - Guy & Joni Peterson	689*3260
"Healing Hands" Massage - Diana Vincent	689-3133
Heel Guard By Miles Ahead - Carl & Lyndy Miles	689-3102
Jackson Hot Springs Lodge - Monte & Inge Peterson	834-3151
Jackson Mercantile - Jeanette Robertson	834-3264
Larry's Automotive & Diesel Service - Larry & Darlene Christiansen	689-3238
Nez Perce Motel - Wayne & Barb Challoner	689-3254
Rose's Cantina - Jennifer Kirby	834-3100
Shepherd's Garage/Polaris - Rich Shepherd	834-3143
Southern Montana Telephone Co. - Bob Helming	689-3333
Steel Creek Traditions - John Wilke	689-3246
Stevenson Shoeing - Dan Stevenson	563-2848
Visual Image Computer Service - Marv Furnandiz	834-3171
Wisdom Market - Norm & Carol Focher	689-3271
Wisdom River Gallery - Daryll & Kay Jacobson	689-3400



For more
information,
call one of
the above
businesses.



ABOUT THE TOWNS:

WISDOM:

Voting district population: 200
Town population: around 120
Elevation: about 6050 feet.

What you can find in Wisdom:

Volunteer Ambulance; Volunteer Fire Department;
K-8 Elementary School (High School is in Dillon, a 66
mile bus ride daily); Post Office; Forest Service
District Office; Big Hole Battlefield National Historical
Monument; Masons; V.F.W.; American Legion Post;
4-H Club; Quilting Clubs; Churches (Catholic &
Presbyterian); General Merchandise "Country" Store;
Sinclair Gas Station; Automotive & Diesel Service;
Custom Seamstress; Western Art Gallery;
Restaurants; Saloon/Bar; Sporting Goods; Motel;
Fax Service; Telephone Company; Trail Rides;
Full Service Outfitting & Guide Service;
Custom Construction and Hauling
Services; Carpentry/Building Services; Harley
Davidson Indian Motorcycle Heel Guards.



JACKSON:

About 19 miles south of Wisdom.
Voting district Population: 90
Town population: 50
Elevation: about 6475 feet.

What you can find in Jackson:

Volunteer Fire Department; K-8 Elementary School
(High School is a 47 mile bus ride daily); Emergency
Quick Response Unit, associated with the Wisdom
Volunteer Ambulance; L.D.S. Church; Post Office;
4-H Club; Restaurants; Motel; General Merchandise
"Country" Store; Hair Cutting/Styling Salon;
Automotive & Mechanic Service; Mineral Hot Spring
Swimming Pool; Outfitter/Guide Service; Custom Hat
Shop; Gift Shop; Taxidermy Service; Public Computer
Access & Services.



Mining, logging/timber and cattle ranching plus the various
support services and businesses have been the main ways
of making a living in the **Big Hole Valley** since its beginnings
in the late 1800's.



Times are changing and old ways are
dying out. The **Big Hole** is not just
a place, it's a way of life found in
few other places (if any) in the
world today. It's a bit of history
that is still alive.

The **Big Hole Valley** is slowly changing, too, however.
Today, it's an unusual blend of history and modern day living.

If travelers happen through at the right time of year, they could
find themselves in a western cattle drive, and if they're lucky,
witness a branding done not too different from the way it was
done in the 1800's.

When passing through during the haying season, visitors can
expect to witness a unique agricultural haying method that's little
changed since the early 1900's. It's even possible to be present
at an "ole time" celebration, or a plain old Saturday night,
Western style. The lucky could end up at an Old West Style
Barbecue, eating some of the local beef (or even buffalo). The
Indian raids, shoot-outs, gun fights, stage hold-ups, etc. are gone,
but their memory and flavor still hangs on.

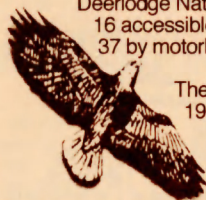
The **Big Hole River** falls *more than*
1650 feet in elevation (over a quarter
mile vertically) from its source in the
south end of the Valley, to just above
Wise River.



It is the outlet for some 149 lakes (of
which there are around 58 found on the
Wisdom Ranger District in the mountains
surrounding the **Big Hole Valley**).

There are presently five lakes that can be accessed by
ordinary vehicles. (Miner, Twin, Mussigbrod,
Van Houten {pronounced "Van HOW Tun"} and Pintler).
The Forest Service maintains campgrounds at each.

Camping is as easy as pulling off the road, when on public land,
and setting up camp. There are literally hundreds of places to
camp, some are very easily accessed and some require "a bit of
work" to get to. If a person is seeking privacy, solitude, or even
seclusion, it can be found in the Big Hole someplace. There's
even the Anaconda Pintler Wilderness.



Within the Beaverhead portion of the Beaverhead-
Deerlodge National Forest there are around 254 lakes:
16 accessible by 2-wheel drive; 28 by 4-wheel drive;
37 by motorbike/ATV; 134 by horse; 39 only by foot.

There are more than 368 species of wildlife,
19 species of fish and plants too
numerous to accurately count,
that occur in the Valley and it's
surrounding areas.

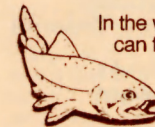
Some are permanent residents and can be numerous; some are
only temporary residents, migrating through on occasion; some
are very small; some are quite large; some are rare. Many of
these animals can be seen occasionally in the **Big Hole**
if your timing is right.

Some common wild animals: badger, elk, moose,
mule deer, prong horn antelope, golden eagle,
great horned owl, sage hen, fool hen,
sandhill crane, blue bird, Oregon jays
("Camp Robbers"), coyote, fox, marmot.



Some animals not so common, but that **LUCKY** visitors can
hope to see: big horn sheep, mountain goat, northern flying
squirrel, marten, mountain lion, lynx, bobcat, bald eagle, osprey,
loon.

Some of the "rare" and not easily observed animals known to be
present: tailed frog, hoary marmot, gray wolf, grizzly bear,
fisher, wolverine, turkey vulture, sharp-tailed grouse.



In the waters of the **Big Hole Valley**, fishermen
can find and fish for: trout (eastern brook,
rainbow, cutthroat, mackinaw, brown, and
golden), arctic grayling, ling and whitefish.

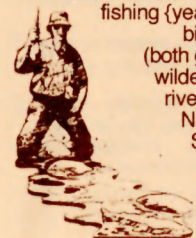
The **Big Hole Valley** offers some of
the best big-game hunting in Montana
(if not the western U.S.). Wapiti (elk),
mule deer, moose, prong horn antelope,
mountain goat and black bear are often
bagged for the dinner table or even
wall mounts and trophies.



The history, wildlife, the unsurpassed scenery
and the many varied wild flowers
(like bear grass, camas, bitterroot, gentians,
rooster heads, Lemhi penstemons, sego lily,
lupines, and hundreds more) combine to
offer near perfect photographic opportunities
(especially when spectacular sunsets are added in).

RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

Within the **Big Hole Valley** and
surrounding areas, the opportunities to
have fun are virtually limitless: hiking,
camping, trail riding, horse packing, crosscountry
skiing, down-hill skiing, snowmobiling,
motorcycling, ATVing, prospecting,
boating, digging for natural crystals,
gemstone collecting, target shooting,
varmint hunting (shooting "gophers"), picnics, golf, hang gliding,
cattle drives, brandings, rodeos, fairs, fun/poker runs, numerous
celebrations, fiddlers contests, pioneer theaters, gun shows,
hot spring swimming, museums, art galleries, historical sites,
designated scenic areas, bird watching,
wildlife viewing, mountain climbing,
fishing (year around (ice, fly & bait)),
big game hunting (both general rifle and archery),
wilderness experiences, river floating, National Scenic By-Way,
National Historical Monuments,
State Historical Monuments,
Indian Pictographs, dancing,
photography, old mines,
general nature appreciation. and
just kicking back for some relaxation.





A LITTLE BIG HOLE VALLEY HISTORY:

The **Big Hole Valley's** history dates back to **before** the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804 - 1806, but unfortunately there's no record of who or what. It is known that Captain Clark came across, and occasionally followed, an "old road which frequently disappeared," when he came through the Valley in 1806. On his journey through the Valley he saw many buffalo wallows, evidence that the American Bison once roamed this valley.

On July 7, 1806, on the return leg of the expedition, Captain Clark's party stopped for lunch at the hot springs (where Jackson now sits). They tested the temperature of the water by putting two pieces of meat into the water. The smaller piece (about the size of three fingers) cooked in 25 minutes.

The Flathead Indians claimed this valley as their summer home for generations, gathering camas bulbs and bitterroot along with their hunting of buffalo, elk, deer and antelope. They called it "La-im-tse-la-lik,"

(Place of the Ground Squirrel.)

The term "hole" was used by early trappers to describe a mountain valley. It's too bad that some of these brave, adventurous men didn't leave any diaries or journals behind when they passed on.

The **Big Hole Valley** (also known as: "the Big Hole Basin," "the Big Hole Prairie," "the Land of Big Snows," and "the Valley of 10,000 Haystacks") was considered a snowbound wilderness for several decades after the Bitterroot and Beaverhead valleys were settled.

Settlers began arriving as early as 1875, but the long winters forced them to move on. The first permanent settlers in the **Big Hole Valley** were Alva J. Noyes and his wife, Hattie, who arrived in the summer of 1882.

The Noyes family settled near the present site of Wisdom, then referred to as "The Crossings." (The present town site was surveyed in 1898.)

The Town of Jackson's first residents arrived in 1884.

When the pioneers of the 1880's came into the Valley, a homestead consisted of 160 acres and a timber claim consisted of 400 acres.

The initial fee for filing on a homestead was 25 cents on an acre. A settler was required to live on the land for five years and make certain improvements (cabin, fencing, and some ditches).

At the end of the specified time the homesteader could "prove up" on his land by going to Virginia City, MT., appearing in front of the Land Commissioner, and paying \$1.00 per acre for the title. For \$1.25 an acre plus their time and labor, the land was theirs.

People who depend on the land for their survival have a keen awareness of the necessity to maintain the delicate balance of using and renewing the resource.

Continuation of this lifestyle is essential to the future attractiveness of this area which is enjoyed by so many.

As an increasing number of urban people share our western resources, it is with mutual respect to other users that this ranching community provides you with this informative and helpful guide so that two vital industries, ranching and tourism, can happily continue to coexist.

When we share the same travel route . . . it is not our motive to delay your travels.

Let us help you on your way quickly and safely.

GOING OUR WAY?

If you encounter livestock traveling in the **SAME** direction that you are going . . . **"MAKE A TRAIN."**

If a rider motions you to follow, FOLLOW THE HORSE CLOSELY, not letting any of the animals slip between you.



All other vehicles should follow "bumper-to-bumper" through the herd.

IF no riders motion you to follow them through, simply proceed **SLOWLY** and **QUIETLY**, W - E - A - V - I - N - G your way through the herd.

GOING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION?

DON'T stop in front of the herd, just proceed **slowly** and quietly, W - E - A - V - I - N - G your way through the herd.

FOLLOW OTHERS **CLOSELY**, everyone moving as one unit.

Occasionally we must move our livestock on recreational trails. If you meet oncoming livestock on a single track trail. . .

IF you can . . . STEP OFF THE TRAIL ON THE DOWNHILL SIDE, REMAIN QUIET AND STILL.

The herd will pass you quickly.



If you are motorized, the **quickest** way to get on with your journey when you meet livestock is to - - - PULL OVER. It is also helpful if you can TURN THE ENGINE **OFF**.

OTHER USER ETIQUETTE CONCERNS:

Please stay on recreational trails when livestock is present in the area. Recreational use of livestock trails interrupts grazing patterns that are designed for vegetation management.

Always watch the person handling livestock in case further direction is needed.



The Nez Perce Indians, lead by Chief Joseph, fought the Battle of the **Big Hole** on August 9 & 10, 1883 against the 7th U.S. Infantry and 34 civilian Volunteers, lead by Col. John Gibbon.

The **Big Hole River** was named the "Wisdom River" by William Clark (of the Lewis & Clark Expedition). He so named it because of President Thomas Jefferson's wisdom in buying the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803. The name changed around 1890.

Sheep producers have come into the Valley, but none have grown large or stayed long.

Cattlemen have used the **Big Hole Valley** since 1874.

In 1880, Chase, Hammer and the Barker Brothers put up the first hay in the Valley for a cattle rancher in the Beaverhead Valley.

From 1890 to 1910, the **Big Hole** became nationally famous as one of the best cattle countries in Montana. Beef fattened on the nutritious wild hay was shipped to eastern markets, and the hay itself was shipped to the east to provide feed for prized race horses.

HAYING the life-style rather



TIME is very important to in the Valley. In fact, it's unique.

It is doubtful that the traveler will see this method of haying in use anywhere else in the world, outside of a few small western Montana valleys similar to the **Big Hole**.

For many of the local ranches, haying today isn't much different from the way it was done in 1910. Tractors and other motorized machines have replaced the horse, but the methods are the same.

Haystacks of over 20 tons of hay, and standing around 30 feet tall are produced using a device called the Beaverslide.



The Beaverslide was invented, designed and patented in the **Big Hole Valley** in 1910, under the name "Sunny Slope Slide Stacker."

Animals are often startled when approached **silently**.

To an animal **YOU** may look like a "TRAIL MONSTER."

As you approach a HORSEBACK rider, **S-P-E-A-K !** If the horse is frightened, **S-T-O-P !** Continue speaking.

Ask the rider if you can help by leaving the trail.



Upon approaching a horseback rider from **BEHIND**, at the first sighting, **SPEAK LOUDLY, MAKE YOUR PRESENCE KNOWN**. Most riders would simply like an opportunity to leave the trail . . . S - A - F - E - L - Y.

PRIVATE PROPERTY?

Under the **Montana** Trespass Law, a member of the public has the privilege to enter or remain on private land by the **explicit permission** of the landowner or his agent, or by the failure of the landowner to post notice denying entry onto the land. Lands can be closed either by posting, **or** through verbal communication. Posting must be by painting with at least 50 sq. inches of fluorescent orange paint, or written notice on a post, structure or natural object.

It is the responsibility of the recreationist to determine if private lands **ARE** posted. If lands **are** posted, it is the recreationist's responsibility to obtain permission from landowners **BEFORE** recreating on these lands.

Recreationists do **NOT** have the right to enter or cross posted, private lands **without** permission.

It is the duty of the recreationist to **KNOW** what lands they are on.

PLEASE, treat the land as you would your OWN yard or lawn: use fire VERY carefully, drive ONLY on established roads, don't litter, don't let your pets run at large, and DON'T SPREAD NOXIOUS WEEDS.



HAVING TROUBLE OPENING AND CLOSING THOSE WIRE GATES?

Put the bottom loop up **HIGH** on the gate stick. Put one arm around the gate stick and post, . . . PULL the gate toward the post while PUSHING the gate stick with your shoulder. Make sure that the bottom loop is firmly down when you finish closing the gate.

IF there is a gate opener present, **USE** it.

A gate opener is simply a lever with which to tighten the gate for easier opening and closing. Make sure that the bottom loop is up as far as it will go. Place the short end of the opener behind the gate stick. Pull around and tuck behind the gate stick.

PLEASE follow any signs on gates specifying either "PLEASE LEAVE GATE OPEN" or "PLEASE CLOSE GATE." IF THERE IS NO SIGN PRESENT, LEAVE THE GATE AS YOU FOUND IT.

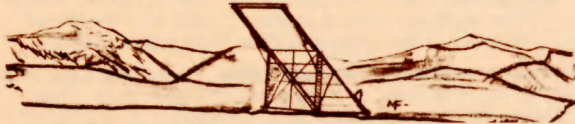
Fences (and gates) are property belonging to the landowner or the Federal Government. It's against the law to **CUT** or dismantle ANY fence or gate.

With apologies to Crested Butte's High Country, the above tips, etiquette, gate information and graphics is their work, not ours.

Because of the vast amounts of hay needed to feed the cattle over the long winters, there are so many stacks of hay put up each summer, that the **Big Hole Valley** earned its nickname of "The Valley of 10,000 Haystacks."

Commercial (or "store-bought") equipment has not performed as well in the **Big Hole** as it has in other places, so locals have always resorted to creativeness in modifying existing equipment and/or methods to meet their needs. Much of the hay handling equipment used in the Valley can be seen few (if any) other places in the world. Much of it has been crafted here.

Since cattle ranching dominates the **Big Hole**, and the grazing season is only about five months long, it's not surprising that hay is the only crop produced in the Valley. Because most of the ranches are cow-calf operations that supply young animals to out-of-state feed lots, most of the hay is consumed within the Valley. At over two tons of hay per animal over the winter, this means that large amounts of hay must be stacked or baled each summer. Native hay was never a heavy crop, but has always had a reputation for quality that fattens cattle.



At one time, the use of the beaverslide had spread as far as California, Washington, Nevada, and Nebraska as well as into British Columbia and Alberta, Canada. Since the 1950's there has been a decline in the use of the Beaverslide throughout most of its former range. In most places it sits, forsaken in fields, serving only as a reminder of times long gone. In most of these areas, the newer, large capacity, commercial systems like the large round or rectangular balers and the loaf stackers have replaced the Beaverslide.

The beauty of our high mountains is greatly improved by open spaces of well maintained landscape in the Valley below. These productive lands are protected by working cattle ranches, some of which are still owned and operated by descendants of the original families who homesteaded them.

The close relationship between the mountain resources and the Valley's ranches began with the first settlers.

During the summer months livestock grazed the mountains while the Valley below produced the hay necessary for winter feeding.

This tradition is still in existence today although the use of mountain summer range is now mostly under the direction of a Federally administered grazing permit system which is critical in preserving these ranches.

Ranchers, through their good conservation & maintenance programs, are knowledgeable stewards of our public lands.

Domestic livestock are natural cultivators as they scatter and plant seeds, and are a tool for improving vegetation while curtailing erosion in wet areas used by vehicles.

Wildlife, as well as livestock benefit from water developments, salt and forage improvements provided by ranchers.

NOXIOUS WEEDS:

The presence of noxious weeds means the **LOSS** or reduction of : native vegetation; water quality; grazing; wildlife; big game hunting; ranching; timber; erosion control; clean scenery; quality environment; tourism; jobs.

It only takes **one** seed for noxious weeds to get established, often in remote areas where they can be nearly impossible to detect and treat.

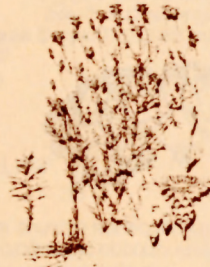
MOST new weeds are **imported** by trucks, cars, ATV s, horse trailers, etc. The seeds can even stick to clothing or shoes of hikers and to the fur of pets and other animals.

Harold . . . aren't these strange flowers pretty?
I'm going to take them home!

SPREAD THE WORD.



NOT THE WEEDS!



Spotted Knapweed

The **BIG HOLE VALLEY** and the surrounding Public Land is still relatively free from noxious weeds.

You can help us keep it that way by :

THOROUGHLY **washing** all parts, **especially** the underside of your vehicle(s) (ATV s, motorcycles, cars, pickups, RV s, horse trailers, etc.) **BEFORE** coming into the Valley.

Using **CERTIFIED** weed free feed and hay if you are bringing in pack or saddle animals.

Brushing your stock (and pets), especially the mane and tail, to clean out weed seeds **BEFORE** leaving home.

Quarantining your stock in a weed free area for at least 48 hours to give the seeds an opportunity to pass through the digestive system **BEFORE** heading out.

REPORTING the presence of any noxious weeds you find to the landowner, County or Forest Service.

Pulling the occasional noxious weed out by its roots, AND packing them out (especially any seed heads).

Thank you for your cooperation and efforts to ensure that the **Big Hole Valley** remains productive and enjoyable for **EVERYONE** !

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