

# EXPLORE!

## Treasures of the Tsars

10 days

Russia - Trip code GR



## Treasures of the Tsars

We begin this trip in the megacity of Moscow, travel by train to St. Petersburg and discover Russia's Golden Ring: the historic cities of Sergiev Posad, Vladimir and Suzdal. The Golden Ring shows you another side to Russia, away from its main bustling cities, where you can experience the rolling countryside and see classic Russian architecture in some of its oldest towns. We'll see the Red Square and Kremlin in Moscow as well as the majestic Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and visit the extravagant Peterhof Palace with its golden statues and cascading fountains.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Moscow** - See the city's main sights including the Red Square and Saint Basil's Cathedral
- ★ **Kremlin** - Visit the historic fortified complex at the heart of Moscow
- ★ **The Golden Ring** - Discover the fascinating Trinity Monastery of Saint Sergius, Zagorsk and Suzdal, one of Russia's oldest towns
- ★ **St. Petersburg** - Explore this fascinating city and visit the world famous Hermitage Museum
- ★ **Peterhof Palace** - Discover the exquisite palace and gardens including its fountains and opulent decor

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:****Full on**

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

**GROUP SIZE:****12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip in Moscow

Arrive in Moscow and check in to hotel. Moscow is one of the largest cities in the world. It has grown rapidly in recent decades, and, as a result, comprises high-rise suburbs surrounding a relatively compact historic centre with plenty of fascinating ancient architecture.



**Accommodation: Hotel Izmailovo Gamma** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Orientation tour of Moscow including the Red Square

Moscow is the pivotal centre of Russia and there is much to see and do here. We start our journey today with a metro orientation tour which ends at the Red Square, still paved in its original stones. The metro itself is an experience being elaborately decorated with chandeliers and mosaics and we'll get to see the most iconic stations during our metro tour. Here you will have an option to visit Lenin's Mausoleum and St Basils or visit one of the many fine art galleries before setting out on a bus to visit outlining areas of Moscow including Lenin Hills and get to see Novodevichy Convent and Cemetery from the outside, with red and white crenelated walls and golden dome, it is one of Moscow's most attractive monasteries. We end our day today at the city centre.



**Accommodation: Hotel Izmailovo Gamma** (or similar)



Standard Hotel

Swimming pool available





Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Excursion to the Kremlin with the chance to visit the Armoury

On our second day we visit the famous Moscow Kremlin on Red Square - a city within a city. The triangular walls of this incredible complex of buildings enclose three fine palaces, cathedrals, belfries and towers, representing Russia throughout its glorious past. Later we recommend an optional visit to the Kremlin Armoury, which contains a stunning collection of imperial jewels and regalia, including the 16th century English silver sent to Ivan the Terrible by Queen Elizabeth I, with an eye to matrimony.



**Accommodation: Hotel Izmailovo Gamma** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - See St. Sergius Trinity Monastery and Vladimir; arrive in Dvoriki

Today we begin our visit by road to the famous cities known as the Zolotoye Koltso or the 'Golden Ring'. Each of these ancient towns in its own way represents the historic soul of the Russian people. We make a slight detour en route to Vladimir to visit Sergiev Posad. Here we will marvel at the golden domes and great bell-tower of the Trinity Monastery of Saint Sergius, which is a main centre for the Russian Orthodox Church. Founded in the 1340's by the crusading monk, Sergei Radonezhsky, who lies buried here under the Trinity Cathedral, the church buildings copy the style of a Byzantine Cruciform. Peter the Great regularly used this monastery. Today, the town is famed for the craftsmanship of its wooden toys, particularly the Matrioshka; nests of wooden dolls which fit one inside the other. This afternoon we continue to Vladimir, which is situated on a semi-circular hill on the Klyazma riverside. Founded in 1108 by Prince Vladimir Monomakh, the Grand Prince of Kiev, many of its striking 12th century monuments still remain intact. Among the splendid sights here are the Cathedrals of the Assumption and Saint Demetrius. The latter is a Medieval gem and one of the finest in the whole country. Its high reliefs, carved on the front of the cathedral, depict strangely mixed characters from classical history, such as King Solomon and Alexander the Great. Also of note are Vladimir's Golden Gates, which were ambitiously modelled on the gates of Kiev and acted as important fortifications to defend the city. After our guided tour of Vladimir we'll drive to the nearby village of Dvoriki and to our unique woodland hotel. Our accommodation for tonight is in splendid isolation within a picturesque forest and the buildings are log built. The hotel has its own restaurant, bar, indoor pool, spa and horses on site. It a great spot to relax in for the evening and enjoy the Russian wilderness.



**Accommodation: Hotel Veles** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Visit the historic town of Suzdal en route to Rostov Veliky

This morning our first stop is in Suzdal, which is perhaps the most beautiful of all the old cities in the Golden Ring. It was already a settlement in the 10th century, but began to flower architecturally in the 12th century under Yury Dolgoruky. We will be able to see the exterior of the Kremlin, which was rebuilt after being pillaged and burnt by the Mongols in 1238. We'll also visit to the north of

the town, the great Spaso-Evfimiyevsky Monastery, which was founded 14th century and was once one of the five largest monasteries in all of Russia. However, from 1767 to 1907 the monastery took on a darker purpose as a prison, for those classed as being lunatics, which includes disgraced nobles, free-thinkers and opposition politicians. The most outstanding building within its walls is the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, with five domes and several superb murals. On the far side of the river we see the Convent of the Intercession, which was also long used as a prison for the unwanted wives of nobles (Ivan the Terrible, his father, and Peter the Great, all exiled their wives here for various reasons). Further down the river we visit the remarkable Field Museum of Wooden Architecture, which has a distinctive collection of ancient wooden churches, manor houses and windmills that were all dismantled and re-erected here from across northern Russia. Continuing our journey we head to Rostov Veliky. Located on the shores of Lake Nero, Rostov Veliky (Rostov the Great), is one of Russia's oldest cities. We visit the Kremlin, considered by many locals to be the finest outside Moscow. Its strategic position on top of a hill and the impressive kilometre long white walls, make the Kremlin the main landmark in this picturesque town in the Golden Ring. Also included in our sightseeing is the Enamel Museum inside the Kremlin. The art of enamel work was developed in this town at the end of the 18th century. We'll get to appreciate both ancient and modern examples of this beautiful technique.



**Accommodation: Hotel Moskovsky Trakt** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Tour of Yaroslavl; overnight train to St. Petersburg

This morning we drive to Yaroslavl which stands proudly at the meeting point of the two rivers, Volga and Kotorl, and is rich in ancient monuments. It takes its name from Prince Yaroslavl of Rostov who captured the settlement here. The town can also claim to have founded Russian dramas: Fyodor Volkov established the first professional theatre company here in 1748. On arrival we'll have an orientation tour of the main attractions, visit one of Yaroslavl's famed churches and the Transfiguration Monastery. We'll then enjoy a short boat trip on the River Volga followed by free time to relax and have dinner before we take the overnight train to St. Petersburg. Our accommodation is in four-berth compartments with bedding provided.



**Accommodation: Sleeper Train to St Petersburg**



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Orientation tour of St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg is famous for its romantic 'White Nights', the period from May until July when the sun practically never sets. The city (formerly known as Leningrad) was founded by Peter the Great as his 'Window on the West', and built on the hundred islets that form the delta of the Neva river. It must surely be acclaimed as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe - some would say the most beautiful. Peter's original idea for its location as a naval base on the Baltic Coast was certainly a huge mistake as the port is ice-bound for one third of the year. Nevertheless, it became the city of great writers like Pushkin and Dostoyevski and it still retains much of the romantic spirit of those bygone days. On arrival this morning we will conduct a sightseeing tour of the city by bus, before going to our hotel to check in. Please note breakfast is not included on the train.



**Accommodation: Hotel Moskva** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 8 - Visit to the Winter Palace and Hermitage Museum

This morning we visit the magnificent Hermitage Museum, which was augmented by Catherine the Great. The Hermitage is unquestionably one of the finest art galleries in the world, containing the works of masters like Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Raphael, Velazquez, Rubens and Rembrandt, as well as contemporary pieces by Matisse and Picasso. This afternoon you have the option to visit St. Peter and Paul's fortress, the final resting place of many of Russia's tsars and their families.



**Accommodation: Hotel Moskva** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Excursion to the Peterhof Palace and Gardens

This morning we travel by bus to the Peterhof Palace and Gardens, which is often referred to as the Russian Versailles. The opulent palace is set within gardens filled with golden statues and elaborate fountains including the centre-piece of the Grande Cascade. The palace was originally built by Peter the Great, as his Grand Palace, and it was also much loved by his daughter Empress Elizabeth who expanded it and added the famed fountains. The Palace like most in Russia was unfortunately badly damaged by the invading Nazi soldiers during World War II, but it was one of the first to be restored and was reopened to the public fully by 1952. This afternoon is free for you to further explore St. Petersburg or you have the option to visit the Yusupov Palace where the 'mad monk' Rasputin was famously murdered.



**Accommodation: Hotel Moskva** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Trip ends in St. Petersburg

Tour ends in St Petersburg after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 8



## Transport

Bus  
Boat  
Train



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



## Accommodation

8 nights standard hotel  
1 nights simple overnight train

# Trip information

## Country information

### Russia Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

In European Russia snows usually start in November and stay till late March/early April, when a great thaw occurs with temperatures ranging from about 5°C in October and April to -15°C in January.

#### Time difference to GMT

+3

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Orthodox Christianit, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism

#### Language

Russian

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Moscow: Kremlin Armoury Museum €35.00 (€40.00 for groups under 10) with a guide or 700 RUB for entrance only with audio guides available in English. Opera or ballet €50-150.00. This optional is subject to availability and performances may sell out. If there is a particular concert or venue you wish to visit, or you just want to ensure you're able to get a ticket to a performance, then we recommend booking your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK. Visit to Sergiev Posad €35.00 (€40.00 for groups under 10). Concert of Maestro Borodiansky which is usually held at Glazunov Museum €25-30.00. Please note this optional is subject to availability and your Explore Leader will advise of this on arrival. The cost shown here is just for the ticket to the concert and museum/gallery entrance fee, transport will be paid for separately and locally. St. Petersburg: Saint Peter and Paul Fortress €25.00. Opera or ballet €40-180.00. This optional is subject to availability and performances may sell out. If there is a particular concert or venue you wish to visit, or you just want to ensure you're able to get a ticket to a performance, then we recommend booking your tickets online directly with the theatre production company before leaving the UK. Yusupov Palace €28.00. Alexander Nevsky Lavra (Monastery) €5.00. Prices for the above optional trips include guide fee, entrance fee to the site and necessary transport unless it states otherwise.

## Clothing

July and August are the hottest months and lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain, although light rainwear may be needed at any time of year. A warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings. Ladies should take a headscarf and ensure their shoulders are covered when entering churches.

## Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daysac for personal items. Remember that you'll have to carry your own luggage, so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

Take some insect repellent for the Golden Ring and St. Petersburg. A money belt is essential, especially in Russia. A swimsuit for saunas may also be taken.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approximately 30 Euros for tips. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

## Country Information

### Russia Holidays & Tours

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Dinner price

£12.00 - 16.00

##### Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

##### Water price

£1

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Rouble.

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

We recommend that you take your money in Sterling, Euros or US Dollars cash. For US Dollars notes should be in good condition (not torn or marked), issued after 1990 (pre-1990 are often refused) and ideally in small denominations. Euros, Sterling and Dollars are easily transferable into the local currency, Roubles.

##### Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

##### ATM Availability

Cash can be withdrawn both in Moscow and St. Petersburg

### **Credit Card Acceptance**

Local currency (Russian Roubles) can also be drawn on credit cards from ATM's in both Moscow and St Petersburg.

### **Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques are accepted in Moscow and St Petersburg but are very time-consuming to change and attract unfavourable exchange rates

## **Transport, Accommodation & Meals**

### **Transport Information**

Bus, Boat, Train

### **Accommodation notes**

#### **Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

For the overnight train journey we will use sleeper carriages with four bunk beds with bedding provided (two beds on floor level and two above) per compartment and with a shared toilet and wash basin in each carriage. There are no shower facilities on board. Luggage is stored under the bottom bunk beds and above the cabin door for the top bunks. There is the possibility that you will be sharing with non-Explore clients in the same cabin. There is no air-conditioning on board and it's not always possible to open the windows, so we recommend light weight bed clothes. You can experience authentic rail travel with the local people and it's a great way of getting from place to place during the night, so you maximise on the amount of time you have in each city during the day to explore. Take snacks, drinks, toilet roll, hand sanitiser and an open mind with you for maximum enjoyment. In Russia the majority of buildings including the hotels still use the old Soviet District Heating System. Large power plants supply both electricity and hot water and from autumn to spring the central heating provided is at a set temperature, which can't be individually adjusted. So this means that it can be hotter inside the hotel bedrooms than you'd expect, but this can't be turned down, so it's best to open a window if you are too warm. Most of the hotels in the main cities were constructed during Soviet times and so tend to be large and can have ostentatious decor. The hotels we use in both Moscow and St. Petersburg are in this style and are just a short journey by metro from the city centres. In Moscow our hotel is by Partizanskaya metro station and is approximately 15 minutes from the Red Square. Within walking distance of our hotel is the Kremlin in Izmailovo where you can visit a number of museums and see different Russian architectural styles. Here you'll find the Russian Toys Museum, Russian Fleet Museum and the Russian Vodka History Museum. Next door to here is a flea market and the Vernissage where folk crafts and antiques are on sale. Nearby there's also Izmailovsky Island surrounded by the Serebryano-Vinogradnye ponds. The island contains 18-19th centuries architectural monuments and was created by the second Tsar of the Romanov family. One of the largest city parks in Europe, Izmailovo Park, is also close by. In St. Petersburg our hotel is situated near to Nevsky Prospekt on the Neva River embankment. The metro station is in the hotel building and it takes approximately 20 minutes to reach the Hermitage. Within walking distance of our hotel is Alexander Nevsky Lavra. This monastery complex is home to some of the oldest buildings in the city and the graves of some of Russia's most famous composers and writers including Tchaikovsky, Dostoevsky and Glinka.

## **Essential information**

### **FCO Advice**

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

#### **Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### **Essential Information**



Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## Visa Information

Russia: All nationalities require a single entry visa in order to enter Russia. As part of the visa requirements you will need to obtain a Russian Travel Voucher and Authorisation from the local Russian authorities. Explore will request this on your behalf approximately 8 weeks prior to departure. Please allow a minimum of 5 working days for the travel voucher and authorisation to be processed. Due to the visa processing times, Explore are unable to accept bookings within one month of travel. For British passport holders: All applicants must present themselves in person to the Russia Visa Processing Centre in London, Manchester or Edinburgh, on the day of application, to provide biometric information (fingerprints). There is currently no appointment system in place for this new process, so applicants will be seen on a first come, first serve basis. It is likely this will mean lengthy queues and waiting times. The biometric process is not optional, and any applicant who refuses to provide their fingerprints will automatically be refused a visa. This information is not stored and applicants will therefore need to travel to the Processing Centre each time a visa is required. In the event an application is rejected due to inaccurate or incomplete information, fingerprints must be resubmitted as part of the revised application. For more information regarding this process - we recommend contacting the Russian Embassy direct, their website is <http://rusemb.org.uk/visa/> It is essential that you provide Explore with the correct passport information at the time of booking, as this will be required in order to request the travel voucher and letter of invite, as well as pre-book any applicable train tickets. Corrections and amendments will incur additional charges, so please double check that the information we have for you is up to date and correct, this includes your passport number, full name as per passport (including middle names), date of birth and place of birth; if customers renew or reissue their passports from the details initially given to Explore, train tickets must be cancelled and purchased again, which involves extra costs and may result in customers being in differing train carriages to the rest of the group. If you intend to renew your passport please let Explore know at the point of booking and please ensure that you have the new passport no later than 8 weeks prior to travel. You will be required to enter a reference number and a confirmation number on your visa application. These can be found at the top of your authorisation letter under the heading 'Voucher Number'. The 6 digit long number is the reference and the 4 digit number is the confirmation number. In order for Explore to provide the necessary documentation to support your visa application (i.e. your visa authorisation), all pre and post tour accommodation must be booked through Explore and not booked independently. Please ensure that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity from the date of return to your home country. All visa information is subject to change regularly, so please check with your local consulate for the most up to date advice for the countries you are visiting. All other nationalities should check with the Russian embassy. For nationalities that require proof of their travel insurance through Explore as part of their visa application, please contact us for a copy of this.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them here.

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Included activities

Please note for many attractions and sites you visit during the tour, you will not be allowed to take coats or bags inside. These will have to be checked into the cloakrooms available and so customers are advised to carry a small bag for wallets/purses, mobile phone, personal docs etc in whilst inside the venue.

## Non refundable permits

## Russia Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, polio and diphtheria. Consult your travel clinic for further advice. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. Special Note: Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. The Russian government advises that certain medications must be declared upon entry into the country, and you may also be required to carry a prescription with you. You should consult your local consulate for up to date information prior to travel.

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