



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



frandango24

It's an Orange Adventure

Santa Ana, Orange County, Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, Dana Point, 3 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Orange County is a beautiful nestled in the bustling Southern California. It is definitely not to be overlooked for it boasts a multitude of great activities. It is centrally located with great access to both the majestic Pacific Ocean as well as the harsh deserts of California. There are many state parks and preserves in this area as well, such as Laguna Niguel Regional Park, or the Corona del Mar State Beach. The Ocean Institute is another great stop to make. Along the way your taste buds will have a trip of their own visiting the likes of Flamingo's Mexican Grill and Bar, Cowboy Seafood, and Brio Tuscany Grille, just to name a few. After this trip you will be sure to be saying "orange you glad we came".

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Orange County, Santa Ana, Dana Point

DAY NOTE: Begin your trip by waking up on the beach at the Capri Laguna Inn on the Beach, once you have wrestled yourself from the comfort of their beds, head to The Cottage for some great breakfast and some history as well. The building is original from 1917, and feels just like a cottage, be it one that serves amazing breakfast favorites. When you have had your fill head over to the Aliso & Wood Canyons Park. This 3,789 acre site has something for everyone, cycling horse back riding or just plain old walking. Walking may be the best way to go because of all the remnants left by the native peoples. Its great exercise, and just generally a really cool place. Just a short distance away is the Laguna Niguel Regional Park, it is a very different place from the Wood Canyons Park for this 236 acre park surrounds a beautiful lake full of fun activities for all ages. From land to lake, to lunch and boy is Flamingo's Mexican Grill and Bar the place to recharge. You must experience some of the Mexican flare when visiting Southern California and this is the place. Enjoy the great chips and salsa before diving into your authentic burrito or tacos. They offer a wide selection of beer and wine as well. Now that you are full, lets head to yet another of the natural marvels of Orange County, the majestic Pacific Ocean. 1,000 steps beach lives up to its reputation for beauty but not 1,000 steps. It is only around 225 so that is good, but it is definitely worth the walk. After enjoying the beach head home and get ready for a fun and exciting dinner at Brio Tuscany Grille, a place in which you will be surprised with the fusion of a steakhouse with and Italian twist. Before or after dinner you will surely be drawn to dance this is the place for it. Dance the night away and have fun at the bar.



Aliso & Wood Canyons Park

Beautiful views for hikers, bikers and horse-riders



Laguna Niguel Regional Park

236 acres of fresh air



Flamingo's Mexican Grill & Bar

Local favorite serving good quality mexican cuisine



Brio Tuscany Grille

Jazz and steak

Day 2 - Dana Point, Newport Beach

DAY NOTE: After you full day yesterday and possibly into the night enjoy the Capri's beds, and when hunger finally finds you

take advantage of their complementary breakfast. Once you are ready to begin your day it is off the the Ocean Institute one of the man notable attractions of Orange County. This institute is a pinnacle of academic instruction, thousands of people flock here to learn a little about the Pacific Ocean. If after visiting the Ocean Institute you are hungry head to the Harbor House Cafe to enjoy either breakfast again of their assortment of burgers and fries or many other options. Your next stop is a very special one, the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve and Preserve houses six endangered species which are always a treat to see. You can tour the preserve either by kayak, canoe or those good old feel. Be sure to enjoy some of the life the Newport offers at the Newport Landing Boardwalk, this is a great place to come and walk around just to enjoy the sun, fun and each other. When you have had your fill of the boardwalk Amelia's is a great stop for dinner. They offer great Italian and Seafood dishes for a very reasonable price, Amelia's is a great way to spend the night.



Harbor House Café

Family friendly, huge portions, great value



Amelia's

Delightful and delicious

Day 3 - Newport Beach, Huntington Beach

DAY NOTE: Enjoy today, sleep in when you are ready either grab a light breakfast and the Capri Laguna Inn on the Beach or head straight to Cowboy Seafood for an early lunch. This is a cool place that is an off shoot of a Houston restaurant. The name is very telling they are all about seafood so be sure you are up for their assortment ranging from grilled tuna to smoked trout. Give it a shot this is vacation be adventurous. Once you have finished with the Cowboy Grill mosey on over to the Corona del Mar State Beach. This is an extremely affluent area that is full of beautiful architecture. There are many points of interest for you to look at here, so check them out and pick your favorites. When you have had your fill of the state beach the Oceanview Promenade is a must see. The only thing to say about this place is to make sure you have enough time to enjoy it because there is enough stuff here for a whole vacation. Perusing the Promenade may create some hunger so when that happens head to Huntington Beach Beer Company, again the name of the establishment is telling, they know their beer. Here you will also find some good bar food food, ranging from pizza to pasta. Come for the beer, stay for the fun.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife



Cowboy Seafood

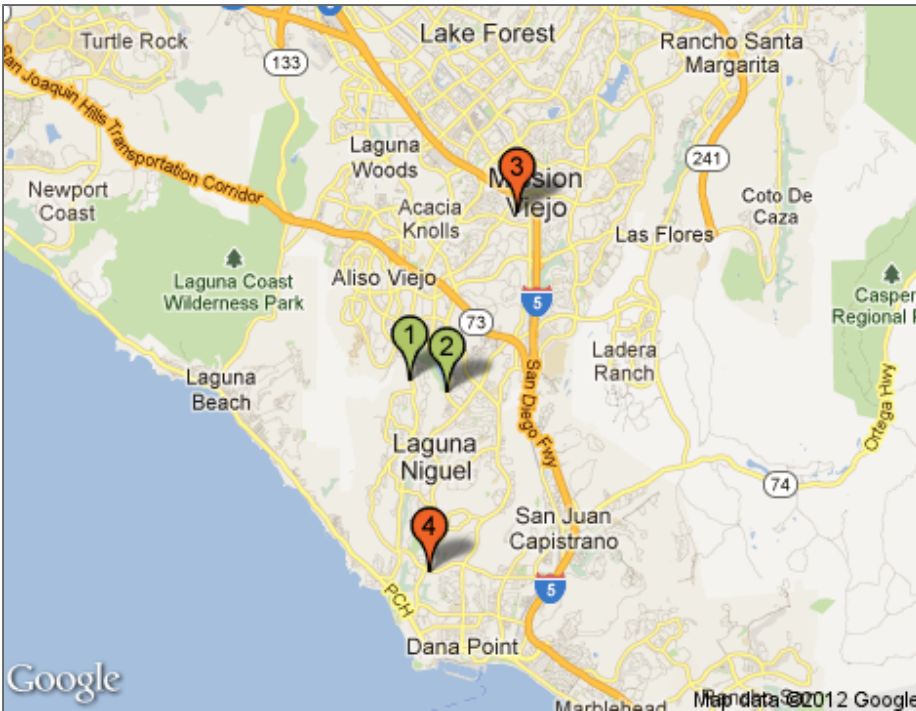
Sleek surroundings



Huntington Beach Beer Company

Brewpub near the beach

Day 1 - Orange County, Santa Ana, Dana Point



QUICK NOTE

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contact:

tel: +1 949 923 2200
<http://www.ocparks.com/alisoandwoodcanyons/>

location:

28373 Alicia Parkway
Laguna Niguel CA 92677

1 Aliso & Wood Canyons Park

DESCRIPTION: This enormous park is an oasis of nature in Orange County. There are many hiking, biking and equestrian trails over the spectacular 3,879 acres. Beautiful canyons and rock formations make up the landscape. Also a place of history, the park contains petroglyphs carved by native people hundreds of years ago, as well as Orange County's largest collection of marine fossils. In addition, the Orange County



wcities

Natural History Museum is located on the grounds. Entry fee is \$2 per car. Cash only. © wcities.com

contact:
tel: +1 949 923 2240
<http://www.ocparks.com/laguna-aniguelpark/>

location:
28241 La Paz Road
Laguna Niguel CA 92677

2 Laguna Niguel Regional Park

DESCRIPTION: This park boasts 236 acres surrounding a lake stocked with trout and other fish. You can find lots of spots to relax and play beneath the hundreds of shady trees. You'll find bicycle trails that curve over the hills making for a challenging, yet still relaxed ride. Two bridges allow access to picnic areas and trails on the other side of the lake. Other facilities include horseshoe pits, rowboats, tennis courts and volleyball courts. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Orange County Parks

contact:
tel: +1 949 768 3811
http://orangecounty.citysearch.com/profile/36583030/laguna_hills_ca/flamingos_mexican_grill.html

location:
25342 McIntyre Street
Laguna Hills CA 92653

3 Flamingo's Mexican Grill & Bar

DESCRIPTION: Flamingo's is a fun, exciting bar and restaurant in Laguna Hills. It might be located in a strip mall, but this restaurant has a lot of character and ambience. You'll think you're in Mexico when you settle into your booth or table and taste the chips and salsa. The servers are friendly and the decor is stylishly authentic but not tacky. Many people come just for the bar. The food is as authentic as you're going to get this side of the border. Delicious tacos, enchiladas, tamales, burritos, and more will leave you full and content. The warm tortillas are the best and all the ingredients are fresh. There's a pretty good wine list and a huge selection of beer. © wcities.com

hours:
Mo to Su from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM

contact:
tel: +1 949 443 1476
<http://www.briorestaurant.com/>

location:
24050 Camino del Avion
Dana Point CA 92629

4 Brio Tuscany Grille

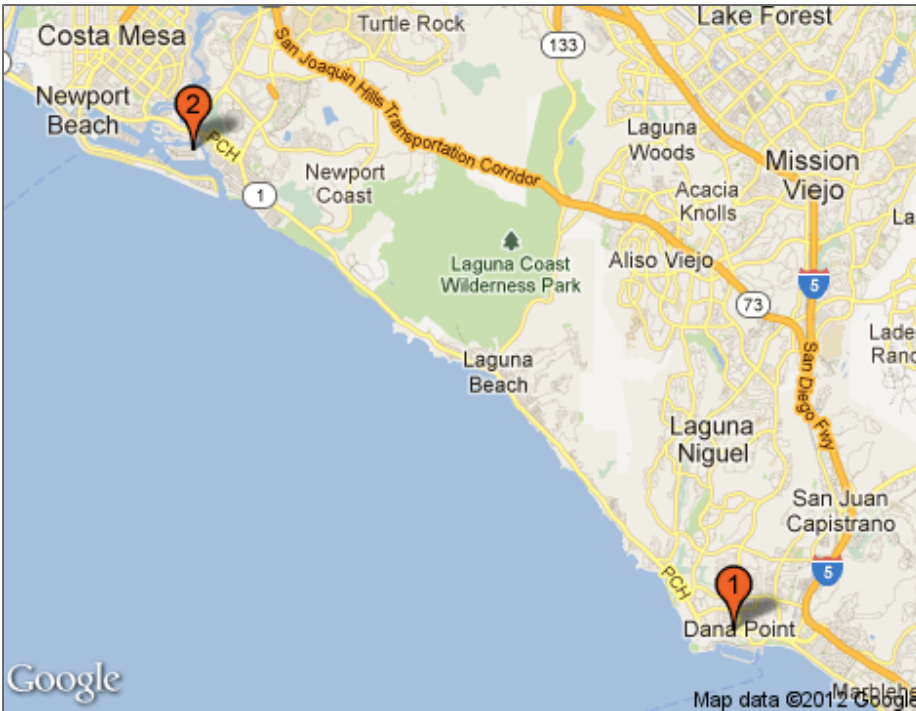
DESCRIPTION: This steakhouse with an Italian twist serves up live jazz and salsa on the side. The live music ranges from jazz to salsa to disco and despite your full stomach from the hearty steaks, you'll still be unable to resist the urge to get up and dance. This restaurant was designed to look like a Tuscan villa. If you like steak you've come to the right place. All of the food is done in an Italian/Tuscan style, which means it's flavorful and colorful. You can also order pasta or fish. Full bar and wine list are also available. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Brio Tuscany Grille

hours:
Mo to Th from 11:30 AM to 11:00 PM, Fr to Sa from 11:30 AM to 12:00 AM, Su from 04:00 PM to 11:00 PM

Day 2 - Dana Point, Newport Beach



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: After your full day yesterday and possibly into the night enjoy the Capri's beds, and when hunger finally finds you take advantage of their complementary breakfast. Once you are ready to begin your day it is off to the Ocean Institute one of the most notable attractions of Orange County. This institute is a pinnacle of academic instruction, thousands of people flock here to learn a little about the Pacific Ocean. If after visiting the Ocean Institute you are hungry head to the Harbor House Cafe to enjoy either breakfast again or their assortment of burgers and fries or many other options. Your next stop is a very special one, the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Reserve and Preserve houses six endangered species which are always a treat to see. You can tour the preserve either by kayak, canoe or those good old feet. Be sure to enjoy some of the life the Newport offers at the Newport Landing Boardwalk, this is a great place to come and walk around just to enjoy the sun, fun and each other. When you have had your fill of the boardwalk Amelia's is a great stop for dinner. They offer great Italian and Seafood dishes for a very reasonable price, Amelia's is a great way to spend the night.

contact:

tel: +1 949 496 9270
<http://www.harborhousecafe.com>

location:

34157 Pacific Coast Highway
Dana Point CA 92629

hours:

24hrs

1 Harbor House Café

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

If you're not feeling like you could eat a horse, order one portion of breakfast between two - it'll save you a bit of cash and you'll still have some food left over.

DESCRIPTION: Harbor House Café offers a plethora of dining options - everything from the standard diner fare of burgers and fries to the more unique options of seafood and stir fry dishes is served here. Breakfast is conveniently available 24 hours a day and all dishes are prepared with cholesterol-free oil.



Harbor House Cafe

The fun, retro atmosphere and hearty portions have made this restaurant a local landmark for diners of all ages. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: +1 949 673 6580
<http://www.ameliasbalboaisland.com/>

location:

311 Marine Avenue
Newport Beach CA 92662

hours:

M-Th 11a-10p, F-Sa
11:30a-10p, Su 10a-10p

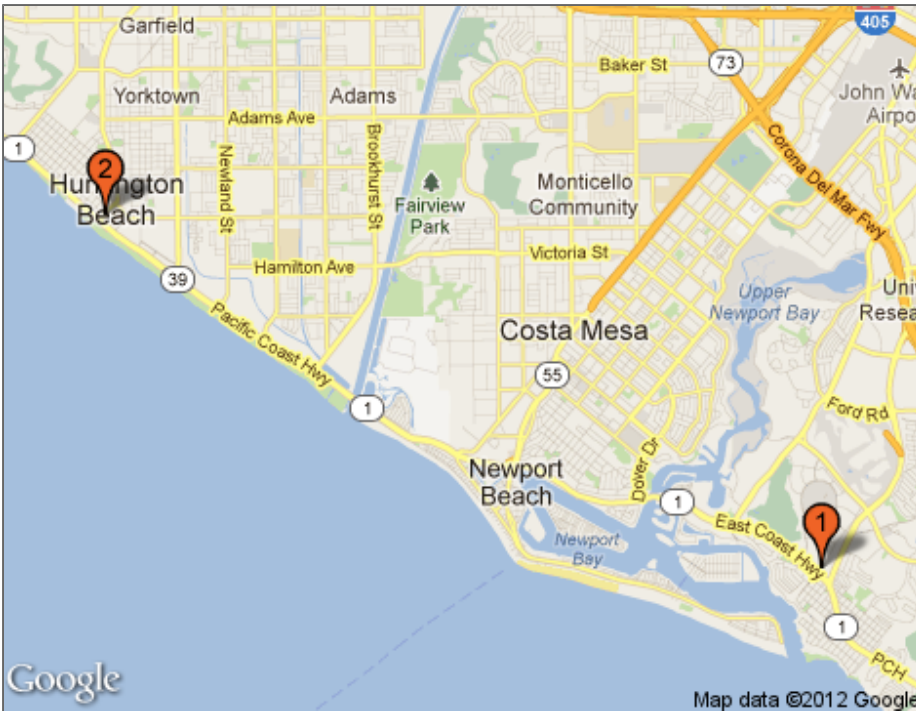
2 Amelia's

DESCRIPTION: This restaurant has been open since the 1960s and it has a strong following. The clientele is devoted to this spectacular little restaurant. The decor is quaint and elegant, and the focus is on the delicious food. It is a good spot for a romantic evening for two with candlelit tables and soft lighting. Serving Italian and seafood dishes that would make anyone's mouth water, this is a great place for lunch or dinner. Dinner is when the seafood shines; try the salmon, lobster or pasta with seafood. The pasta dishes without seafood are also delightful. Entrees range from \$7-15. It also offers a small wine list featuring some basic wines. © wcities.com



Amelia's

Day 3 - Newport Beach, Huntington Beach



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Enjoy today, sleep in when you are ready either grab a light breakfast and the Capri Laguna Inn on the Beach or head straight to Cowboy Seafood for an early lunch. This is a cool place that is an off shoot of a Houston restaurant. The name is very telling they are all about seafood so be sure you are up for their assortment ranging from grilled tuna to smoked trout. Give it a shot this is vacation be adventurous. Once you have finished with the Cowboy Grill mosey on over to the Corona del Mar State Beach. This is an extremely affluent area that is full of beautiful architecture. There are many points of interest for you to look at here, so check them out and pick your favorites. When you have had your fill of the state beach the Oceanview Promenade is a must see. The only thing to say about this place is to make sure you have enough time to enjoy it because there is enough stuff here for a whole vacation. Perusing the Promenade may create some hunger so when that happens head to Huntington Beach Beer Company, again the name of the establishment is telling, they know their beer. Here you will also find some good bar food food, ranging from pizza to pasta. Come for the beer, stay for the fun.

contact:
tel: +1 949 718 0187

location:
850 Avocado Avenue
Newport Beach CA 92660

hours:
M-Th 5:30p-10p, F-Sa
5:30p-11p, Su 4:30p-9p

1 Cowboy Seafood

DESCRIPTION: This is a concept restaurant from the people who brought us Houston's, a popular restaurant and bar concept featuring an eclectic menu and lively atmosphere. The decor is streamlined and modern. Fans whirl on the ceiling creating a kind of soft buzz in the air. The clientele is mostly young, hip, super-beautiful twenty and thirty-somethings. It is all about seafood here, and you will yell like a cowboy when you taste the succulent flavors of these dishes, from grilled tuna to smoked trout and beyond. Prices range from \$12-28 for entrees. There is a full bar and decent wine list with bottles ranging from \$8-40. Patio seating is also available. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: +714 960 5343

fax: +714 960 3535

<http://www.hbbeerco.com/index.html>

location:

201 Main Street

Huntington Beach CA 92648

hours:

Daily 11a-2a

2 Huntington Beach Beer Company

DESCRIPTION: Good beer and high-definition plasma TV's (with NFL, NBA, & MLB packages) make this brewery a real find when you are wondering where to stumble in for your favorite sporting event. Typical brewery grub is served here for reasonable prices, like burgers, sandwiches, pizza and pasta, and a variety of appetizers that you might expect to accompany a cold one. Speaking of cold ones, they got lots of 'em. Including the Huntington Beach Blonde, Pier Pale Ale, Indicator IPA, and Bourbon Barleywine, to name a few. They also have great daily specials and a late-night happy hour. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Huntington Beach Beer Company

Orange County Snapshot

Local Info

The picture today of Orange County is much different than its image from when the Beach Boys were big. The world famous beaches, bleached blonde locals, original Magic Kingdom, and entrenched conservatism still remain, but the years have brought gradual, beneficial change. The Democrats achieved unprecedented success in Orange County during the 2008 presidential election, while the social and cultural demographics are also much changed from Nixon's day with, for example, a strong Vietnamese presence now established in the City of Westminster.

While the Beach Boys (none of whom could actually surf) continue to be played every third song on a local radio station, K-Earth, a younger generation of locals are more likely to think of No Doubt as the representative OC-born band of recent years: inventive, exciting, and with a definite global appeal.

OC geography

This substantial 948 square mile rectangle of California, with the Pacific Ocean along the west and the San Bernardino Forest in the east, contains 34 towns within its borders with the capabilities to cater to almost any taste. With shopping, restaurants, and plenty of outdoor activities, the main draw remains the unending coastline.

Stretching the full length of the county, from the OC's southernmost city of San Clemente (aka: the Spanish Village by the Sea) and the westernmost tip of Seal Beach (home to a National Wildlife Preserve), the beach is the focal point for much of life in the OC. Millionaire homesteads in Newport and Laguna Beach cap the semi-arid hills of the OC, battling for the best ocean views. Choice surf spots such as Huntington Beach, Salt Creek, and San Onofre are never without their attendant pods of wetsuit-wearing surfers, often in the water from as early as 6am to avoid the crowds and lay claim to the best waves.

Surfin' USA

Surfing being what it is in Orange County (Huntington Beach, proudly known as "Surf City USA" lays claim to the origins of the practice in the US), it's also possible to come across surfing competitions throughout the year at any of these prime surf spots. Two competitions particularly worth catching are the Huntington Beach-located US Open (mid-July), like a local festival with live music and a skateboarding arena included, and the Hurley Pro Trestles (mid-Sept), held at Lower Trestles near San Clemente.

Historical pockets

If you're looking for more history than the ongoing surfing traditions (although Huntington does have an International Surfing Museum), there are some historical pockets of interest around the OC. Mission San Juan Capistrano is always a popular choice, famous for its classic Spanish Colonial architecture and the Return of the Swallows celebration which marks the annual migration of the swallows from Argentina to the OC. Nearby Dana Point also holds its own historical "hidden secret" - a replica of the brig Pilgrim (the boat upon which Richard Henry Dana rode in on to eventually write "Two Years Before the Mast", and who Dana Point is named after).

If you are a presidential history buff, be sure to stop by the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, situated on the land where Nixon family lived until 1922. You can't miss the building - it has an actual Army One helicopter outside (and yes, you are able to step aboard).

History can also be uncovered in unexpected places, such as along the hiking trails (or dirt bike tracks, depending on your perspective) that wind throughout the beautiful canyons that you can find just a few miles inland from the coast. The Dripping Cave (found in Aliso and Wood Canyons Park), a prime example of the wind-carved sandstone caves that litter the region, was the hideout for stagecoach

bandits, reminding you of wilder times in this now most settled of regions.

Top stops

Nowhere is more settled than the most popular areas of the region: Laguna Beach and Newport Beach (the latter incorporating Balboa Island and the Balboa Peninsula). These two towns, on the surface, are distillates of old school Orange County, with millionaire residents and, in the case of Newport's Balboa Island, gleaming powerboats docked at the end of private piers. But look closer, and you see what the super-rich are buying here is the cozy, local feel that sets these towns apart from their in-county cousins. Laguna, home to a stretch of stunning beaches backed by sea-cliffs (1,000 Steps Beach is a perennial local favorite), is also Orange County's local artist epicenter, with a small gallery almost every second shop (for a closer look, attend the annual Sawdust Festival when local artists open their studios to the public or their weekly Art Walk during the summer). Walking around Newport's Balboa Island feels like stepping backwards into a more innocent time - at the Fun Zone there's a big wheel, a 50's style diner on the pier, and stands at which to buy the local specialty of frozen bananas.

If that all sounds a little too nostalgic, South Coast Plaza, the great commercial heart of Orange County, awaits just off the I-5 for all those keen to indulge in some serious mall-time. For the wandering gourmand, increasing ethnic diversity coupled with OC resident Michelin-starred chefs ensure a galaxy of choice (for all budgets) when it comes to deciding where to eat. Oenophiles, unsure whether to go straight to Napa, can find local wineries in Orange County (Laguna Canyon for one), and are also within easy striking distance of the many vineyards found in the Temecula Valley.

The thing about Orange County is that it's full of surprises. Yes, there's Disneyland (now expanded to include the rides of sister-park, California Adventure,

Orange County Snapshot continued

and the music of the House of Blues), coastline to die for, and the laid-back surfer vibe. But there are also intense chilli cook-

offs, bizarre traditions like the Laguna Niguel annual mooning of the Amtrak train service, and America's richest two-day rodeo. Remember that when deciding your

itinerary, leave a couple of days free to explore and find out what you can uncover.
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