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Foreign travel advice

Greece

Warnings and insurance

Still current at: 29 November 2023

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Latest update: Information on the UEFA Europa

League game between AEK and Brighton in Athens

on 30 November ('Safety and security' page).

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) provides advice about risks of travel to help British nationals make informed decisions. Find out more about FCDO travel advice (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/about-foreign-commonwealth-development-office-travel-advice).

Before you travel

No travel can be guaranteed safe. Read all the advice in this guide as well as <u>support for British</u> <u>nationals abroad (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/support-for-british-nationals-abroad)</u> which includes:

- advice on preparing for travel abroad and reducing risks
- information for women, LGBT+ and disabled

travellers

Follow and contact FCDO travel on X (https://twitter.com/fcdotravelgovuk) (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/fcdotravel) and Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/travelaware/). You can also sign up to get email notifications (https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/greece /email-signup) when this advice is updated.

Travel insurance

If you choose to travel, research your destinations and get appropriate travel insurance (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance). Insurance should cover your itinerary, planned activities and expenses in an emergency.

Entry requirements

This advice reflects the UK government's understanding of current rules for people travelling on a full 'British citizen' passport (https://www.gov.uk/types-of-british-nationality) from the UK, for the most common types of travel.

The authorities in Greece set and enforce entry rules. If you're not sure how these requirements apply to you, <u>contact Greece's embassy or consulate (https://www.mfa.gr/uk/en/)</u> in the UK.

COVID-19 rules

Countries may restrict travel or bring in rules at short notice. Check with your travel company or airline for changes.

If you test positive for COVID-19, you may need to stay where you are until you test negative. You may

also need to seek treatment there.

Visit TravelHealthPro (from the UK's National Travel Health Network and Centre) for general COVID-19 advice for travellers (https://travelhealthpro.org.uk /news/499/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice-fortravellers).

Travel to Greece

Follow any instructions given on arrival at immigration or airport testing facilities. Check the Ministry of Tourism website (https://mintour.gov.gr/en/archiki-english/) for more information.

Passport validity requirements

If you are planning to travel to an EU country (except Ireland), or Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino or Vatican City, you must follow the Schengen area passport requirements (https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/entry-exit/non-eu-nationals/index_en.htm).

Your passport must be:

- issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

You must check your passport meets these requirements before you travel. If your passport was issued before 1 October 2018, extra months may have been added to its expiry date.

Contact the embassy of the country you are visiting (https://www.mfa.gr/uk/en/the-embassy) if you think that your passport does not meet both these requirements. Renew your passport if you need to (https://www.gov.uk/apply-renew-passport).

Visa requirements

You can travel to countries in the <u>Schengen area</u> (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/docs/schengen_brochure/schengen_brochure_dr3111126_en.pdf) for up to 90 days in any 180-day period without a visa. This applies if you travel:

- as a tourist
- to visit family or friends
- to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events
- for short-term studies or training

If you are travelling to Greece and other Schengen countries without a visa, make sure your whole visit is within the 90-day limit. Visits to Schengen countries within the previous 180 days before you travel count towards your 90 days.

For a longer stay (to work or study, for business or for other reasons) you will need to meet the Greek government's entry requirements. Check with the Greek Embassy (https://www.mfa.gr/uk/en/the-embassy) before you make arrangements to travel about what type of visa and work permit, if any, you may need.

If you are <u>travelling to Greece for work</u> (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-to-greece-for-work), read the guidance on visas and permits.

The entry requirements for touring creatives have recently changed, more <u>details of the new rules can</u> <u>be found on the Greek Embassy website.</u>

(https://www.mfa.gr/uk/en/visa.html?mission=lon) If you stay in Greece with a residence permit or long-stay visa, this does not count towards your 90-day visa-free limit.

Passport stamping

Check your passport is stamped if you enter or exit the Schengen area through Greece as a visitor. Border guards will use passport stamps to check you're complying with the 90-day visa-free limit for short stays in the Schengen area. If relevant entry or exit stamps are not in your passport, border guards will presume that you have overstayed your visa-free limit. If you do overstay, you may be fined on departure, and have restrictions placed on your ability to re-enter Greece whilst the fine remains unpaid.

You can show evidence of when and where you entered or exited the Schengen area, and ask the border guards to add this date and location in your passport. Examples of acceptable evidence include boarding passes and tickets.

You may also need to:

Print Greece travel advice - GOV.UK

- show a return or onward ticket
- show you have enough money for your stay

If you are resident in Greece, read our <u>Living in Greece guide (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-greece#passports-and-travel)</u> for passport stamping information.

Vaccination requirements (other than COVID-19)

At least 8 weeks before your trip, <u>check the</u> <u>vaccinations and vaccination certificates you may</u> <u>need on TravelHealthPro</u> (https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/91/greece).

Customs rules

There are strict rules about goods that can be brought into and taken out of Greece (https://www.aade.gr/en/customs). You must declare anything that may be prohibited or subject to tax or duty.

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Taking food and drink into the EU

You cannot take meat, milk or products containing them into EU countries. There are some exceptions for medical reasons, for example certain amounts of powdered infant milk, infant food, or pet food required for medical reasons. Check the rules about taking food and drink into the EU (https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animalproducts/personal_imports_en) on the European Commission website.

Safety and security

Terrorism

There is a high threat of terrorist attack globally affecting UK interests and British nationals, including from groups and individuals who view the UK and British nationals as targets. You should remain vigilant at all times.

UK Counter Terrorism Policing has information and advice on staying safe abroad
https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk
/safetyadvice/) and what to do in the event of a terrorist attack. Find out how to reduce your risk
from terrorism (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reduce-your-risk-from-terrorism-while-abroad)) while abroad.

Terrorism in Greece

Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in Greece.

Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places frequented by foreigners.

There have been several attacks involving explosives and automatic weapons against Greek institutions, shopping malls, banks, media offices, diplomatic premises and the police.

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British nationals aren't normally considered a specific target, but attacks could happen in places visited by foreigners.

UEFA Europa League

Athens will host the <u>UEFA Europa League</u> (https://www.uefa.com/uefaeuropaleague/) on Thursday 30 November between AEK and Brighton. If you are travelling to Athens for the match, you should:

- plan your movement around the city to arrive at the stadium well in advance of the match kick-off
- follow the instructions of the local authorities
- take care of your personal possessions including passports, especially in crowds and on public transport

Further information can be found on <u>Brighton and Hove Albion's official website</u>
(https://www.brightonandhovealbion.com/news/3742662
/important-information-for-supporters-travelling-to-aek-athens).

Political demonstrations

Greek authorities have increased security at some prominent locations, including tourist sites, due to events in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Stay aware of your surroundings, stay away from demonstrations and follow the advice of local authorities.

Strikes and demonstrations

There are regular strikes, sometimes called at short notice that can cause disruption to public transport (including air travel and ports), as well as road networks and borders. Political demonstrations can also occur frequently.

Avoid demonstrations wherever possible and follow

the advice of the local authorities. Some demonstrations in the past have turned violent. If you do find yourself unexpectedly near a demonstration, move away to the last known safe place. Security forces often use tear gas to break up demonstrations, which can harm your breathing and vision.

Demonstrations take place regularly around major squares in central Athens, in particular Syntagma Square. There is currently a heightened risk of demonstrations, particularly in central Athens, related to events in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Nationwide strikes and protests can occur at any time and may disrupt road, air, sea travel and cause delays or diversions at border crossings.

Demonstrations may happen at short notice, and have traditionally happened on 1 May, 17 November and 6 December.

Crime

Theft

Theft of passports, wallets and handbags are common on the metro and in crowded tourist places, particularly in central Athens. Don't carry all your valuables in one place, and remember to keep a photocopy or scanned copy of your passport somewhere safe. Maintain the same level of personal security awareness as in the UK.

When driving on holiday, keep your valuables out of sight and lock your vehicle at all times. Always park in a well-lit area or secure car park. Be alert to car crime.

Sexual assault

Sexual assaults and personal attacks may occur in Greece. This includes attacks on foreign visitors in

tourist areas and cities.

We recommend that all travellers follow this advice:

- save the location of your accommodation on your maps app, so it's easier to find at the end of the night
- set up a WhatsApp group to keep in touch with others in your group
- keep an eye on each other's drinks to make sure they don't get spiked
- don't let a friend walk back to their hotel alone
- don't give a drunk person more alcohol

You should immediately report anything you see that doesn't feel right to local authorities or hospitality management.

Laws and cultural differences

Personal ID

Carry a copy of your passport or other photographic ID which confirms British nationality at all times, this is a legal requirement.

Race

The majority of visitors experience no difficulties related to race, but there have been some racially motivated attacks, particularly in inner-city areas.

Public offences

The Greek police won't accept behaviour they find rowdy or indecent, especially where excessive drinking is involved, this behaviour may be illegal. The police will make arrests and the courts are likely to give heavy fines or prison sentences if you behave indecently.

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Some fancy dress costumes may be regarded as offensive and therefore against decency laws. Your travel insurance may not cover you after drinking.

Smoking

It's illegal to smoke in all indoor public places. The penalty for violating this law is a fine of up to 500 euros.

Drugs

Possession of even small quantities of illegal drugs can lead to a long prison sentence.

Alcohol, drugs and use of nitrous oxide can make you less alert, less in control and less aware of your environment.

Nitrous oxide is illegal to buy or sell for recreational use in Greece. You can be arrested or fined if found in possession.

Public transport

It's sometimes necessary to time stamp or validate your ticket on public transport for it to be valid. Check with local providers.

Buying goods or services

Make sure you get a receipt for any goods or services you buy.

Offensive items like pepper spray, knuckledusters or knives with a blade length of 10cm or above are listed as weapons in Greece and fall under the current weapon possession law. You need to have a special licence from the local police authority to carry any weapon otherwise you might face arrest and legal charges. You need to have a special licence to carry any knife that is not made for

domestic, professional, artistic or hunting use.

LGBT+ travellers

Same-sex sexual relations are legal in Greece and civil unions between same-sex couples have been legal since 2015. The age of consent in Greece is 15, this applies to partners of both the same sex and opposite sex. Transgender people are able to change their legal gender. Anti-discrimination and hate speech laws apply to gender identity.

Public attitudes towards same-sex sexual activity vary throughout the country; showing affection in public by same-sex couples may be frowned upon, especially in rural areas.

Attitudes are generally much more welcoming in Athens and on many Greek islands, particularly on Lesvos, Mykonos and Skiathos. See our information and advice page (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice) for the LGBT+ community before you travel.

Military service

Men, aged 19 and above, born to a Greek national parent may have military service obligations, regardless of any other nationality they hold. Authorities can prevent you leaving Greece until you complete military service obligations.

Using cameras or approaching sensitive locations

It is illegal to approach or take photos or videos of military installations, vehicles or buildings at any time. The Greek authorities will arrest and possibly prosecute anyone doing so. Certain border areas are also militarily sensitive. Although you can visit these areas, you should avoid taking photos or video footage.

Outdoor activities and adventure tourism

Music festivals

Be aware of local laws and customs, and take extra care of your valuables if attending a festival or large concert. Read our festivals in Europe travel checklist (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/festival-travel-checklist) for more advice.

Water sports and swimming safety

If you are considering taking part in water sports activities, do so through a licensed water sports centre and make sure paperwork is completed before starting the activity. Check the Safe Water Sports website (https://safewatersports.com/) for more information.

Make sure you follow any warning signs, adhere to instructions from lifeguards and observe the flag indicators on beaches. Follow local advice if jellyfish or urchins are present.

Quad biking and mopeds

Quad biking is considered an extreme sport and carries the risk of serious injury or death. Specific travel insurance to cover quad bike rental is essential. Always take care to read the details of your insurance cover before you travel on holiday, paying particular attention to the small print and exclusions on your insurance policy.

If you do rent a quad bike, choose a category in accordance with your driving licence and age. Drivers and passengers must wear helmets. Failure to do so may invalidate your insurance and if stopped you will be fined and your licence taken from you. If you intend to hire a moped you will need a valid driving licence with at least category

A1 - 'light motorcycle'. Category P, which is valid in the UK for driving mopeds up to 50cc, is not valid in Greece.

Transport risks

Road travel

If you are planning to drive in Greece, see information on <u>driving abroad (https://www.gov.uk/driving-abroad)</u> and read the <u>RAC guide</u> (https://www.rac.co.uk/drive/travel/country/greece/).

Make sure any vehicle you hire is in good condition and check that you're insured. When renting mopeds or quad bikes, insurance sold by the hire company usually only provides third party insurance, which only covers the cost of damage to another vehicle. Any damage sustained to the rental vehicle in many cases may need to be paid for by you, or you may face arrest if you do not pay and the hire company decide to press charges.

Traffic can be busy, fast and chaotic, especially in the larger cities. Take care when crossing roads. Pedestrians should cross roads using a crossing. Drivers don't always stop, even though they are required to. The green pedestrian crossing signal sometimes also allows cars to turn right onto the crossing, so cross with caution.

Driving any vehicle while over the legal drinking limit can result in a heavy fine or imprisonment.

Licences and permits

You can drive in Greece with a UK driving licence.

Driving a British car abroad

You may need a UK sticker to drive your car outside the UK. Check the GOV.UK displaying number

<u>plates website (https://www.gov.uk/displaying-number-plates/flags-symbols-and-identifiers)</u> for more information on what to do if you are driving outside the UK.

Extreme weather and natural disasters

Flooding

Adverse weather conditions, including floods, are affecting some regions. The situation can change quickly. Follow <u>"112 Greece" (https://twitter.com/112Greece)</u> on X (formerly known as Twitter) for official updates

Forest fires

There are active wildfires across Greece, including in populated areas on the mainland and a number of islands.

Wildfires are highly dangerous and unpredictable. The situation can change quickly. Follow "112 Greece" on X (formerly known as Twitter) for official updates.

You should:

- take care when visiting or driving through woodland areas
- make sure cigarette ends are properly extinguished
- not light barbecues

Causing a forest fire is treated as a criminal offence in Greece even if unintentional. If you see a forest fire, call the emergency services on 112.

Forest fires can also cause travel disruption in wider areas.

Be cautious if you are in or near an area affected by wildfires. You should:

- follow the guidance of the emergency services
- call the Greek Emergency Services on 112 if you are in immediate danger
- contact your airline or travel operator who can assist you with return travel to the UK.
- enable the "Emergency Alerts" option to receive the Greek government's emergency alerts. For:
- iPhones go to Settings > Notification. Enable the "Emergency Alerts" option at the bottom.
- Android 11 and higher go to Settings > Notifications > Advanced Settings > Wireless Emergency Alerts
- Samsung Devices go to Settings > Apps >
 Messages > Notifications > Emergency
 Notifications. Enable the "Emergency Alerts"
 option
- read the <u>Greek Government's protection</u> guidelines (https://civilprotection.gov.gr/odigiesprostasias/dasikes-pyrkagies?lang=en) in the event of a forest fire.
- register via the <u>Greek government's Emergency</u> <u>Communication Service (https://civilprotection.gov.gr</u>/) (in Greek)

For further information on the risk of forest fires, visit the <u>Civil Protection website</u> (http://civilprotection.gr/en/forest-fires).

Earthquakes

Greece can experience earthquakes and earth tremors. You should:

- familiarise yourself with safety procedures in the event of an earthquake
- follow advice given by the local authorities
- call the Greek Emergency Services on 112 if you are in immediate danger

The Greek General Secretariat for Civil Protection website has advice about what to do before, during and after an earthquake (http://www.civilprotection.gr/en/earthquakes), and reports on incidents.

Health

Before you travel check that:

- your destination can provide the healthcare you may need
- you have <u>appropriate travel insurance</u>
 (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance)
 for local treatment or unexpected medical evacuation

This is particularly important if you have a health condition or are pregnant.

Emergency medical number

Dial 112 or 166 and ask for an ambulance.

Contact your insurance or medical assistance company promptly if you're referred to a medical facility for treatment.

For more information read guidance on <u>healthcare</u> when travelling in Europe (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-residents-visiting-the-eueea-and-switzerland-healthcare).

Vaccinations and health risks

At least 8 weeks before your trip check:

- the latest information on health risks and <u>what</u>
 <u>vaccinations you need for Greece</u>
 (https://www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/91/greece)
 on TravelHealthPro (from the UK's National
 Travel Health Network and Centre)
- where to get vaccines and whether you have to pay on the <u>NHS travel vaccinations page</u>

(https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/travel-vaccinations/)

Medication

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or bought in the UK can be different in other countries.

TravelHealthPro explains <u>best practice when</u> <u>travelling with medicines (https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/43/medicines-abroad)</u>.

The NHS has information on whether you can take your medicine abroad (https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/medicines/can-i-take-my-medicine-abroad/).

While pharmacies across the country stock a good supply of medicines, you should make sure you have sufficient medical supplies (including prescription medicines) for the duration of your stay and any unforeseen delays, adequate travel insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment and repatriation.

Prescription medicine for uninsured individuals are only dispensed from pharmacies at hospitals or those pharmacies registered with the National Organisations for the Provision of Health Services (EOPYY).

Travelling into Greece with medication

Medication can be brought into Greece if you hold a letter from your doctor stating the quantity required during your stay as well as a copy of your prescription. Ensure that medication is packed in the original container with the full prescription printed on the container, the name on the prescription must match the name on your passport.

If you need to take controlled medicines in Greece,

contact the dispensing agency via email.

For more information, contact the Greek National Organization of Medicines:

- By telephone: 0030 213 2040 395 / 285 / 225 / 000
- By email: clearance@eof.gr / relation@eof.gr

Healthcare facilities in Greece

Treatment and facilities are generally good on the mainland, but may be limited on the islands. The standards of nursing and after care, particularly in the public health sector is not to the standard expected in the UK. The public ambulance service is basic. There are serious shortages of ambulances on some islands.

If you are uninsured, you may not be able to get medical treatment or diagnostic tests from private doctors in Greece, only from public hospitals and primary healthcare centres.

You can view a list of English speaking doctors in Greece. (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/medical-facilities/list-of-medical-facilities-in-athens-mainland-greece)

COVID-19 healthcare in Greece

Wearing a mask

It is mandatory to wear a mask in all healthcare and social care facilities (e.g. hospitals, clinics, health centres and care homes).

Health insurance cards

Apply for a free <u>UK Global Health Insurance Card</u> (<u>GHIC</u>) or <u>European Health Insurance Card</u> (<u>EHIC</u>) (https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad

<u>/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/)</u> before leaving the UK. If you already have an EHIC, it will still be valid as long as it remains in date.

The GHIC or EHIC entitles you to state-provided medical treatment necessary during your trip. Any treatment provided is on the same terms as Greek nationals. If you do not have your EHIC with you or you've lost it, contact the NHS Overseas Healthcare Team (https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/contact-overseas-healthcare-services).

It's important to take out appropriate travel insurance for your needs. A GHIC or EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance and you should have both before you travel. An EHIC or GHIC does not cover all health-related costs, for example, medical repatriation, ongoing medical treatment and non-urgent treatment. Read more about what your travel insurance should cover (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/

EHIC and GHIC cover state healthcare only, not private treatment. You will be responsible for the cost of any treatment provided by a private doctor or private clinic.

Travel and mental health

Read FCDO guidance on travel and mental health (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues). There is also guidance on TravelHealthPro (https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/85/travelling-withmental-health-conditions).

Getting help

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) cannot provide tailored advice for individual trips. Read this travel advice and carry out your own research before deciding whether to travel.

Emergency services in Greece

Telephone: 112 (ambulance, fire, police)

Calling 999 from a UK mobile in Greece will automatically transfer you to the Greek emergency services.

Contact your travel provider and insurer

Contact your travel provider and your insurer if you are involved in a serious incident or emergency abroad. They will tell you if they can help and what you need to do.

Refunds and changes to travel

For refunds or changes to travel, contact your travel provider. You may also be able to make a claim through insurance. However, insurers usually require you to talk to your travel provider first.

Find out more about <u>changing or cancelling travel</u> <u>plans (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/about-foreign-commonwealth-development-office-travel-advice)</u>, including:

- where to get advice if you are in a dispute with a provider
- how to access previous versions of travel advice to support a claim

Support from FCDO

FCDO has guidance on staying safe and what to do if you need help or support abroad, including:

finding English-speaking <u>lawyers</u> (<u>https://find-a-professional-service-abroad.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk</u> /find?serviceType=lawyers&country=greece), <u>funeral</u> directors (<u>https://find-a-professional-service-</u>

abroad.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/find?country=greece&serviceType=funeral-directors) and translators and interpreters (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/translators-and-interpreters-list/list-of-english-speaking-translators-and-interpreters-in-athens-and-mainland-greece) in Greece

- dealing with a <u>death in Greece (https://www.gov.uk</u> /guidance/what-to-do-after-a-british-person-dies-ingreece)
- being <u>arrested in Greece (https://www.gov.uk</u> <u>/government/publications/greece-prisoner-pack/information-pack-for-british-prisoners-in-greece)</u>
- getting help if you're a <u>victim of crime</u> (https://www.gov.uk/victim-crime-abroad)
- what to do if you're in hospital (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/in-hospital-abroad)
- if you are <u>affected by a crisis (https://www.gov.uk</u>/guidance/how-to-deal-with-a-crisis-overseas), such as a terrorist attack

Contacting FCDO

Follow and contact FCDO travel on X (https://twitter.com/fcdotravelgovuk), Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/fcdotravel) and Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/travelaware/). You can also sign up to get email notifications (https://www.gov.uk /foreign-travel-advice/greece/email-signup) when this travel advice is updated.

Help abroad in an emergency

If you are in Greece and you need emergency help from the UK government, contact the <u>British</u> <u>embassy Athens or one of our consulates</u> (https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-athens).

You can also <u>contact FCDO online</u> (https://www.contact-embassy.service.gov.uk /?country=Greece& post=Greece%20travel%20advice%20team).

FCDO in London

You can call FCDO in London if you need urgent help because something has happened to a friend or relative abroad.

Telephone: 020 7008 5000 (24 hours)

Find out about call charges (https://www.gov.uk/call-charges)

Risk information for British companies

The Overseas Business Risk service (https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/overseas-business-risk) offers information and advice for British companies operating overseas on how to manage political, economic, and business security-related risks.

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