

Wines from Australia

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In Australia, wine is produced in every State, with more than 60 designated wine regions totaling approximately 160,000 hectares. The principal vineyards of Australia are in six different wine regions: New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, and a smaller area in Queensland. Australia is the **5th most extensive wine-producing country**, with around 1,400 million liters of wine produced, although the country's consumption represents less than 40% of the production, making Australia the **5th largest wine exporter**, with 711 tons of wine. Australia has over 160 grape varieties distributed on 146,244 hectares (ha) across all six states.

The first vines arrived in Australia at the end of the eighteenth Century on board the vessels of the First Fleet of Governor Phillip going to New South Wales. Today the main grape varieties cultivated in Australian wine regions are Shiraz (Syrah), Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Riesling, Viognier, Pinot Noir, Grenache, Sangiovese, Mourvèdre, and Pinot Grigio.

Red grapes planted

Grape	Area Ha (04) ^[19]	Area Ha (05) ^[19]	Area Ha (06) ^[20]	Area Ha (07) ^[19]	Area Ha (08) ^[19]
Shiraz	39,182	40,508	41,115	43,417	43,977
Cabernet Sauvignon	29,313	28,621	28,103	27,909	27,553
Merlot	10,804	10,816	10,593	10,790	10,764
Pinot noir	4,424	4,231	4,254	4,393	4,490
Grenache	2,292	2,097	2,025	2,011	2,011
Mourvedre	1,040	963	875	794	785
Other Red	11,235	10,797	7,002	11,309	10,902

White grapes planted

Grape	Area Ha (04) ^[19]	Area Ha (05) ^[19]	Area Ha (06) ^[20]	Area Ha (07) ^[19]	Area Ha (08) ^[19]
Chardonnay	28,008	30,507	31,219	32,151	31,564
Sémillon	6,278	6,282	6,236	6,752	6,716
Sauvignon blanc	3,425	4,152	4,661	5,545	6,404
Riesling	4,255	4,326	4,400	4,432	4,400
Other White	23,925	23,365	17,683	24,303	23,109

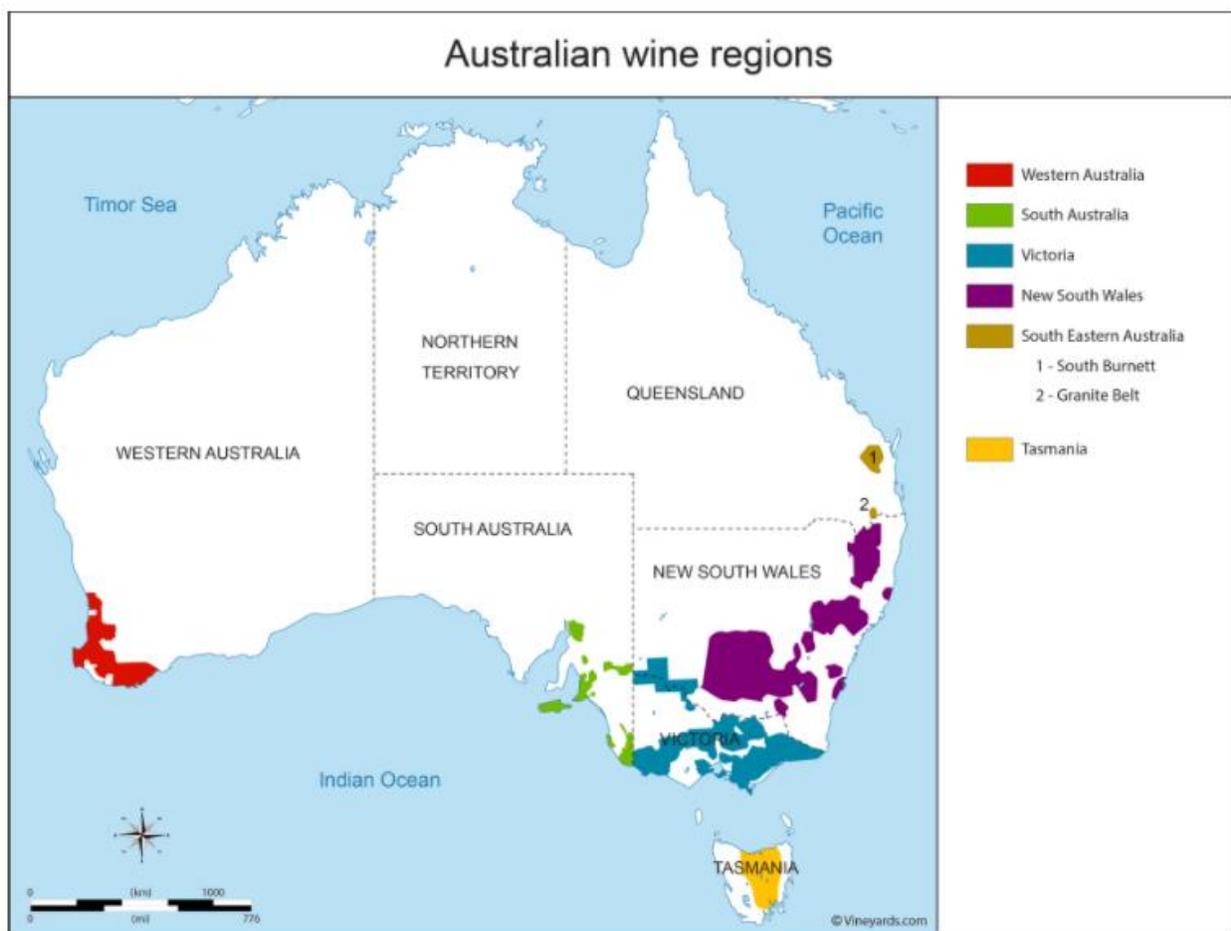
Australia's wine regions are mainly in the southern, cooler parts of the country. The wine regions in each State produce different wine varieties and styles that take advantage of the particular Terroir, such as climatic differences, topography, and soil types. Wines are often labeled with the name of their grape variety, **which must constitute at least 85 percent of the wine.**

One of the most notable aspects of Australian wines is consistency. Every bottle reaches a certain minimum, perfectly acceptable level of quality; it comes from the heavily irrigated vineyards in the country's interior. Almost two-thirds of every year's grape harvest is grown on one of the three extensive irrigated areas where canalized rivers turn bush into orchard and vineyard. These areas in decreasing importance are **Murray Darling** (or Valley), which straddles the Victoria-New South Wales border; **Riverland and Swan Hills**; and **Riverina** (Murrumbidgee).

The Australian wine industry is crucially dependent on the Murray River. The crescent pollution of the river and the high salt level in Australia's underground water, that little good-quality irrigation water is the principal constraint to converting one of the driest countries on the earth into one big vineyard.

Australians believe in economies of scale. Despite the feverish planting of vines at the end of the 20th century, there is a shortage of wineries. This approach aligns with the tradition of shipping grapes or grape juice long distance from vineyards to corporate cellars. The produce of distant vineyards is often blended into a single wine. Nevertheless, the Australian wine map has been changing fast, devising its appellation system, Geographical Indications, called GIs.

The wine regions are primarily located on the southern coast of Australia, which offers lower temperatures and rainfall. Still, Queensland has been developing its wine industry, centered on the cooler western slopes.



Much of Southeastern Australia has a Mediterranean climate, which wine grapes enjoy. Melbourne is on the same latitude as Cordoba, Spain. Strong wines full of sugar but lacking acidity are the ones typically from Australia.

With the noble exception of some of the older vines in Barossa and McLaren Vale, **the average vine age in Australia is notably young.** For example, not a Chardonnay vine was known in South Australia in 1970, but in early 1990 was almost the only one planted. The pendulum swung to the red wine, and so much of Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon was planted created a shortage of Chardonnay in 2001.

Australia's most planted variety is Shiraz and is recognized as what Australia does best, in red wine at least.

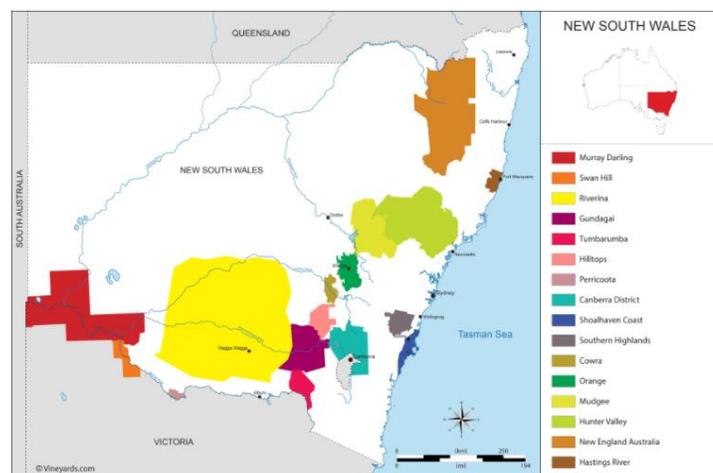
Australia wine regions

1. New South Wales

The New South Wales wine appellation comprises **16 different regions** and covers roughly 810,000 square kilometers (312,000 sq mi). This area correlates with the eponymous State, one of six that make up the Federal Commonwealth of Australia. Despite being one of the smaller Australian states geographically, it has been the most populous since the first European settlements of the 18th Century.

New South Wales is the cradle of Australian wine growing. It is located around 160 km north of Sydney. However, the Lower Hunter Valley is far from an ideal place to grow grapes. Its subtropical summers are scorching, and autumns can be vexingly wet. More than two-thirds of the annual rainfall (750mm) falls in the crucial first four-month of the year. Therefore, vintage quality varies considerably from year to year. Shiraz, once known here as Hermitage, is the classic red grape.

Semillon is the traditional white grape. **Hunter Semillon is one of the Australian classics.** In the old days, grapes would be picked at low ripeness levels, fermented in a vat, and bottle fairly early, softening malolactic fermentation. These wines would age in bottle magnificently into green-gold, mineral-laden packed with explosive layers of flavors.



Today an increasing proportion of Hunter Semillon is picked riper and made just like a barrel-fermented Chardonnay, thereby aging much faster and much less distinctively.

Much like the rest of the country, the two most populous grape varieties of New South Wales are Chardonnay and Shiraz, of which each account for 20 percent of the State's whole production. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are also found planted in each GI of New South Wales. In addition, Colombard and various types of Muscat are seen through the Big Rivers, an area associated more with mass production than a high-quality style of wine. It, therefore, accounts for 75 percent of the State's production from these high-yielding varieties. In comparison, the Hunter Valley, unquestionably New South Wales' best known and most-prized wine zone for its production of dry Hunter Semillon with its rich, stone fruit-scented Chardonnay close behind.

From the regionally expressive wines of the Hunter Valley to the mass-produced wines of highly irrigated lands to the South and west, New South Wales has an established place in Australia's wine industry, both past, and present.

2. Victoria

Victoria is the second smallest State; it covers nearly 250,000 square kilometers (over 90,000sq miles) of land (almost the same area as the US state of Texas) but is home to more regions and individual wineries than any other state in Australia. It also has the greatest diversity of regional climates, which allows for the production of virtually every imaginable wine style, from fine sparkling wine, high-quality Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, age-worthy Cabernet, savory Shiraz, and the historic fortified wines of Rutherglen.

In the 1880s, Victoria was Australia's largest wine-producing state. The ebb and flow of prosperity due to gold mining and the eventual outbreaks of Phylloxera put a temporary halt to production in many areas. However, a resurgence of interest was reignited in the 1970s.



Victoria is tucked into the south-eastern corner of the Australian mainland. Consequently, it has many diverse regions. The warm-climate areas span Victoria's northern and western rim. They include the Murray Darling, Swan Hill, and Rutherglen, which have carved a reputation for unique fortified wine styles such as Muscat. These wines boast hedonistic sweet fruit flavors concentrated through long dry autumns.

Victoria's other wine regions are generally cooler than those of the States to the north and west. One example is the Yarra Valley

region, just half an hour's drive from Melbourne, producing Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wines of elegance and delicacy. From stylish and refined Chardonnay to rich, voluptuous Shiraz; intense and complex Pinot Noir to unique and decadent fortified wines, you'll find a wine to suit any occasion from the diverse regions of Victoria. With **21 wine regions, Victoria** is home to more areas, innovative wineries, and distinct climates than any other state in Australia.

Victoria is, in many ways, the most interesting and certainly the most varied of Australian wine states. The most important survivor of the phylloxera pest at the end of the 19th Century was Victoria's northeast region. It continues to specialize in dessert wines, including the finest dark-skinned Muscat and the more caramelized Tokay.

3. South Australia: Barossa, Clare, and Eden Valleys

South Australia is what California is to the USA: the wine state. It crushes 46% of every vintage and houses the most important wine and vine research organizations. Adelaide, the state capital vineyards, surrounds it. They stretched 130 km north up to the hills from Watervale, but most to the Barossa Valley, only 55 km from the city. Barossa was a settlement founded by German-speaking immigrants from Silesia in what is now Poland. Barossa is Australia's biggest quality-wine district. Summer days are hot and generally dry. Their vines can

produce the most concentrated form of what has become one of the world's most distinctive wine styles, Barossa Shiraz. Rich and chocolaty, spicy, these wines can range from intriguing essences to unctuously alcoholic. Grapes ripen fast from the blistering sun, so fast that acidity often plummets before the grapes are picked. Some Barossa winemakers add tannins as well as acid. Barossa reds typically finish their fermentation in American oak barrels, imbuing them with a heavy sweetness and smoothness.

Unsurprisingly, the State is home to some of Australia's most renowned wine brands, including Penfolds Grange, Jacob's Creek, and Henschke Hill of Grace, as well as hundreds of wineries spread over **15 distinct South Australia wine regions**.

South Australian wines are dominated by red varieties, with the country's ubiquitous Shiraz (known elsewhere as Syrah) the most planted grape – while Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache, especially when combined with Shiraz and Mourvedre for the classic Australian GSM blend, also flourish. Quality white wines have been less successful from South Australian wine regions, with the notable exception of Riesling from Clare Valley and Chardonnay from the cool climes of Adelaide Hills. The Barossa Valley is the oldest and arguably most important of all wine regions in South Australia, with a reputation for producing world-class Shiraz that first put the country on the international map.

The red wines from Barossa are similar in varietal profile to those from France's Rhone Valley full-bodied styles featuring rich chocolate and spiced flavors – while the continental climate has attracted leading winemakers, including Penfolds, Wolf Blass, and Peter Lehmann. Eden Valley is also within the Barossa zone is Eden Valley, which despite its proximity, it is better known for producing white Riesling from its more elevated vineyards – although Shiraz is still successfully harvested here.

In the Mount Lofty Ranges zone, Clare Valley competes with Eden Valley for the South Australian wine region's most delicate white styles – with Riesling reigning supreme over Chardonnay and Semillon. It is a popular destination for tours of South Australian wine regions. It is one of the country's most picturesque regions with a collection of quality-conscious estates that often have boutique wineries with cellar doors.

Flanked by the Barossa and Adelaide Hills, Eden Valley is a boutique wine region where hillsides are contoured with vineyards, and a handful of cellar doors sit nestled in the valleys. A picturesque hour's drive from Adelaide, the fertile high country, is responsible for producing premium cool climate wines, which are best tasted straight from a cellar door. So, pull up a seat at Fernfield, Brockenchack, Flaxman, or Henschke wines and taste the region's signature varieties, Riesling and Shiraz. Eden Valley's Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot are also among the best wine in Australia. With a winemaking history dating back to 1847, Eden Valley is home to some of the world's oldest Shiraz and Riesling vineyards. Here, 5th generation winemakers with links back to the area's original settlers still make wine using the same techniques as their forefathers.

4. South Australia: McLaren Vale and Adelaide Hills

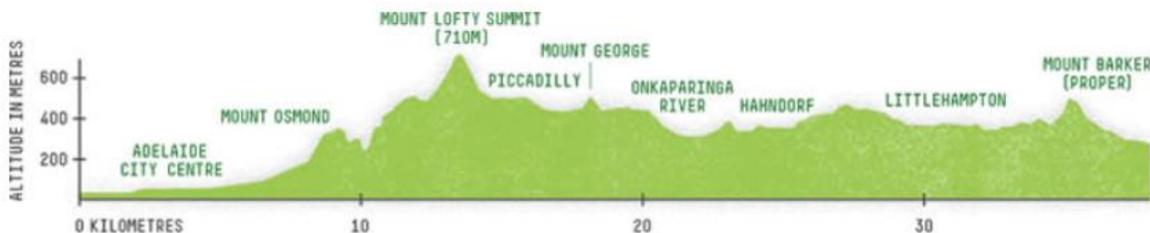
This region is the site of the oldest vineyard in Australia: The Chateau Reynella planted their vines in 1838. Natural conditions for the vine could hardly be better than in this coastal zone. There is adequate rainfall, a warm but not torrid summer, good air drainage prevents frost. Some vineyards have the story of growing Sauvignon Blanc. In addition, this region offers seductive reds such as Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot.

McLaren Vale is challenging Barossa for the title of Australia's best red wine producer. The warm climate creates luxurious, chocolate-toned Shiraz, Grenache, and Cabernet Sauvignon, while the maritime influence is responsible for fine Chardonnay, Viognier, and Marsanne. It is by far the most critical region in the Fleurieu zone, with winemaking traditions among the oldest in the country and some of the best wines come from vines planted over 100 years ago.

Nowadays, the vineyards are expanding towards the much cooler foothills of Southern Mount Lofty. The Piccadilly Valley and Adelaide Hills are well known as one of the excellent wine regions planting grapes to 400 m over sea level, provides weather that can be different from other regions of the country. Grey mist is constant, spring frost and chilly nights, even in summer. However, the region is cool enough to provide sparkling wine and is recognized for lively aromatic Sauvignon Blanc. Even the Chardonnays can be Sauvignon-like with the brisk nectarine flavors. Also, Pinot Noir is likely to shine here.

The Adelaide Hills is one of Australia's largest geographical wine regions and amongst the most diverse in terms of climate, soil, and topography. The region consists of two registered sub-regions, Lenswood and Piccadilly Valley. The Adelaide Hills is Australia's most vibrant incredible climate wine region. With over 90 wine labels and 50 cellar doors, it is acknowledged internationally for its distinctive premium wines, viticulture, and stunning scenery.

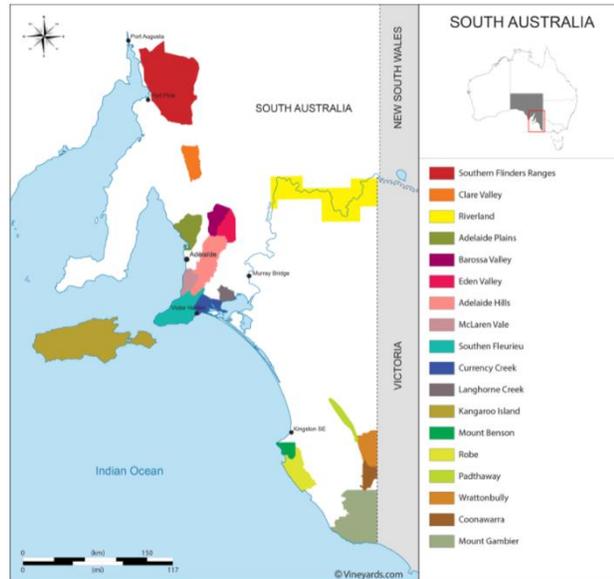
The region is located in the Mount Lofty Ranges east of Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia. Stretching in a narrow band of approximately 70km long, the highest vineyards are sited between 600-650 meters altitude in Crafers, Summertown, Piccadilly, and Carey Gully.



5. South Australia: The Far Southeast

This region is the coolest and most rapidly evolving corner of the wine state. Just north of the village of Penola, a long, narrow rectangle only nine miles by one of entirely red and crumbly to touch. A mere 45 cm down, the red soil changes to pure free-draining limestone, and only 2 m below, there is a constant table of relatively pure water. No land could be better for fruit growing.

The Coonawarra wine region is a wine region centered on the town of Coonawarra in the Limestone Coast zone of South Australia. It is known for the Cabernet Sauvignon wines produced on its "terra rossa" soil. The name has been said to have originated in Bindjali, an Aboriginal language, meaning "wild honeysuckle." It is about 380 kilometers (240 mi) southeast of Adelaide, close to the border with Victoria.



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6. Western Australia

The most well-known wine-producing area is Margaret River. Other regions are Swan District, Perth Hills, Peel, Geographe, Blackwood Valley, Manjimup, Pemberton, and Great Southern. The most important aspect is the maritime influence from the ocean leading to a long maturation and the development of interestingly delicate, balanced, and aromatic wines.

This region produces only 3% of the Australian wines. However, these scattered vineyards produce far more than their fair share of Australia's most lauded wines. The Swan Valley, just upstream from the state capital, Perth, has the searing heat of the summer with dry winds keeping temperatures close to 38° C for weeks. So, the early vintners realized that their forte would be dessert wines.

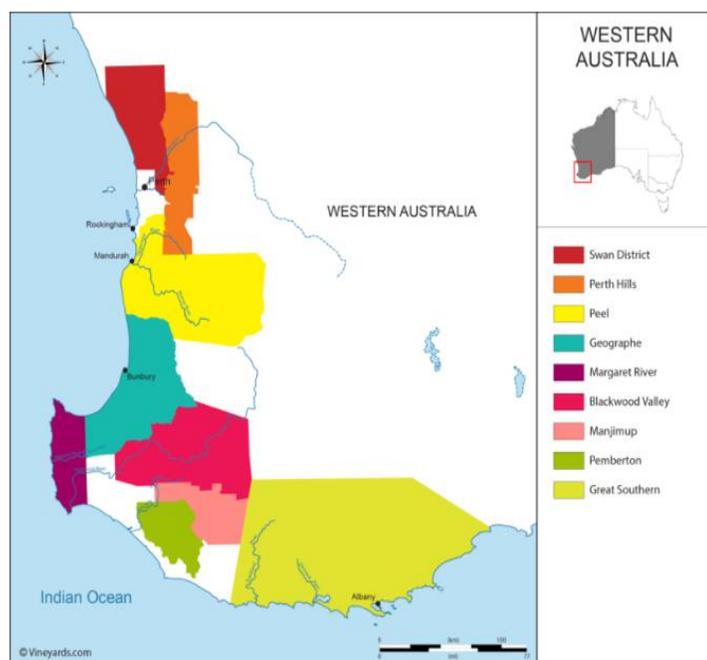
Western Australia is the largest State and spans the western third of the Australian continent. However, the winemaking regions are almost entirely concentrated in

the state's southwest and great southern land divisions. Some parts are close to Perth, the State capital, but most are located further south away from the metropolitan area. The regions include Blackwood Valley, Great Southern, Peel, Pemberton, Manjimup, Margaret River, and Swan District.

There is a history of wine production in Western Australia dating back to 1840 with the establishment of Sandalford in the Swan Valley region. However, the recognition of pleasing the fine wine possibilities started after establishing the Margaret River Region in 1967.

However, an experimental lot of dry white wine, made in 1937, put Western Australia on the nation's wine map. It started with White Burgundy and was followed by Chenin Blanc, Muscadelle, Semillon, Verdehlo and **most recently Chardonnay that has remained year after year Australia best-selling dry white**. The extraordinary bonus is that it is even better after six to eight years in the bottle. Unfortunately, it took more than 30 years to realize that potential lay in the cooler parts of the State.

Perth, around which is still clustered a small hot-climate wine industry, but south down the coast, the influence of Antarctic currents is felt in much more temperate conditions. Thanks to an extraordinary influx of investment capital in late 1990, vines are going into all areas around Margaret River on the Indian Ocean coast.



Three decades ago, Margaret River was better known for its various classic surf breaks, but scientists like Dr. John Gladstones identified it as a prime location for premium wine production. This empirical perspective has driven the development of vineyards and wineries that have overcome the State's geographic isolation and carved their mark worldwide.

Margaret River has become known for its equally classic Chardonnay, and Cabernet Sauvignon to its unique Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc blends. The other regions also produce a diverse range of regionally distinct wines, from evocative Shiraz to a range of unique Cabernet Sauvignon blends.

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