



freeload[®]



Freeload is inspired by the challenge of exploration and discovery. Whether seeking out remote singletrack trails or pushing the limits of product innovation, here at Freeload we love the excitement and risk of extending the boundaries of riding and design, as we create, prove and provide exciting new load carrying products for riders world-wide.

Since the formation of Freeload in 2007, following the development of the world's first quick release and fully adjustable bike rack, our team has created an exciting range of products, shaped by the needs and expectations of global riders.

Designed and proven in New Zealand, home to some of the most exciting and challenging touring conditions on and off-road, Freeload products are continually evolving to meet the needs of riders in every category - from bikepacking and road touring to urban commuting and work-related transportation.

Let Freeload take you further. Enjoy your ride.

Pat Maguire
Founder and CEO

Photo, Mike Wilson

freeload[®]

The system

Freeload lets you remove the load from your back and mount it directly to your bike, giving you more freedom to enjoy the ride. Ours is the world's first fully adjustable bike rack that can be fitted to the front or rear of all types of bikes.

At the heart of the system are the patented mounting brackets and frame - add your choice of deck and accessories to customize the rack for your needs.

VERSATILE AND TOUGH

The Freeload system lets you extend your bike's versatility. The same design fits both ends of your bike. It can be fitted, removed or swapped between bikes in a few minutes.

Designed to handle the rigors of off-road riding, our racks are constructed of the toughest materials, and rated to carry 25kgs (55lbs). Unlike a traditional tubular or wire rack, ours are designed to take a knock and bounce back - no welds to crack and fail here!

But just in case you have a more serious crash (it happens), we offer all parts of our racks individually so you can rebuild and get back on (or off) the road.



LOCKS ON GENTLY

Our unique attachment system allows you to quickly fit a rack to any type of bike, regardless of tubing shape or diameter.

Incorporating a stainless steel ratchet pin and 25mm webbing, our racks require no frame braze-ons and will clamp firmly to any frame size, shape or material.

A rubberised foot pad provides a soft, paint-friendly contact point between the rack and your bike.



CHANGE IS GOOD

With the push of a button, the glass fibre reinforced polypropylene decks can be removed and replaced by other accessories for road touring, commuting, or carrying bulky or oddly-shaped loads.

Freeload racks not only allow you to choose any bike to join you on your ride, but also how and where you want to position your load on your bike. You can mount loads on the front or back of your bike... or both.



SPREAD THE LOAD

By splitting your load evenly using a combination of dry bags, backpacks or panniers, you can transfer its weight across the bike to balance your ride and create a low centre of gravity.

The 6061 T6 Aluminium frame adjusts to suit geometries from a steeply raked fork to a near-horizontal swingarm using just a 4mm hex key. It is a tubular platform that can adapt to a variety of load-carrying duties.



LOAD IT UP





Riding the legend

Words and Photos, Paul Smith

In between Golden Bay and the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island lies a vast area of wild coastland, bush-filled river valleys, inhospitable sub-alpine tussock downs, and few signs of human activity.

Exploration of the area dates back hundreds of years. West Coast Maori located at the mouth of the Heaphy River travelled north-east along the river to access Moa hunting areas around Goulund Downs and followed the coast south towards Karamea in search of pounamu (greenstone). In the mid-1800's the West Coast section was travelled and recorded by the explorers Charles Heaphy and Thomas Brunner, with assistance from Maori guides. A few decades later there are records of more European settlers traversing the inland portion from Golden Bay in search of gold. This led to the complete Heaphy trail route being surveyed and developed into an 80 kilometre pack track linking Golden Bay with Kohaihai. However, when the gold rush ended it became overgrown and was only sporadically used by hunters for much of the next century.

The Heaphy trail needs no introduction to Kiwi mountain bikers. There are stories of cyclists travelling along it back in the 1930's, but it was in the 1980's and 90's that it became a must-do adventure. The formation of the North-West Nelson Forest Park in 1965 made access to the route easier. Unfortunately for cyclists, the area was designated the Kahurangi National Park in 1996, just as the mountain bike boom was taking hold: under the rules of the National Parks Act, no bikes were allowed. The 15 years that followed was long enough for stories of riding the Heaphy to become legends, and it became a somewhat

mythical mountain bike adventure. Now, thanks to prolonged campaigning from mountain bikers and an open attitude from the Department of Conservation, the trail is open to bikes again each winter from May 2011 for a three year trial.

Given this history, it isn't a surprise that so many mountain bikers want their own Heaphy experience. What I do find surprising, however, is just how many riders have grappled with the logistics of a trail between the depths of Golden Bay and the back of beyond of the West Coast. The Heaphy is a two or three day mountain bike undertaking carrying overnight gear which would, for many riders, be a completely new experience.

I spent two nights and three days on the trail, travelling with four riding buddies. The riding is good, very good in fact, but my strongest memories are of the diversity and sheer glory of nature and landscape that threatened to overwhelm my senses. The Heaphy packs plenty into its 80 kilometres. The variety of terrain and scenery is immense: hidden beaches where Nikau Palm groves meet sand and sea, brooding and atmospheric mist-clad river valleys, perpetually damp and lush podocarp forest, barren sub-alpine tussock and marshlands, eerie limestone cave systems, and high altitude beech forests.

The track is managed by two adjacent Department of Conservation regions. On the West Coast they typically have to deal with more rainfall and more difficult terrain. They maintain the trail as a dirt surface with short sections of boardwalk to cross the wettest and



muddiest parts. After rain it makes for heavy going. The boundary with the Golden Bay area is obvious. Their trail maintenance involves significant rock armouring and long boardwalk bridges to cross wet tussock marshes. The riding after rain is more wet than muddy. The two distinct trail surfaces only add to the diversity of the Heaphy experience.

Conversations with friends who had previously ridden the track suggested that it is very tough going. Stories of deep mud, sections with flooding higher than handlebars, long unrideable sections and serious bike damage. The trail seems to be creating a minor economic upturn through the sale of replacement brake pads alone. I'm not going to join this cacophony of warnings. It was reported that the trail had received 1910mm of rain in the month prior to our visit. There were muddy sections, and one of the climbs needed some pushing and bike carrying. But, despite a couple of days of heavy rain immediately prior to our trip, and a night of heavy rain before our final day, I found the Heaphy very rideable. Mud and saturated trails were constant companions, but they never dominated the experience.

A trail like this offers new challenges to most mountain bikers in the form of swing and suspension bridges: there are nearly a dozen of them on the Heaphy. Local guides told us that it can take 45 minutes to get a group of six over a swingbridge. The alternative method to cross is to ford the rivers, if the flow is low enough. If you are worried about dragging a loaded bike across a wobbly wire bridge over a river, then wet feet is probably a good option. Wading through the Heaphy River saved us two swingbridges, at the expense of soaking wet shorts and feet.

Riding the Heaphy was a feeling of experiencing something hidden, something secret and something to be cherished. This was enhanced by the multi-day nature of the trip. While either end of the trail could be accessed for a day trip, the necessity of the overnight stops and haulage of gear only added to the experience. It was intense, and made more so by the effort required. I felt privileged to be riding there and, after three days of being bombarded by untouched New Zealand, I returned buzzing and talking about it to anyone who would listen, and many who would rather not.

*Paul would like everyone to ride a bicycle.
www.inspiring-riding.co.nz*



Sport rack SR-1

Designed primarily for top-loading of drybags, packs and the like, the sport deck is our take on 'fast and light' travel.

Whether you're racing the Great Divide Route from Canada to Mexico, or just heading into the local hills for a night or two this rack will see you right.

The Sport deck features a curved profile and a multitude of slots to lash, strap or bungee your gear securely.

Our modular design, using the same frame and attachment system as the Tour rack, means you can change between decks at a moments notice, no tools required.

In the box you receive everything you need to get up and running, including three lengths of stainless struts to cater for all frame sizes and shapes, and tools for set up and removal of the rack from your bike.

Weight: 810g with medium length struts

Deck dimensions: 325mm x 150mm

Load capacity: 25kg

Materials: Glass fibre reinforced nylon and polypropylene, heat treated 6061 aluminium, all fasteners and hardware stainless steel.



"For a typical offroad trip we often use two racks with roughly 7-8 kg's in drybags on each for better balance and handling. On trips when I'm expecting some really technical riding and/or a decent amount of hauling, I like to replace one drybag with a pack- so when the going gets tough, I can wear the pack to make the bike easier to lift over tree-fall, up scree slopes, through rivers..."





Brevet.... kiwi-style

Words, Jonty Ritchie Photos, Caleb Smith, Jeff Lyall & Nick Treadgold

Held in January 2010, the inaugural Kiwi Brevet was an 1100 kilometre route consisting of 50% sealed road, 45% gravel road and 5% singletrack. The route traversed a hilly, remote and very scenic loop around the upper South Island of New Zealand. A brevet is an organized long-distance bicycle ride where participants must complete a designated but unmarked route within specified time limits. Participants do not compete against each other; brevets are a test of endurance, self-sufficiency and bicycle touring skills.

Prior to the start, our group of four like-minded individuals entered into much discussion about bikes and equipment. Equipment selection came down to supplementing equipment already owned with whatever could be borrowed, and filling in the gaps with a little retail therapy. Having been raised on a steady diet of tramping and skiing, my gear selection erred on the side of survival. The addition of some luxury items (a stovetop espresso and stove) made for a mid to heavyweight load, relative to other riders' very lightweight setups. Our group had a loose arrangement to ride at a fast touring pace, eat well, sleep plenty and enjoy some beautiful scenery.

Seventy riders lined up in the small town of Blenheim, awaiting the start of between five and nine days of riding. Bikes included 29ers, 69ers, cyclocross bikes and mountain bikes with full suspension, front suspension or no suspension. I was disappointed not to see any road racing bikes. Luggage selection ranged from way too much to not nearly enough. For the over-ambitious there would be some harrowing and friendship-testing episodes as they struggled through dense West Coast bush in the dark of night, trying to get to their pre-booked accommodation.

The 'neutral' start was surprisingly fast but quite social as riders had their only chance to mingle with all of the other participants

before the field naturally split up. The first section had some riders questioning their perception of what the Kiwi Brevet actually entailed - many long steep climbs and descents, mostly on gravel with huge clouds of all-engulfing dust in 30oC (90oF) heat.

When we arrived in Picton, no more than fifty kilometers from the start, the event seemed to already have broken some riders. Our group had sustained five flat tyres and one torn sidewall. Our original goal of making Nelson that evening was looking tenuous. Darkness fell at the bottom of the daunting Maungatapu climb - a 700 metre ascent up an old coach road. We decided to bivvy at Murderers' Rock, near the top of the climb. I was a little apprehensive about sleeping in a place where five men had been murdered some hundred years before, but the others didn't seem to buy into my concept of white man's tapu.

After a deep sleep under a beautiful roof of stars we awoke to another hot and sunny day. After descending the Maungatapu we enjoyed a very leisurely breakfast at a café in Nelson and took time to shop for the essentials we had overlooked. The folks at home, who were following our Spot Trackers (a compulsory satellite tracking device carried by all participants), were wondering what we were playing at.

Days two and three saw us covering hundreds of kilometres of gravel and tarseal in unrelenting heat on the way to Blackball on the West Coast. Our group, that had swelled to six, split into two groups of three. The heat and long days in the saddle were taking their toll. At St Arnaud, painkillers were washed down with rum and coke and at Murchison we discovered that rural New Zealand towns are all closed up long before 10pm. We also rode some sweet backcountry singletrack and gazed on gorgeous vistas of the Nelson Lakes National Park.



At some point riding up a long valley out of Murchison we were joined by a tame fawn. Initially we thought this was great fun...

"We'd better take it back", suggested Jeff.

"It'll go home", said Nick and I, not wanting to slow progress.

Five kilometres later, after a 55 km/h descent, it was still with us.

"I'm taking it back."

"OK Jeff."

We pulled into (Formerly) The Blackball Hilton late, after a 30 kilometre time trial in the dark and rain, to find two riders supping on their fifth beers. Obviously serious athletes. The pub is named thanks to the Hilton Hotel chain, who saw a small West Coast pub as a serious threat to business!

Arthur's Pass (920 metres) was our first goal on day four. Arriving into Arthur's Pass town I heard a fellow rider yell to his mate, jump on his bike, and whizz past before we had time to order our chocolate milkshakes. It was starting to dawn on me: maybe this is a race? I had noticed that Jeff was no longer self-correcting when referring to the event as a race. Putting aside our casual approach we were secretly adopting a seek and destroy, rip out their hearts methodology. Of course, we wouldn't openly admit to this.

Catching up to our friends Lawrence and Guy, we cruised along the tarseal through the Craigieburn region and down to Springfield. Some frenzied provisioning ensued, as there were no more shops until we reached Hanmer the next day. We spent the night sleeping out in the very well appointed Oxford Pony Club domain. In the morning Lawrence declared: "I can put the maps away today". The last we saw of them, they were sailing up the wrong road as we took the correct turn to the Wharfedale Track. The Wharfedale was great

singletrack. Jeff at one point executed a perfect somersault as he flew down a steep bank. "I used to do Judo," he explained obliquely.

Waking at 6am in Hanmer (our earliest yet) we gobbled the remains of the previous night's takeaways, threw down coffee and a couple of painkillers and hit the road soon after 7am. We began what would be an eleven-hour, 205 kilometre, time trial through the largest station/ranch/farm in New Zealand and past the vineyards of the Awatere Valley to the finish. Along the way we passed five other riders, got badly beaten by some very rough roads and secretly hoped for the end to come.

On arrival back in Blenheim I could reflect on one of the hardest but most enjoyable weeks of my life -a near perfect mix of humour, physical challenge and scenery. Our short (14 - 15 hour) days were reasonably manageable. If we were prepared to go longer into sleep-deprived stupor I'm sure a better 'result' in the 'race' could have been achieved. However, I suspect that this may come at the expense of actually experiencing the local culture and generally stunning scenery. In short, the week was a perfectly balanced lifestyle: ride all day, eat as much as you can, sleep and repeat. What more could you want?

Jonty owns Revolution Bicycles in Wellington, New Zealand. His intimidating speed and bike handling skills continue to strike fear into the hearts of many at the start line.

www.facebook.com/pages/Revolution-Bicycles



Tour rack TR-1

Designed to accept panniers and handle longer top loads with ease, this rack features adjustable 10mm side rails and a flat deck. This rack is perfect for sealed or gravel road touring, fitting panniers to a mountain bike, or providing great versatility for urban commuting.

Re-positionable rails give you up to 75mm of fore/aft adjustment - vital for gaining valuable heel clearance on many mountain bikes, and handy when you want to move your front end load closer to the bike's centre of gravity to tweak steering and handling response.

Plugs on the ends of the rails let you clamp your pannier hooks in place to stop annoying rattles, and keep them from sliding back and forth.

Our modular design, using the same frame and attachment system as the Sport rack, means you can change between decks at a moments notice, no tools required. The same arrangement of slots as the Sport deck let you lash, strap or bungee oddly shaped loads securely

Weight: 960g with medium length struts

Deck dimensions: 325mm x 165mm (to outside edge of rails)

Load capacity: 25kg

Materials: Glass reinforced nylon and polypropylene, heat treated 6061 aluminium, all fasteners and hardware stainless steel.





Overnight success

Words, Tim Armstrong Photos, Paul Smith & Tim Armstrong

Call it 'sub 24 hour overnight' (S24O), 'bike overnight', or simply a short ride either side of an overnight camp. This type of cycling adventure is nothing new, but it is gaining popularity among mountain bikers partial to a little camping and outdoor adventure. There are some convincing reasons for loading up and leaving a warm home and comfortable bed for a night out in the wilds: the quest for solitude, an opportunity for good conversation, removal from the 'always on' society, time out from the daily grind, the love of the outdoors, or a search for clarity of thought, peace and relaxation.

I used to get out in the hills far more often, before the days of children and a responsible job. I missed my regular doses of wilderness. Fortunately, these days I can call my bike overnight trips 'work', and it's a great way to fit in a little product testing while gaining a fresh perspective on some aspect of our business. My approach is to make the experience as easy and comfortable as possible. I usually head out once the kids are tucked up in bed. I have a couple of favorite spots that I can get to in an hour or so, though generally I like to ride a little further and tire myself into a good night's sleep. I like my location to have early morning sun, spectacular views, and a ride out on sweet singletrack. A good book, torch and something tasty to go with my morning coffee are standard equipment, along with a notebook to record the flashes of inspiration that tend to appear whilst in the middle of nowhere, and a wee dram of single malt to encourage those flashes.

A multi-day bike tour requires detailed planning and logistical arrangements, and there is usually a need for specialist equipment to keep weight down and to cover for unexpected eventualities such

as horrible weather, injury or mechanical failures. These trips require significant time out of busy schedules. Yet for a bike overnight trip, all of the planning and logistics come down to answering some simple questions, like 'where am I going?' 'where will I camp?' 'what trails will be fun?' and 'what should I take to make the night comfortable?'

There are no rules to bike overnight, it isn't a competition and it isn't wrong to just make up your own thing. It is fun to sleep under the stars or to take a decent tent, ride for hours or just cruise local trails, take expensive and lightweight bikepacking gear or just grab whatever comes to hand. The beauty of these rides is the distance, or rather the lack of it. There is less need to reduce weight and more reason to add in a few luxuries to make for a pleasant night. Bike overnight trips are an ideal way to re-introduce yourself to camping in the great outdoors. And your friends will eventually run out of excuses and come along too.

I was joined on a calm but chilly winter's evening by first time bike overnights Jim and Rich. The ride up to the summit of Makara Peak in Wellington was short and sweet, taking little over an hour. Bike handling with seven or eight kilograms of luggage is not the finely tuned experience that bike manufacturers strive to create: it is far more interesting than that. We used a combination of dry bags (me), panniers (Jim) and a great big backpack (Rich). Steering is slow, line changes are a struggle, bikes understeer, and drop-offs become bigger and more daunting. Even the most accomplished of riders make silly mistakes more akin to a novice.



There is no campsite at the summit of Makara Peak. In fact, there isn't much flat ground to pitch a tent at all. A nor-westerly was expected to blow up overnight, and the uninterrupted views north to the Tararua hills and west to the Tasman Sea suggested that finding shelter was a priority. The sensible option was to make use of the building attached to the large antenna that dominates the summit. Jim and I pitched our tents, and Rich laid out his borrowed bivvy bag. The night was spent gazing over the lights of Wellington, marvelling at the orange ash-filled sky (thanks to a Chilean volcano that was causing air travel havoc) and taking time out of our busy lives to relax, catch up, and set the world to rights. We finally retired around midnight and I dozed off listening to the comforting sound of light rain falling on my tent. By morning, drizzle had turned to persistent rain. We shoved our wet gear into our bags and packs and rode the half-hour downhill home. The rain had added slippery roots and damp clay to the morning riding mix. Our shaky loaded-bike riding skills made for some interesting descending, but we made it down safely (although I confess to avoiding the steepest, slipperiest lines). We departed vowing to repeat the experience and looked forward to the promise of warmer, lighter spring nights for the chance to explore other locations on an overnight camp. I arrived home on Saturday morning as my family were finishing breakfast. This trip borrowed no family time: the kids barely knew I'd gone.

As part of the Freeload team, Tim feels very lucky to be able to combine both of his passions; exploring on his bike and designing stuff. He is looking forward to some warmer weather when his kids can join him on a work trip or two...



Side frames SF-1

Designed to support large panniers and offer a wide range of mounting options, the side frames attach directly to our Tour rack. Pop these on for a fully loaded tour, or commute to work - then whip them off when you want to travel fast and light.

As with the Tour deck, the entire side frame has 75mm of fore/aft adjustment to aid heel clearance.

The side frame kit adds two more re-positionable 10mm rails which let you choose how high or low you set up your panniers. Run them high for better ground clearance when riding singletrack, or set them down for a lower centre of gravity when you hit the road.

Just like our decks, the side frames feature a plethora of slots - handy for tying through to beef up your panniers' attachment system when riding in the rough.

We designed these to flex a little, rather than be fully rigid - you'll see why when you accidentally hit that rock or tree. Unlike welded wire and tube racks, ours will absorb the shock and spring back.

Weight: 470g

Dimensions: 285mm x 310 (width x height)

Materials: Glass fibre reinforced nylon, heat treated 6061 10mm aluminium rails and stainless steel hardware.

Sold as a pair.





Challenge and reward

Words, Paul Smith Photos, Caleb Smith

It was nine in the morning and we were staring through the windscreen at a sizeable and freshly toppled beech tree lying across the road, a few kilometres away from the start of Te Iringa track. We had left behind the dairy pasture and pine plantations characteristic of the central plateau of New Zealand's North Island and entered the Kaimanawa Forest Park. Our bikes were still strapped securely to the cars, yet the first challenge had confronted us.

I often question why mountain biking consumes me absolutely, why I leave family at home to spend hours with my bike and the trails. At times I enjoy the solitude of riding alone, at other times I'm energised by the company of like-minded people. Of course it's rewarding to simply get out in the bush and explore this beautiful country, but *always*, there is the challenge.

A good ride, alone or with company, might offer elements of physical and technical challenge and a little scenic reward. But a truly great ride contains all of these elements: personal space, good company, wonderful scenery and challenge after challenge. These are the rides that stick in the memory and make the trudge of work in the real world tolerable.

So when Caleb mentioned a short-notice trip into the Kaimanawa Forest Park I didn't have to think twice. The plan was to head along Te Iringa trail, stay the night in a hut and return the following day along the same route. Our group of six were riding a variety of bikes ranging from state of the art cross country and all-mountain full suspension, to hardtails dating back 20 years. Our overnight gear was carried on racks loaded with dry bags and in backpacks of various capacities. My own gear weighed around twelve kilograms, spread

between a small backpack and front and rear racks. Measuring this ride by the number of potential challenges, it was set to be great: a bike loaded to upset the handling, an overnight hut stay, and the unknown quantity of a virgin ride on a backcountry tramping track with new riding companions.

Te Iringa is a backcountry track used by hunters and trampers, and is not like those built by mountain bikers and graded for a defined rider skill level. Backcountry tracks require pushing, lifting and carrying of bikes over and around obstacles. There may be fallen branches and trees to negotiate, ruts, slips, washouts, precarious swing bridges and river crossings, narrow ledges with serious exposure, unrideable roots, rocks and drops, and bogs that swallow whole wheels. But they also contain *many*, kilometres of sweet and seemingly unriden singletrack. Riding these trails feels like being a modern pioneer: taking a mountain bike where few others have ventured.

We rode the track as an out-and-back trip of eighteen kilometres each way, with around 2300 metres of climbing in total. The ride in can be viewed in four sections: a mostly rideable climb to 1000 metres, a sometimes rideable undulating traverse with plenty of exposure, a sweet singletrack descent losing 500 metres in altitude, and mostly rideable singletrack following a river. It took us seven hours one way, and the same to come back. Some of this was down to regular photo stops, and some was caused our lunch stop being extended by a stove, coffee pot and freshly ground coffee. Mostly, however, it was due to the stop-start nature of backcountry track riding with its regular dismounts, and the additional load we were lugging along on our bikes and backs.



Despite the challenges we faced on this ride, there was only one incident that might have really affected our trip: Close to the last descent, on the exposed traverse, one of our group disappeared over a drop-off, and continued to disappear off the edge of the trail. Panic bubbled up—how far was the drop? We found him and his bike five metres down, suspended on the huge roots of an upended tree. A few metres to each side, the drop was more like fifty metres. In the end, there was nothing more serious than a sore knee, nervous laughter, and dented pride.

While Te Iringa poses many challenges and a hell of a lot of hard work, the rewards are truly worthwhile. Everyone should experience the unworldly beauty of beech forest at 1000 metres, or take lunch by a bend in the river overlooked by a pumice cliff carved by centuries of flowing water. Of course, for mountain bikers the singletrack is the ultimate reward. Te Iringa consists entirely of challenging and memorable singletrack, but a few significant sections really bring satisfaction: a fast and sinuous twenty minute descent covered with beech leaf 'cornflakes' that encourage drifting at every opportunity; a deceptively easy trail following the river through native bush, peppered with obstacles and 'are they, aren't they?' bogs; and the final descent to the car, dropping 500 metres over countless roots and drop-offs. To top it all off, the challenge of carrying gear gives you plenty of extra time to get to know your riding buddies.



There was continual laughter on this trip. New friends were made, and old friendships became tighter after thirty-two hours together. The rewards far surpassed anything I could get from even the finest purpose-built mountain bike trail. This was a truly great ride, and the memory of it will stick with me for a *long* time.

And what of the first challenge, the fallen beech tree on the road? As we parked up and got ready to ride to the track, a hunter appeared in a 4WD on the other side of the tree. He had the chainsaw, we had the muscle, and in less than an hour the road was passable. One challenge down. Many to go.





Cover Photo, Derek Morrison

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