

Exploring Climate and Culture Around the World

Kirin Patel

September 11, 2025

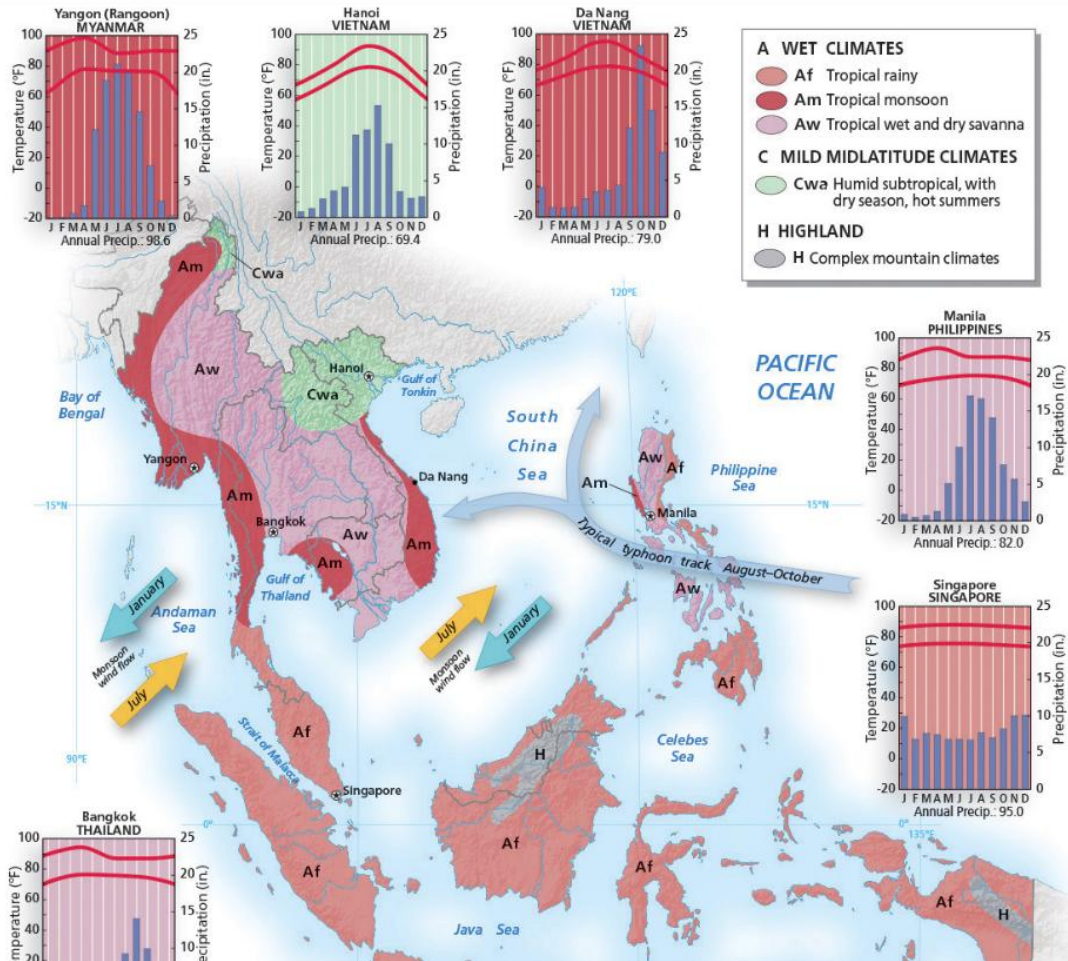
Introduction

I chose to live in River Valley, Singapore, located in Southeast Asia, for at least five years after graduating from college. I would love to explore Sub-Saharan Africa by traveling to Kampala, Uganda. The last location I would like to visit is Lima, Peru, in Latin America.

I will be going into a deep dive into my interests in these countries and some of the fascinating geographic differences. This includes the location's climate, bioregion, and physical topography, unaltered by humans. I will also explain more about their cultural characteristics as well as the environmental issues that may affect the locations. When talking about Uganda and Peru, I will go on and explain the best times to visit each country based on their climate, seasonality, and cultural events that are being celebrated. With different climates and weather around the year, there are also essential items that I will need to pack as well, so I will be explaining some items that need to be brought on vacation to Uganda and Peru.

Residential Location: River Valley, Singapore

In the 19th Century, it was once a vital trade route for early settlers, making this area very rich in history. This location is a blend of Chinese, Indian, and Malay populations. Due to the diverse mix of cultures, there is a vast number of fusion cuisines, creating new flavors and many options. Aside from the culinary scene, there are beautiful parks and landscapes to explore throughout the city, and it is very close to the Central Business District. The area is highly walkable, and public transportation is very accessible. The housing in River Valley is high-end, but specifically within new developments, there has been a trend to create eco-friendly features for more sustainable living (todaynewlaunch, "Why").



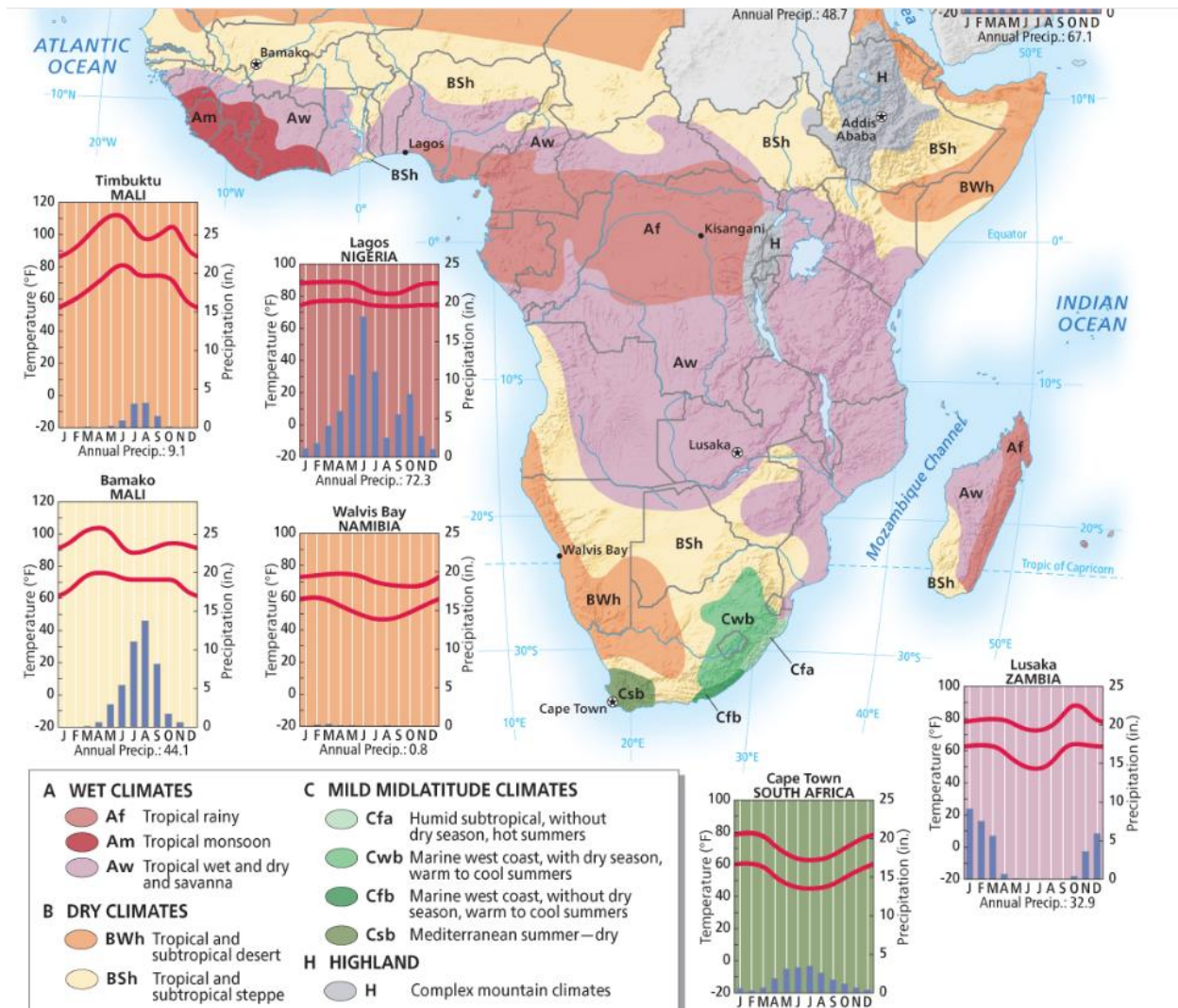
According to Figure 13.3: Climate Map of Southeast Asia, Singapore is a tropical rainy climate with consistently warm weather ranging from 73 – 86°F. The amount of rain is, on average, 8 inches per month, with an annual precipitation of 95 inches. From October to January, the precipitation significantly increases, reaching a high of 10 inches of precipitation in November, December, and January (Price, Marie, et al., pg. 434). River Valley is in the Central region of Singapore, which consists of gentle slopes and elevated areas (todaynewlaunch, “Exploring”). There are estimated to be 1,190 species of vascular plants in the primary forests, 207 species of birds, 25 species of amphibians, 44 species of animals, 72 reptile species, over 100 fish species, and 156 species of butterflies (*Singapore Biodiversity: Animal and Plant Species and What Is under Threat*). Singapore’s rich biodiversity is a result of the rainforests and marine ecosystems. Due to the increase in pollutants in the Singapore River, many of the aquatic ecosystems are being detrimentally affected. With the increase in urban areas like River Valley, there is also a lot of habitat loss, which is displacing species and disrupting their ecosystems. There have been efforts in River Valley to keep parks and green spaces, so habitats are not disturbed, but with a growing population, it can be very difficult.

There is severe deforestation, increasing temperatures, and food security threats (National Climate Change Secretariat). The severe deforestation is mainly caused by the increase in settlement and infrastructure. From 2001 to 2024, there has been minimal tree loss in River Valley. This is because the city has been built for many decades, so the natural landscape has shifted over time to become more urban. In urban

areas like River Valley, the rising temperatures are causing heat to be retained due to natural land cover being replaced with buildings and other infrastructures. This will cause more discomfort and likely increase the use of air-conditioning, furthermore, increasing Singapore's already high energy demands. This, in turn, results in higher carbon emissions. With intense storms from climate change come more flooding and droughts, threatening the local crops. Since Singapore relies strongly on the global food supply, climate change will negatively impact the country's ability to import food as supply becomes scarce, and prices increase (National Climate Change Secretariat). The best way to be prepared for these hazardous conditions is to be informed within your area and take proper action, such as wearing lighter clothing during heat and drinking a lot of water. To prevent rising temperatures, we must work on finding more eco-friendly ways to produce energy and overall reduce our energy consumption. For droughts and floods, it is best to create an emergency kit with necessities such as food and water, and to develop an evacuation plan.

Travel Destination: Kampala, Uganda

I have heard many stories about Kampala, Uganda. Many of my family members have lived here, and I would like to learn more and eventually travel here. One aspect I found attractive about this location was the abundance of greenery in the city and in its surroundings. I also learned that birds are a major tourist attraction due to the many different kinds, and Kampala is a great place to see up to 50 water and forest bird species. It is a city that lies on the shore of Lake Victoria, Africa's largest freshwater lake. I would also like to see the different mosques, Hindu temples, and Christian churches since the population has a mix of religions. The Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi would also be an interesting attraction to learn more about Ugandan royalty.



Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa with an elevation of over 4,000 meters, making it a plateau (Price, Marie, et al., pg.176). The very northern tip of Uganda consists of tropical and subtropical steppe climates. The rest of the country qualifies under tropical wet and dry and savanna. This makes Uganda a mix of wet and dry climates. Kampala is a part of the tropical wet and dry savanna climate, meaning there is a mix of trees and tall grasses in the wetter zones and short grasses and fewer trees in the drier zones (Price, Marie, et al., pg. 181). Uganda has a vast species of birds, taking up approximately 10% of the world's bird population. There are 1,020 different bird species, 345 mammal species, 142 types of reptiles, 86 different amphibians, 501 species of fish, 1,242 kinds of butterflies, and 4,500 species of plants ("WCS Uganda > Wildlife > Biodiversity"). One of the most common birds you can find in Kampala is the common bulbul, a short and thin bird whose nests are placed in shrubs. They often eat a mix of plants and insects. They thrive near humans, for example, in parks and gardens ("Top 20 Most Common Bird in Kampala - Picture Bird").

Kampala is a city with rapid urbanization, with a population of 4.2 million people in 2025, double the amount compared to 2010 ("Kampala, Uganda Metro Area Population 1950-2024"). Due to the increase in

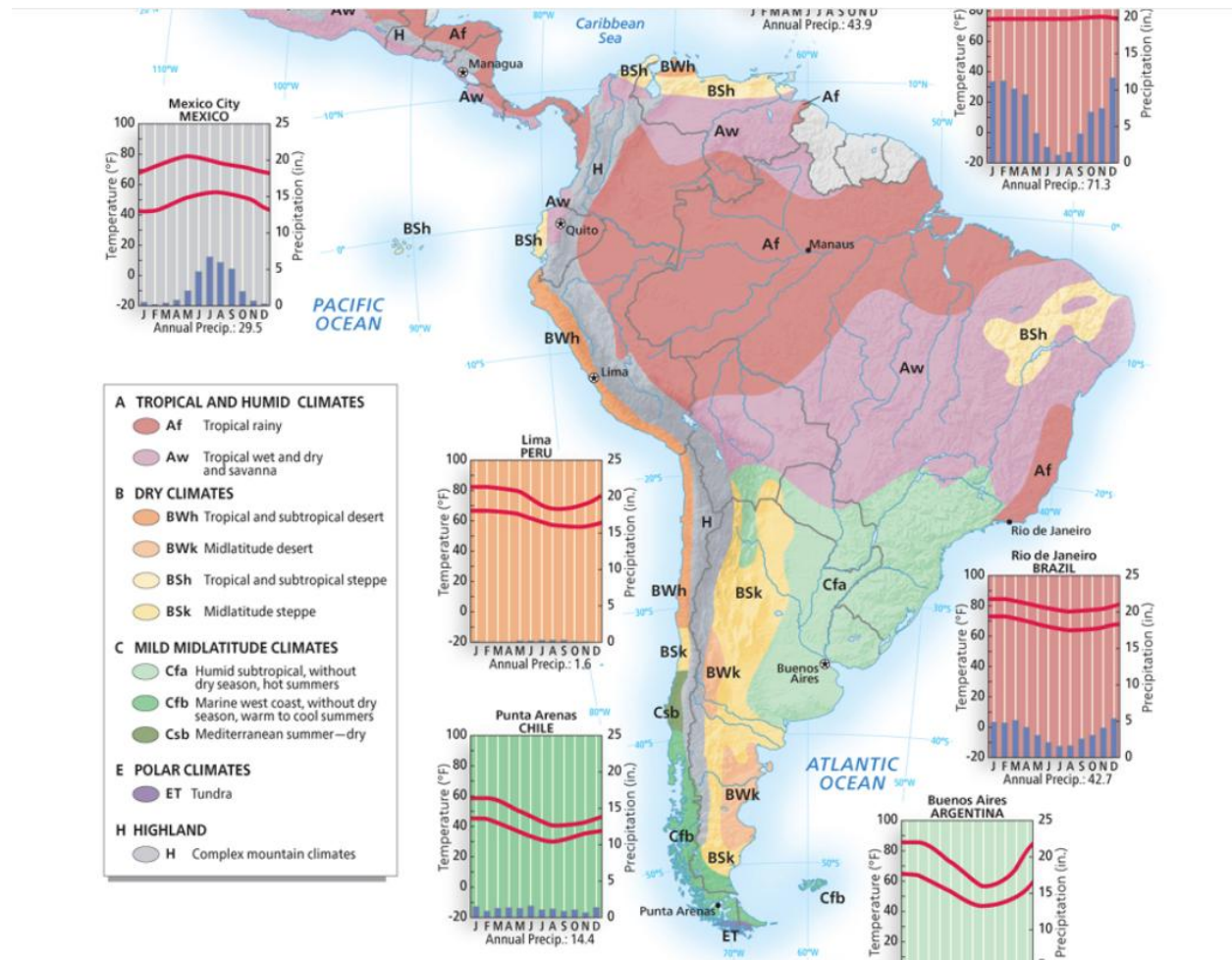
population, resulting in a large demand for more land, much of the biodiversity is being lost. Climate change is also strongly affecting biomes. The increase in heat over the years has become hazardous, along with the changing rainfall patterns. With unpredictable rainstorms, causing high run-off levels, the city's infrastructure cannot handle abrupt changes. Flooding and the spread of pollution have largely affected the natural environment ("Planning a Green Future for Kampala"). Overfishing in Lake Victoria causes a reduction in the fish population. Targeting specific fish species in high numbers can disrupt the food web, in turn, causing the loss of biodiversity ("WCS Uganda > Wildlife > Biodiversity"). Overfishing can also threaten economic stability in certain communities, initiating increases in competition. A decline in fish population in certain communities can create food security risks as well.

From December to February is the best time to visit Kampala, Uganda, as it coincides with the dry season. Since this is not usually the peak travel season for most people, there will be fewer tourists in the area. The highs during the day are approximately 84°F, and the lows are around 64°F. The cooler months of June, July, and August are also peak times to travel to Kampala, but there are many more visitors. The climate is still dry, but there are occasional showers. The temperature during these months ranges from 80 – 82°F during the day and around 62°F at night. During these dry months, there are many opportunities to explore various parks and reserves. The dry conditions make it easier to see primates such as gorillas, monkeys, and chimpanzees in the forests. There are also fewer bugs compared to the wet season, which lowers your chances of getting malaria (African Mecca Safaris). If you visit Uganda at the end of January, you can experience the celebrations of their Liberation Day. Many festivals and performances reflect the sacrifice and journey Uganda fought through for freedom (Lee). At these times of the year, you must pack cooler clothing, especially with warmer temperatures during the day. Sun protection is important to protect yourself from the strong sun during the day. Comfortable shoes or boots would be useful if you are going on hikes. I, personally, would bring a camera to take pictures of the landscapes, wildlife, city, and any new, fascinating items and experiences I come across.

I do not foresee there being many cultural differences. Since much of my family grew up here and in Jinja, a town 40 miles north of Kampala, I feel aspects of Uganda were brought to the U.S. with them. People mainly converse in English in Kampala, so there would not be a language barrier. There are many street food stalls. One of the popular foods sold is called Rolex, a type of bread called chapati, filled with egg and vegetables. Another food is kabalagala, a fried plantain snack, representing traditional Ugandan cuisine ("Kampala Culture: Discover 10 Unique Experiences"). These are foods that I have had multiple times in my life. A cultural difference in Kampala that I have not experienced is the abundance of local markets selling Ugandan handmade items. This can range from woven baskets to beaded jewelry, created using traditional techniques and vibrant colored materials ("Kampala Culture: Discover 10 Unique Experiences"). Something that might be challenging during my time there is the weather. I am not used to such dry and warm climates.

Travel Destination: Lima, Peru

Lima has a beautiful cultural landscape consisting of many historical sites like Plaza Mayor and the Government Palace. Peru also has delicious, authentic cuisine in local markets and street vendors that you cannot miss. The city has lots of greenery like palm trees, which is not something I would have expected, and the land is very close to the Incan citadel called Machu Picchu, in the Andes Mountains.



Peru is located on the far left of South America, below Ecuador. A majority of the land is connected to the Andes Mountains. Lima has a dry climate, specifically a tropical and subtropical desert (Price, Marie, et al., pg. 108). The precipitation in Lima is very low, approximately 1.5 inches per year. As for the temperature, from January to May, the high is around 82°F and the low, 67°F. Once June comes around, the temperatures begin to drop. The average high from June to September is approximately 70°F, and the low is around 58°F. The temperatures start to pick back up to the upper 70s and 80s from October to December. Peru has more than 1,800 species of birds, over 300 different kinds of mammals, nearly 500 types of reptiles and amphibians, and thousands of plant species (Peru Travel). Altitude variation creates many unique environmental conditions that encourage diverse spreads of species and ecosystems. With one part of Peru being on the coast of the Pacific and the other in the Andes, with the Amazon rainforest on the other side, there are various habitats for animals such as desert, mountains, dry forests, canyons, and

wetlands (Peru Travel). As stated in Peru Travel, "In the Madre de Dios region, bamboo forests are essential for biodiversity and have unique species such as the spectacled bear and the jaguar." This shows how impressive Peru's biodiversity is, as well as its conservation of the habitats.

Some environmental issues that may affect Lima are the high levels of deforestation. There have been illegal logging practices in Peru along with the development of urban areas, leading to increased energy consumption and air pollution. Mining and oil operations have also contributed to deforestation by creating water pollution and carbon emissions, intensifying climate change. The expansion of agriculture by using nitrous oxide and methane gases has increased greenhouse gases, once again, contributing to climate change. Climate change has been affecting the local climate patterns in Peru, causing increased temperatures. Deforestation can also cause an offset of microclimate regulation, leading to reduced rainfall and soil erosion (USCIS). Natural habitats can also be lost with deforestation, destroying natural habitats and biodiversity. Indigenous communities will be displaced from the forests, threatening their way of life as well. With rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns, there will be more crop failures and livestock losses, causing food scarcity. The Peruvian government has taken action steps to promote renewable energy and has made efforts to protect its forests and overall climate (USCIS).

The best time of year to travel to Lima, Peru, would be from December to April. Because Lima is in the Southern Hemisphere, these months are considered their summer and are warmer compared to May through November. Though, if based on weather, it really depends on your preference for cooler versus warmer months. I would prefer to go in the cooler months since I am more comfortable in that weather. There is often a misty fog that comes over the nighttime that locals call "la garua" (U.S. News). An enjoyable festival to see around this time is the Peruvian Independence Day in July, where there are feasts and music all around to celebrate. The Fiesta de Santa Rosa de Lima, in August, is a religious festival devoted to Santa Rosa de Lima, the first saint of America and patron of Lima. There are hymns and prayers sung in her honor (Rodriguez). If I were going to Lima in July and August, I would bring some light and slightly warmer clothing for the temperature highs and lows throughout their winter. I would also pack hiking boots if I plan to do treks, but also shoes that can support all the walking I would be doing around the city. It would also be respectful to bring a few clothing items that are not revealing if planning on attending churches.

I think the major difference in culture is their strong connection to religion and history, and the idea of representing and preserving that. I feel that in the U.S., I do not see as much passion about our history compared to the number of celebrations and museums that they have in Lima. People in the U.S. all have different religions, or none at all, and the idea of the whole country or even a city celebrating one religion is a culture shock. I also think traditional Peruvian food is a major cultural difference. I have never had Peruvian food. I know they use a lot of potatoes, quinoa, seafood, and spice blends in their dishes that I am not used to. One thing that I know I will find challenging is the language barrier and the fact that they know I am a tourist. A lot of times tourists will get targeted and scammed in other countries because they do not know the language or culture, and that is always a challenge that is hard to work passed. I think a similarity is the idea of having strong family bonds and close relationships with others.

Conclusion

I learned a lot about how the climate can really affect your ideas of where you want to live or even travel. Having to think about the time of year that is best to travel to a country is important to be prepared. In River Valley, Singapore, I learned about the mix of cultures that is strongly shown in the food around the area. As for Kampala, Uganda, I never knew how many species of birds they had or that there are two dry seasons, which are prime times to travel there. In Lima, Peru, the diverse climates were a shock to me because I never thought about how, on the other side of the Andes mountains, was the Amazon rainforest. I learned it is really important to look into the environmental situations of each country and whether they are making efforts to improve. After completing this project, I would now choose Peru as the country I would like to live in.

Acknowledgements

I used MLA format for my Works Cited page. I had the assistance of Bing as my search engine and used Mybib as a citation manager. To check whether my citations were correct, I followed the structure of: Author last name, first name, article title, website title, date published, URL, and date used. If there was the same author, but a different publishing date, I adjusted the in-text citation to include the publisher and the first word of the article title to differentiate the two. For example, "(Patel, "Life")". I also remade the USCIS and Rodriguez bibliographies due to an error in Mybib. I have placed the citation AI that I used in my works cited as well.

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