



What Airbnb Guests Actually Notice

Items, Design Choices, and Details That Consistently Deliver Five-Star Reviews.

Based on recurring trends across guest reviews from London and UK listings.



Introduction

The UK Airbnb and short-let market continues to attract strong demand from domestic and international travellers. But with thousands of listings competing for attention, success is increasingly shaped by more than location alone.

Guests now expect comfort, convenience, cleanliness and thoughtful details as standard. For hosts and investors, this makes furnishing a commercial decision: *not just a finishing touch*. The figures below show why getting the guest experience right matters.



A Snapshot of UK Airbnb and Tourism Demand

£5.7bn: Airbnb UK **economic contribution**, 2023¹

380,000–420,000 approx.
active **listings** across UK²

73%: London average
occupancy rate³

£147bn: annually generated by
UK tourism⁴

Sources

1. EY Report 2024: Travel on Airbnb: housing and economic impact study
2. Stayful: How Many Airbnbs Are in the UK ? Growth from 2018 to 2025
3. Airbnb Average Occupancy Rate in the UK Market in 2026
4. Visit Britain: Economic Value of Tourism



**WHY GUEST
EXPERIENCE
DETERMINES
YOUR RATING**

WHY GUEST EXPERIENCE DETERMINES YOUR RATING

Three- or four-star reviews have a common theme: the property or the experience was almost perfect and it's the small oversights that missed the mark.

There was a shortage of towels, the Wi-Fi password was buried in a welcome letter, and the blackout curtains did not quite reach the windowsill or simply the mattress was sagging.

Individually, these issues are minor but when you look at the bigger picture, they compound and create a poor impression on guests that costs hosts full star ratings.

In the competitive UK short-let market, that single star is the difference between a thriving listing and one that barely breaks even.

What is particularly instructive about positive five-star reviews is what guests choose to mention unprompted. They are not recounting the square footage or the view — they are describing how the space made them feel. The quality of sleep. Whether they could cook a proper meal. Whether checking in was seamless. Whether the bathroom felt considered. These are furnishing and equipment decisions, and every one of them is within a host's control.

” **“AMAZING FURNITURE THAT’S BOTH PRACTICAL AND FASHIONABLE”**

Reviewer on an Islington Airbnb listing.

” **“THE HOUSE IS SPARKLING CLEAN. IT’S EXACTLY WHAT I NEED.”**

Reviewer on a Manchester Airbnb listing.

” **“COUCH IS SUPER COMFY, SPACIOUS LIVING ROOM AND DINING AREA, AND BALCONY IS CUTE!”**

Reviewer on a Greater London Airbnb listing.

Industry guidance consistently emphasises that maintaining high cleanliness standards is essential for building trust and securing bookings.

WHY GUEST EXPERIENCE DETERMINES YOUR RATING

Across Airbnb listings in London and other major UK cities, guests consistently highlight the following

Sleep comfort

Cleanliness

Convenience

Usability

Reliability

NOT LUXURY ALONE.

Reviews show that thoughtful preparation such as comfortable bedding, reliable appliances, and intuitive layouts often determines whether guests return, recommend the property, or leave a top rating.

” **“MAKING A FIVE-STAR IMPROVEMENT FOR A GUEST-READY AIRBNB PROPERTY IS PRACTICAL, STRATEGIC AND EFFORTLESS, NOT EXPENSIVE.”** -Mansi Mehra, Director InStyle Direct

THE UK SHORT-LET MARKET AT A GLANCE

Understanding the scale of the market helps explain why the gap between a well-furnished and an under-equipped listing translates so directly into financial outcomes.

The UK's travel and tourism industry contributes approximately **£147 billion annually** to the economy and around **5% of GDP supporting 2.4 million jobs**. It is projected to grow to **£161 billion by 2030⁵**, driven strongly by inbound international travel.

In 2023, travel on **Airbnb contributed £5.7 billion to the UK economy**, directly supporting over **75,000 jobs**. The EY report commissioned by Airbnb and published in August 2024 found that the typical **UK host earned nearly £5,500 annually**, which is equivalent to two months of additional pay for the average UK household. This income stays local, providing a meaningful boost to families, neighbourhoods, and nearby businesses.

London's short-let market sits at the top of UK performance metrics. London short-term rentals average around **73% occupancy**—among the highest urban rates in Europe, reflecting the city's sustained demand from both leisure and business travellers. Against this backdrop, the quality of a listing's furnishings is not merely an aesthetic consideration but it works as a revenue generator.

Source

5. Visit Britain: Economic Value of Tourism

WHAT UK AIRBNB REVIEWS ACTUALLY REVEAL

Guest reviews are the most direct available data on what matters in a short-let property. Across hundreds of UK listings that we have reviewed, high-performing listings show consistency.

The categories below account for the vast majority of furnishing-related mentions in positive UK Airbnb reviews. Each reflects a concrete decision a host can make: *not about the building or the location, but about the items, the quality, and the thoughtfulness of what they provide.*

” **“ The pictures were promising, but the reality was unsurpassed. The loving and detailed furnishings and the high-quality ambience were so beautiful that it seemed more pleasant to spend a cozy evening in our holiday home than in a restaurant or theater. We enjoyed the time very much, the surroundings and also the tranquility let us live near the city, but still like in a bubble of coziness. In addition to the great decor, everything you need was available. ”**

Reviewer on a Hampstead Airbnb listing.

” **“ It was spotless, comfortable, nicely designed (even exceeded the photos with beautiful high ceilings and airy feel), and had everything we needed. ”**

Reviewer on a Kensington Airbnb listing.

” **"High-speed Wi-Fi, smart TV with Netflix ready to go, and a dedicated desk with monitor made this perfect for my working trip. Everything was seamless from keyless check-in to the welcome basket waiting on the counter. Faultless."**

Reviewer on a Manchester B&B listing.

Across types, locations, and guest demographics there is a focus on the quality of specific items rather than the property itself. Guests notice specifics, such as cookware availability, the curtains, bedding, cleanliness, the Wi-Fi, the coffee machine, and more, which in turn drive the ratings.

WHAT SEPARATES
HIGH-PERFORMING LISTINGS



(AND WHAT HOSTS CAN LEARN)



THEY PRIORITISE GUEST COMFORT

Elements such as premium bedding, blackout curtains, and quality mattresses are consistently mentioned in positive reviews. Hosts who treat sleep quality or comfort quality as their primary investment rather than an afterthought see it reflected directly in their ratings.

THEY DELIVER PRACTICAL CONVENIENCE

Features like keyless entry, well-equipped kitchens, and high-speed WiFi reduce friction during a stay. Guests who encounter small frustrations, such as a lack of proper kitchen equipment, lack of work desk setup, a missing Wi-Fi password, or a password buried in a welcome pack, are measurably more likely to mention these issues. Top hosts have systematically eliminated these moments before a guest arrives.





THEY CREATE MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES

Outdoor seating, thoughtful welcome touches, and design-led interiors often become the moments guests remember and write about. A well-placed welcome basket or a considered terrace setup costs little but generates disproportionate goodwill in reviews.

THEY ARE DESIGNED WITH REVIEWS IN MIND

Top hosts understand that every furnishing choice influences the guest – from the quality of towels to the usability of the workspace. They think about the review before the guest arrives, not after.

”

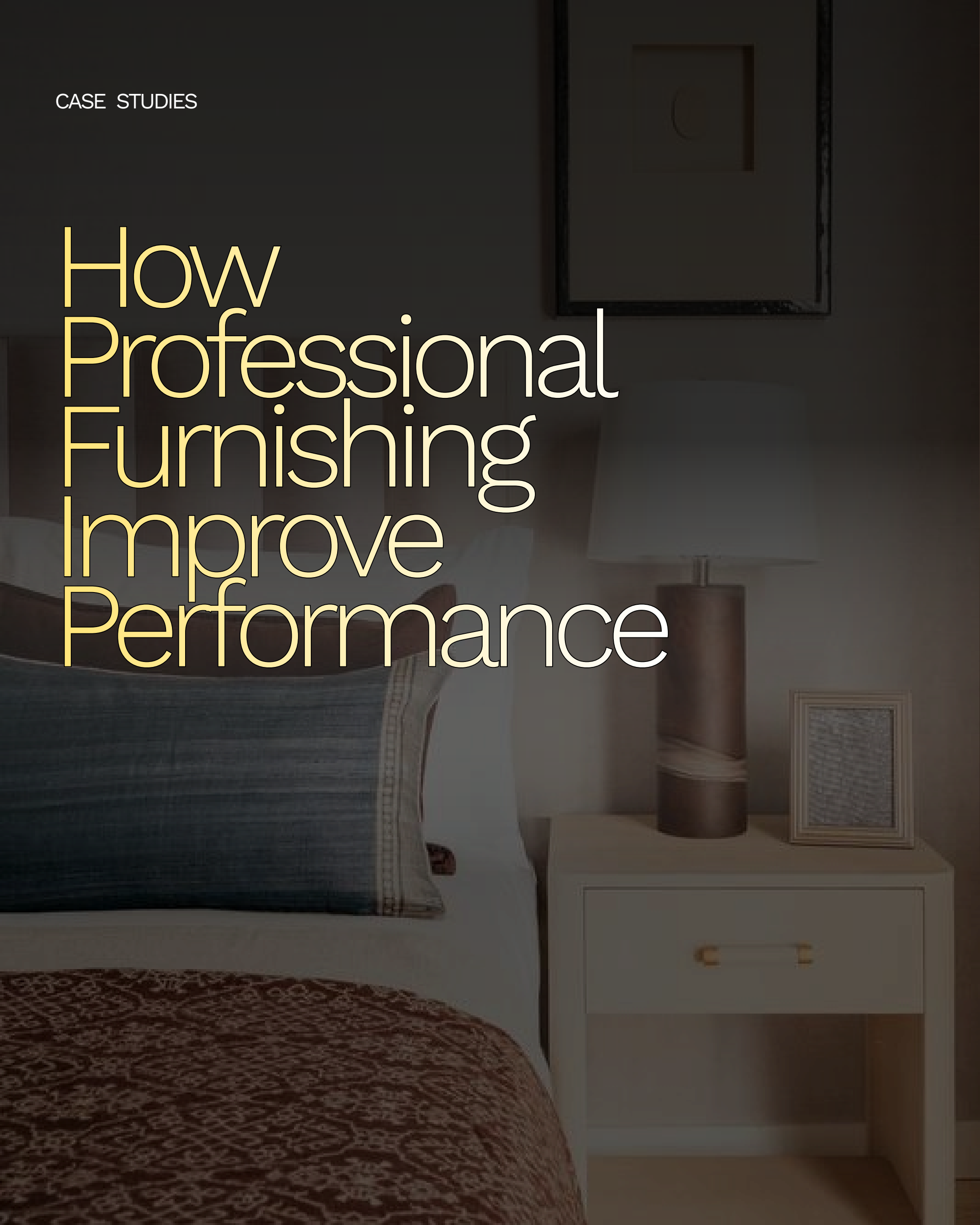
“PROPERTIES THAT COMBINE DESIGN-LED FURNISHING, COMFORT UPGRADES, AND THOUGHTFUL AMENITIES CONSISTENTLY RECEIVE STRONGER REVIEWS AND REPEAT BOOKINGS, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THEY ARE CITY-CENTRE STUDIOS OR RURAL RETREATS.”

*James McNeill, Associate Director,
InStyle Direct.*



CASE STUDIES

How Professional Furnishing Improve Performance





LET WITHIN ONE WEEK OF
PROJECT COMPLETION

CLIENT: OVERSEAS PRIVATE
AIRBNB HOST

CITY: LONDON

THE STORY

An overseas host with no local presence needed their London property Airbnb-ready without being physically present to manage any part of the process. InStyle Direct delivered a full furnishing package with premium bedding, quality cookware, bathroom essentials, smart lock installation, and Wi-Fi setup, all while coordinating with the owner completely remotely without needing their presence in London. We provided complimentary professional photography that enhanced the impression on listings. The property went live with a complete listing and was fully booked within seven days, with the host managing everything remotely from abroad.

RESULTS

- *Complete remote management*
- *Guest-ready interiors*
- *No host involvement*
- *Fully booked within 7 days of going live*

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**FOUR-FIGURES IN MONTHLY
INCOME**

CLIENT: OVERSEAS LANDLORD

CITY: LONDON

THE STORY

An overseas investor's Chelsea Waterfront property was furnished as a private holiday home with the property's mixed usage and long-term investment in mind. Every decision, from the layout to the material specifications, was made to ensure that the property could be enjoyed as a private second home, as well as for short-term holiday rentals and long-term rental flexibility. We selected timeless designs and high-quality finishes throughout, which meant the property transitioned seamlessly into the short-let market to eventually be a long-term rental when the owner's needs changed.

Within a week of listing as a short let, the property secured a tenant, which turned from a short rental to a long-term tenancy, generating a four-figure monthly income. This project perfectly demonstrates how to style high-end homes in a way that balances personal goals with long-term financial performance.



**RENTED WITHIN
ONE WEEK**

**FOUR-FIGURE
MONTHLY INCOME**

**ZERO VOID
PERIOD**



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**FURNISHING FOR
FUNCTIONALITY AND HIGHER
RETURN**

CLIENT: AIRBNB HOST

CITY: LONDON

THE STORY

InStyle Direct transformed a one-bedroom Airbnb-to-be apartment in 'The Pembridge' – a high-end development in Notting Hill – into a modern and practical Airbnb rental. The design prioritised guest comfort while ensuring that the space was visually appealing and inviting, especially for short-term holiday renters. The sleek, modern furnishings complemented the apartment's overall design, creating a seamless flow from the living area to the bedroom.

The client was highly satisfied with the results. The thoughtful design maximised the use of space and positioned the property as the perfect Notting Hill retreat for Airbnb guests, ensuring it matched the area's competitive rates. The efficient turnaround allowed the landlord to prepare the property quickly for the rental market, confident that the space offered both style and functionality to meet the expectations of short-term tenants.

> READ MORE

**INCREASED RENTAL
POTENTIAL**

**PRACTICAL DESIGNS
AND LAYOUT**

**HIGH CLIENT
SATISFACTION**



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YOUR FIVE-STAR READINESS CHECKLIST



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Work through each category below and tick off what your property already has. Use the gaps to identify your most impactful next investment.

	SLEEP & COMFORT	
a	Premium mattress or quality topper	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Blackout curtains	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	Hotel-quality bedding (2 sets per bed)	<input type="checkbox"/>
d	Soft and firm pillow options per guest	<input type="checkbox"/>
	KITCHEN & DINING	
a	Nespresso or bean-to-cup coffee machine	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Quality cookware (pans, knives, utensils)	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	Full crockery and glassware for max guest count	<input type="checkbox"/>
d	Kitchen staples provided (oil, salt, tea, coffee)	<input type="checkbox"/>

YOUR FIVE-STAR READINESS CHECKLIST

Work through each category below and tick off what your property already has. Use the gaps to identify your most impactful next investment.

	BATHROOM	
a	Spa-quality towels (hand, bath, face)	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Rain showerhead or high-pressure fitting	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	Full-size quality toiletries: Shampoo, conditioner, body wash	<input type="checkbox"/>
d	Hair dryer: Guests frequently complain about this essential item missing in the bathroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	TECHNOLOGY	
a	Fast Wi-Fi (300+ Mbps) clearly listed: Keep a framed card or QR code on desk	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Smart TV with Netflix, Prime Video, BBC iPlayer: Pre-configured, no setup needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	Keyless smart lock entry: Guests prefer hassle-free check-in/check-out process	<input type="checkbox"/>
	LIFESTYLE & EXTRAS	
a	Dedicated workspace (desk, chair, monitor): Increasingly pulls remote-working guests	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Outdoor seating area (if applicable): Even balcony chairs count	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	Welcome basket with local treats: It's a memorable small investment	<input type="checkbox"/>
d	Local area guidebook: Keep a personal recommendation, as guests love personalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
e	Games, books, entertainment extras: Groups and families in Airbnb reviews prefer additional in-house activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>



READY TO RECEIVE FIVE-STAR REVIEWS?

InStyle Direct provides complete Airbnb furnishing packages for UK properties – from targeted upgrades to full-property transformations.

Reach out to our team today and see how we help your short rentals reach their full potential.

[GET A QUOTE](#)



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