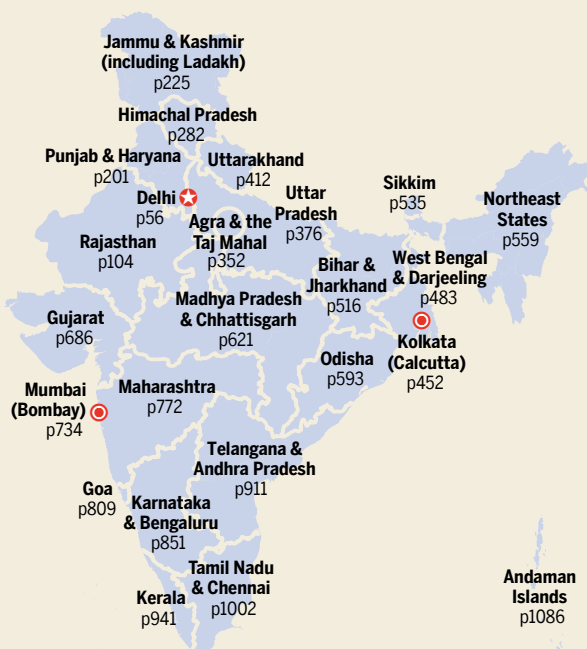




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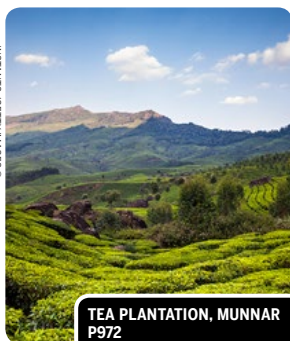


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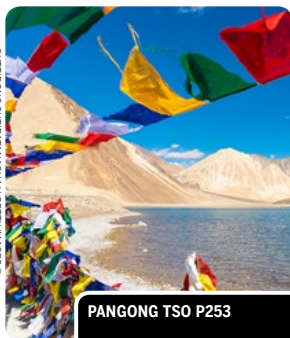
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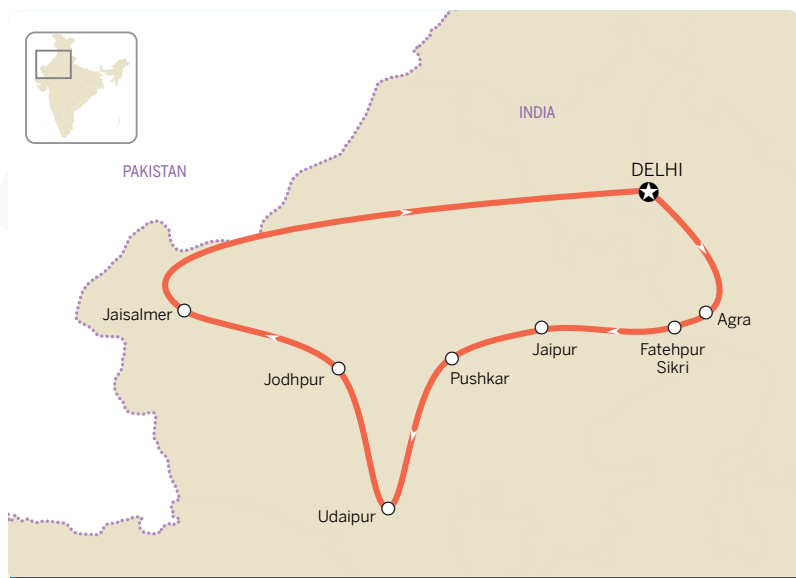
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Itineraries



2 WEEKS Golden Triangle & the Land of the Kings

This might be a well-worn trail, but there's a reason for that. The Golden Triangle of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur combines some of India's most jaw-dropping sights.

Kick off in **Delhi**, visiting the tumult of Old Delhi with its Mughal-era Red Fort and Jama Masjid, and taking it easy wandering Lodi Gardens, and Humayun's Tomb. Next, catch a train to **Agra** and see how beautiful the Taj Mahal, the world's most extravagant monument to love, really is. Explore Agra Fort and devote a day to nearby **Fatehpur Sikri**, a ghostly Mughal city. Continue on to the Pink City **Jaipur**, and devote several days to its whirlwind of bazaars, the City Palace, Hawa Mahal, and the Amber Fort.

Loop back to Delhi, or travel on to **Pushkar** for a few days of chilling out around lake-side temples, then take time to stay lakeside, go boating and explore elegant **Udaipur**. Next visit magnificent hilltop Kumbhalgarh and the temple at Ranakpur, en route to **Jodhpur**. See the Blue City unfurled beneath you from the mighty battlements of Mehrangarh Fort. Finish off in fortified **Jaisalmer** and go all Lawrence of Arabia on camel-back through the dunes, sleeping under a firmament of stars. Finally, loop back to Delhi, with one last cycle ride through Old Delhi, an early morning trip to the ruins of Qutb Minar, or shopping in its amazing emporiums, markets and boutiques.



Six Months North & South

Tourist visas last six months, allowing you explore a lot of India.

Kick off by exploring **Delhi** before riding the rails north to **Amritsar**, to see Sikhism's most holy site, the glittering Golden Temple. Connect through Chandigarh to the laid-back vibes of **Shimla**. From this classic hill station you can roam northwest to Buddhist **Dharamsala**, home of the Dalai Lama, or **Manali**, starting point for the beautiful, thrilling but gruelling overland journey to rugged **Ladakh** (July to September), gateway to the high Himalaya. When you've had your fill of mountain air, head south for some yoga in **Rishikesh**, and descend to **Agra**, to see the vision-like Taj Mahal. Next go south **Khajuraho**, with its risqué temples, and scan the jungle for tigers in **Bandhavgarh National Park**. Continue to the holy city of **Varanasi** for a boat trip along the sacred Ganges.

You can meander on detours as you train it eastwards to **Kolkata** (Calcutta), bustling capital of West Bengal. Swing north as far as **Darjeeling** or **Sikkim** for sweeping Himalayan views, then drift down the coast to the temple towns of **Konark** and **Puri** in Odisha (Orissa). Fly south to **Chennai** (Madras) for a different kind of India.

From here you have a chance to visit the wonders of **Mamallapuram** (Mahabalipuram), for temple carvings; **Puducherry** (Pondicherry), for colonial-era heritage combined with contemporary charm; and **Madurai**, for deity-encrusted temple towers. At this point, you've more than earned a long stay at **Kerala's** beaches, before taking a trip inland to nostalgic **Mysuru** to see how maharajas lived.

Continuing north, head to **Hampi**, where temples and ruined cities are strewn among the boulders, then get a second dose of beach life on the coast of **Goa**. Wine, dine and go Bollywood-crazy in **Mumbai** (Bombay), fast-paced capital of the west coast; then admire the glory of the cave paintings and carvings at **Ajanta** and **Ellora**.

Finish on a high in Rajasthan with its the coloured-city triple – pink **Jaipur**, blue **Jodhpur** and white **Udaipur**. There might just be time to detour to the fascinating temples, exquisite embroidery villages and nature reserves of **Gujarat**, before closing the circle with a last train ride to Delhi.

1
MONTH

Mountains & Tribal Culture

Sikkim and the Northeast States, with their incredible mountain scenery, are still a well-kept secret for many travellers. Insurgencies and permit restrictions have long put off visitors, but India's last frontier is slowly opening up to the outside world. From Kolkata, you can go north to Darjeeling, see astounding Himalayan vistas in Sikkim then visit the world of India's hill tribes. Advance planning is essential – permits are mandatory and there are security risks to consider.

Starting in **Kolkata**, make your first stop genteel **Darjeeling** – here you can sample India's finest teas and pick up a permit for Sikkim, one of India's most serene quarters. **Gangtok**, the Sikkimese capital, is the starting point for jeep rides to historic Buddhist temples set amid dramatic scenery. Veer to **Namchi** to see the giant statues of Shiva and Padmasambhava, and to **Pelling** for inspiring views of the white-peaked Khangchendzonga and the beautiful Pemayangtse Gumpa, ringed by gardens and monks' cottages. Take the weeklong trek from **Yuksom** to **Goecha La**, a 4940m pass with incredible views, then exit Sikkim via **Tashiding**, with more wonderful views and another stunning gumpa, before travelling to **Siliguri** for the journey east.

Arrange tours for the Northeast States (including permits for Arunachal Pradesh) in **Guwahati** or online. Then head from Guwahati to **Arunachal Pradesh** to pay your respects at the stunning Buddhist monastery at **Tawang**, before exploring the tribal villages around **Ziro**, where the elders have dramatic facial tattoos and piercings. A visit to Nagaland opens up fascinating tribal villages around **Mon** – featuring a rugged countryside dotted by traditional longhouses and remote settlements – and the capital **Kohima**, with its WWII relics. Going south, there's a fair chance of encountering Meitei culture in **Manipur** and Mizo culture in **Mizoram**, before you fly back to Kolkata.

Alternately, you could also try this classic loop (Arunachal permits not required): from Guwahati, head to **Kaziranga National Park** to spot rare rhinos. Detour to sleepy **Shillong**, and hike to the waterfalls and incredible living root bridges of **Cherrapunjee**. Drive on to **Agartala**, the capital of Tripura, before returning to Kolkata by air or overland through Bangladesh.



3
WEEKS

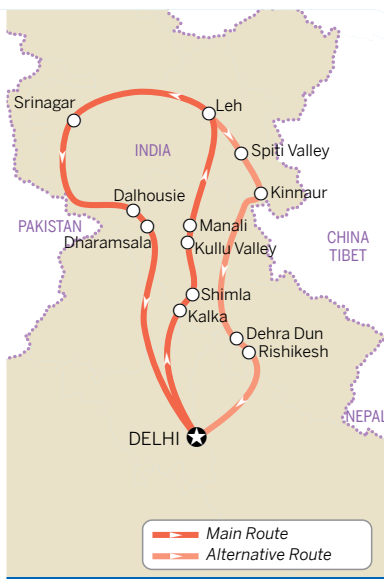
The Spiritual Centre

Take in some of India's most fabulous temples in this temple-hopping trip around the central plains.

Start amid the chaos and rich cultural life of **Kolkata**, then swap the big-city bustle for the peace and spirituality of **Bodhgaya**, where the Buddha attained enlightenment. Roll across the plains to **Sarnath**, where the Buddha first taught the dharma.

Move onto the sacred city of **Varanasi**. See the rituals on the banks of the River Ganges, then ramble to the Hindu temples of **Khajuraho**, which seethe with erotic carvings. Head southwest to **Sanchi**, where Emperor Ashoka first embraced Buddhism, then zip through Bhopal to Jalgaon, jumping-off point for the carving-filled caves of **Ajanta**.

Next, detour into Rajasthan; stop off in whimsical **Udaipur**, with its lakes and palaces, then explore the Jain temples of **Ranakpur** or **Mt Abu**. Continue to **Pushkar**, curled around its sacred lake, then make a trip to nearby **Ajmer**, one of India's key Islamic pilgrimage sites. Take a final stop in atmospheric **Jaipur**, then end the trip in **Delhi**, with its magnificent Islamic ruins and the shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin.



4
WEEKS

Himalayan Adventures

See soul-feeding Himalayan views on this mountainous loop.

Start by riding the rails from **Delhi** to **Kalka**, to board the narrow-gauge train to colonial-era **Shimla**. From here you can ramble around the hills, then join the traveller pilgrimage north to the **Kullu Valley**, stepping up a gear with some adventurous mountain activities.

From the hill resort of **Manali**, embark on the thrilling, winding, two-day journey to **Leh** in Ladakh (July to September), to hike to dramatic Buddhist monasteries and trekking peaks. For a short loop, continue from Leh to Kargil and on to Kashmir (checking first that it's safe to travel). Stay on a **Srinagar** houseboat, then loop through Jammu to elegant **Dalhousie**, and soak up Buddhist culture in nearby **Dharamsala**, before returning to Delhi.

With more time to spare, head southeast from Leh into the dramatic **Spiti Valley**, where ancient monasteries blend into the arid landscape. Ride the rattletrap bus to rugged **Kinnaur**, with its plunging landscapes, and make stops in **Dehra Dun** and **Rishikesh** to soak up some Hindu culture, before finishing in Delhi.

2
WEEKS

Southern Beaches

This route meanders to some of India's finest beaches and charismatic coastal towns.

Start in **Mumbai** and people-watch, amble and sample *bhelpuri* (crisp noodle salad) at Girgaum Chowpatty beach. Take a boat trip to the rock-cut temples on Elephanta Island, then travel south by train to beach-blessed **Goa**.

Take your pick from tropical sandy stretches of **Arambol**, **Vagator** and **Palolem**, then continue along the coast to the sacred town of **Gokarna**. Now for a change of pace; head inland to **Hampi**, with its serene Vijayanagar ruins, and witness the zenith of medieval stone carving in the Hoysala temples of **Belur** and **Halebid**. Return by train to **Mangalore** to dine on spectacular seafood, then chug south to the lovely, laid-back town of **Kochi** (Cochin), a melting-pot mix of influences from as far afield as China and the Middle East.

Cruise Kerala's backwaters from **Alappuzha** (Alleppey), before dipping your toes in the warm waters around beach resorts **Varkala** or **Kovalam**. Make your last stop **Thiruvananthapuram** (Trivandrum), home to fascinating, often-overlooked museums, before flying back to Mumbai.

3
WEEKS

A Southern Loop

Chennai is the easiest starting point for exploring India's southern tip. Ideal timing weatherwise is from October to February, when the weather is balmy and neither too hot or hitting the monsoon.

Kick off with some fiery thalis in **Chennai**, then see intricate temple carvings in **Mamallapuram**, one-time home of the Pallava kings.

Next, head for French-flavoured **Puducherry**, before leaving the coast behind and heading inland to the temple towns of Tamil Nadu: take in the boulder-covered **Trichy** (Tiruchirappalli), and **Madurai**, with its soaring, deity-covered *gopurams* (temple towers). From here, it's easy to zip down to **Kanyakumari**, the southernmost point of India.

Kick back on the coast at **Kovalam** or **Varkala**, then trade the sand for jungle fronds in steamy **Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary**, home to tigers and elephants, or take a trip up to **Munnar**, Kerala's centre of tea plantations, for tranquil rambles in the hills. En route back to Chennai visit colourful **Mysuru**, with its fabulously flamboyant maharaja's palace and giant stone Nandi (bull statue).

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Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Anna Kaminski

Odisha, Gujarat For as long as Anna has been travelling in India, she's been enchanted and exasperated by the country in equal measure, and never ever bored. This trip was no exception. Cons? The demonetisation crisis. Pros? Exploring two vastly different corners of the country. Highlights included the ancient architecture of Ahmedabad, spending time in traditional villages in Odisha's tribal country, lion-spotting in Sasan Gir National Park and witnessing first-hand the

centuries-old craft kept alive in the villages of Kachchh.



Bradley Mayhew

Bihar & Jharkhand, West Bengal & Darjeeling Bradley has been writing guide-books for 20 years now. He started travelling while studying Chinese at Oxford University, and has since focused his expertise on China, Tibet, the Himalaya and Central Asia. He is the co-author of Lonely Planet guides to Tibet, Nepal, Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya, Bhutan, Central Asia and many others. Bradley has also

fronted two TV series for Arte and SWR, one retracing the route of Marco Polo via Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and China, and the other trekking Europe's ten most scenic long-distance trails.



Iain Stewart

Karnataka, Telangana & Andhra Pradesh Iain's trained as a journalist and worked as reporter and restaurant critic in London in the 1990s. He started writing guide-books in 1997 and has penned more than 60 titles for destinations as diverse as Ibiza and Cambodia. For Lonely Planet, Iain's worked on books including Mexico, Indonesia, Croatia, Vietnam, India, Sri Lanka and Central America. Other passions include tennis, scuba and freediving. He'll consider working anywhere there's a

palm tree or two and a beach of a generally sandy persuasion. Home is Brighton, UK, within firing range of the city's south-facing horizon. He tweets at @iaintravel.

Contributing Writer Joe Bindloss wrote the History and India Today chapters.

**John Noble****Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh & Chattisgarh**

John has been travelling since his teens and doing so as a Lonely Planet writer since the 1980s. The number of LP titles he's written or co-written is well into three figures, covering a somewhat random selection of countries scattered across the globe, predominantly ones where Spanish, Russian or English are spoken (usually alongside numerous local languages). He still gets as excited as ever about heading out on the road to un-

familiar experiences, people and destinations, especially remote, off-the-beaten-track ones. Above all, he loves mountains, from the English Lake District to the Himalaya. See his pics on Instagram: @johnnoble11.

**Kevin Raub****Mumbai, Maharashtra**

Kevin Raub grew up in Atlanta and started his career as a music journalist in New York, working for *Men's Journal* and *Rolling Stone* magazines. Being a pursuer of hops himself, he was all too happy to put Kingfisher in his rearview drinking mirror and immerse himself in Mumbai's exploding craft beer scene for this edition of the India guide. This is Kevin's 40th Lonely Planet guide. Follow him on Twitter and Instagram (@RaubOnTheRoad). To learn more

about Kevin, check out www.lonelyplanet.com/members/kraub.

**Sarina Singh****Andaman Islands, Plan & Understand sections**

After finishing a business degree in her hometown of Melbourne, Sarina went to India to pursue a corporate traineeship before working as a journalist. After five years she returned to Australia and completed postgraduate journalism qualifications before authoring Lonely Planet's first edition of *Rajasthan*. Apart from numerous Lonely Planet books she has written for a raft of other publications and has been a scriptwriter and expert

commentator. Sarina is also the author of *Polo in India* as well as *India: Essential Encounters*. Her award-nominated documentary premiered at the prestigious Melbourne International Film Festival before screening internationally.

**Michael Benanav****Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand**

When Michael was young, his father made the mistake of handing him a biography of Lawrence of Arabia, along with adventure novels like *Around the World in 80 Days*. Something was sparked as this book-wormish boy over-identified with the main characters in these tales. Today, he is a veteran traveller, writer, and photographer, who loves exploring places far from beaten tourist trails. He's authored three non-fiction books (set on three different

continents) and writes and shoots for major publications. He also founded Traditional Cultures Project, which documents indigenous cultures around the world. To see some of his work, visit www.michaelbenanav.com.

**Mark Elliott****Jammu & Kashmir (including Ladakh), Sikkim**

British-born travel writer Mark Elliott has lived and worked on five continents, authoring or contributing to more than 60 books. He has been visiting the subcontinent since a 1982 trip which lined his stomach for all eventualities. While delighting in India's full rainbow of cultures, he's especially drawn to the cool air, magnificent mountains and spiritual warmth of the Himalayan regions whether sharing sufi secrets in Srinagar, mumbling man-

tras in Ladakh or being dazzled by Sikkim's larger than life mega-temples/statues.

**Paul Harding****Goa, Kerala**

As a writer and photographer, Paul has been travelling the globe for the best part of two decades, with an interest in remote and offbeat places and cultures. He's an author and contributor to more than 50 Lonely Planet guides to countries and regions as diverse as India, Iceland, Belize, Vanuatu, Iran, Indonesia, New Zealand, Finland and – his home patch – Australia.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Abigail Blasi

Delhi, Plan & Survival sections A freelance travel writer, Abigail has lived and worked in London, Rome, Hong Kong, and Copenhagen. Lonely Planet have sent her to India, Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritania, Mali, Italy, Portugal, Malta and around Britain. She writes regularly for newspapers and magazines, such as the *Independent*, the *Telegraph*, and *Lonely Planet Traveller*. She has three children and they often come along for the ride. Follow her on Twitter and Instagram: @abiwhere



Lindsay Brown

Rajasthan Lindsay started travelling as a young bushwalker exploring the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. Then as a marine biologist he dived the coastal and island waters of southeastern Australia. He continued travelling whenever he could while employed at Lonely Planet as an editor and publishing manager. On becoming a freelance writer and photographer he has co-authored more than 30 Lonely Planet guides to Australia, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.



Anirban Mahapatra

Punjab & Haryana, Kolkata, West Bengal & Darjeeling, Northeast States Ever since he gave up his journalist day job in 2009, Anirban Mahapatra has been travelling across the farthest extents of India on professional assignments as a travel writer and documentary filmmaker. A Lonely Planet writer since 2007, he has so far worked on five consecutive editions of the India guidebook, mostly specialising in destinations in east and northeast India. When not socialising with tribal chiefs over rice beer in Meghalaya or hiking along jungle trails in primeval Arunachal Pradesh, he cools his heels at his studio in Kolkata, conveniently located near some of the city's choicest pubs and restaurants.



Isabella Noble

Tamil Nadu English-Australian on paper but Spanish at heart, Isabella has been wandering the globe since her first round-the-world trip as a one-year-old. Having grown up in a whitewashed Andalusian village, she is a Spain specialist travel journalist, but also writes extensively about India, Thailand, the UK and beyond for Lonely Planet, the *Daily Telegraph* and others. Isabella has co-written Lonely Planet guides to Spain and Andalucía, and contributed to *India*, *South India*,

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