Cambridge Judge Business School

Reimagining Churches as Community Assets
for the Common Good

PRODUCING A CHURCH GUIDEBOOK FOR VISITORS:

NOTES FOR CHURCHES

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Judge Business School

The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

BENEFACT TRUST

Historic England

CONTENTS

WHY
A CHURCH
GUIDEBOOK?

Ancient or modern, urban or rural, large or small – English parish churches may look similar to an untrained eye. Outside, the tower and the spire may dominate the local skyline; inside, the aisle in the nave leads towards the altar, carvings and paintings adorn the entrance and walls, the light shines through the colourful stained glass, and all around in the sacred space different shapes, ornaments and figures in wood and stonework transmit rich and varied Christian iconography, imagery, symbols and concepts. Yet **there are no two churches alike** in England as each church building has its own character. Every church was built to be read as we connect with it when stepping inside. **A church is an open book** for visitors to learn about the local history, notable people and families who left their mark, and the local community. Few people, including regular visitors, can interpret true meanings of church objects and treasures.

Imagine a visitor who is not a church-goer who happens to cross the threshold of your church – what questions do they have or even how 'lost' they might feel. Indeed, a vicar or a churchwarden can be of help if they happen to be there at the time of the visit, but a guide to your church can be **a helpful engagement tool** that connects visitors to architectural and physical features of your church that communicate welcome.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the church guidebook is **to welcome and introduce first time visitors to your church** by providing useful information about the church building, its people and community, artefacts, as well as to help visitors feel welcome by giving them something tangible. Some may argue that those interested in your church may research about it in their own time. But **it is all about the welcome** – which is also a truly biblical theme – and the first impression to your church and your ministry that a church guidebook is part of. Having a guidebook shows that the church cares about having visitors from around the world. The guidebook highlights that your church is a culturally-inclusive place that offers peace and opportunity to pray, explains architectural and religious artefacts, helps visitors get engaged with the church materiality, learn about your community and enrich their personal experience of being in the church.

A well-designed church guidebook is also **a token of a visit or a thank you gift** – when leaving the church, visitors can take the guidebook with them, which is either displayed for free or sold for a small fee, and refer to it later or share with friends. For some curious minds, the guidebook can stimulate an interest in a deeper learning about your church and community heritage, Jesus and biblical stories. The church guidebook is much more than a mere brochure with images and encyclopaedic dry facts – it is a glimpse into the life of a 'living church'. Be it a centuries-old building or a modern construction, all churches are cared-for places of peace and sanctuary, filled with messages, memories and meanings.

Producing a church guidebook could be an additional way **to attract new members** to your congregation, or to simply ensure your church is recognised and valued as a central part of the local community for all residents. It could help to build wider support through volunteering, fundraising and attendance at community events.

SHORT AND LONG VERSIONS

There are two types of a church guidebook – a short leaflet and a more detailed publication. The short leaflet is about 2-4 pages long distributed for free or sold for micro-price, e.g. 50p. Such a small price is justifiable since many people who love church crawling will spend an afternoon, or a whole day, looking at many churches. Spending £1 or 50p per church would be a reasonable spend. A more detailed and professionally printed 'glossy' publication can be sold for a higher fee, e.g. £3-5).

In this guide we cover both versions and you can decide which one (or both) is mostly suitable for your church. A thing to remember is that people can do the in-depth reading once they are at home, but when in the church they want to know what is there and why in an easily found and understood description.

PREPARATION

Unlike the Village Welcome Handbook (*see a separate REACH Ely notes for churches on producing a welcome handbook*), the church guidebook is more of a professional-type of publication with images and text. Care should be taken in preparing the guidebook. It may best be done by a team of church members who would be willing to write and research for historical information, consult experts and/or libraries if necessary, take and edit photographs, typeset and design the document, and fact-check and approve the final version.
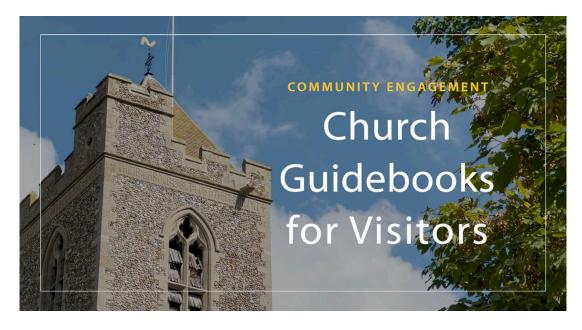
PRACTICAL RESOURCES

To help you in writing the church guide and researching your church history and genealogy, we recommend first to read the following advice materials:

- **Diocese of Ely's 'Research Your Church' (2021) leaflet**: https://d3hgrlq6yacptf. cloudfront.net/5f0f7281dadce/content/pages/documents/researchyourchurch.pdf

- **Diocese of Ely's 'Church Buildings for Everyone: A Visitor Welcome Toolkit' (see Chapter 7 How to Tell Your Story – The Printed Word):** https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront. net/5f0f7281dadce/content/pages/documents/welcometoolkit.pdf

We are pleased to be able to publish a short **video interview** filmed in the church at Isleham in which John Vigar, an ecclesiastical historian, talks about the aspects of producing a church guidebook.
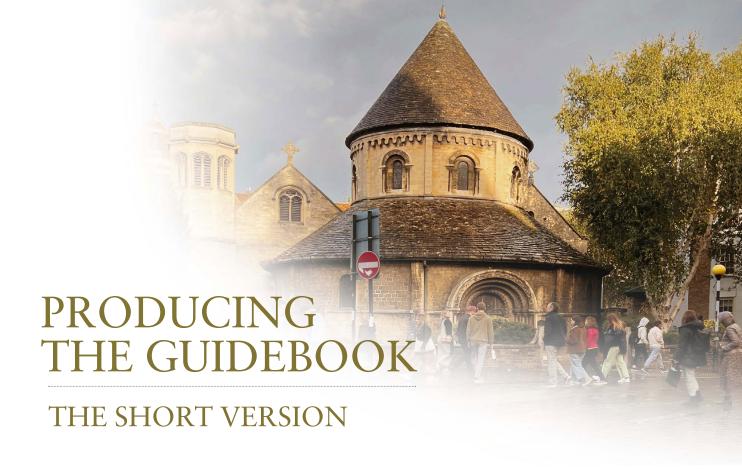
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtCToBmkiM0

A WELL-DESIGNED CHURCH GUIDEBOOK:

- provides a welcoming introduction to the church and community

- is clearly laid out

- is not too long

- contains images

- provides brief information on most, if not all, church artefacts (a long version), as well as architecture and notable people

- can have brief information about main church events and services, or details of where to find such information

- includes contact details with websites and social media channels.

At the end of this document 'Producing a church guide', we suggest **desktop publishing software** to design a church guidebook in-house which require basic design skills, list **online publishing resources**, as well as offer a Microsoft Word-based **editable template** – as a starting point or as a simplified way to make the church guidebook in-house without access to professional software.

PRODUCING THE GUIDEBOOK

THE SHORT VERSION

Keep it brief

Visitors who have no religious background or understanding may enjoy exploring and looking at churches. They want to know what they can see and its meanings. A brief introduction at the beginning of the guidebook may be feasible. Remember, people have chosen to visit your church before finding the guide, so no lengthy introduction from the current rector or in-depth past history of the settlement is required.

Word length

Aim to write about 600 words for a two-sided A4 leaflet (or when folded, four-page A5 format) or about 1,000-1,300 words for the two-page A4 leaflet.

Church treasures

Your short guidebook should give information about the church exterior, churchyard and things to see, then the church interior. In extra space, you might have a paragraph on a church hall.

The brief leaflet is to be kept as a memento of what visitors have seen once they get home, and as a record, particularly through the use of colour photographs, of the things in each individual church (if they have visited several in one day).

When describing church treasures for a casual church visitor, give a simple explanation of all the interesting things to be found to avoid providing too much information. Details about the people in the brasses or memorials can be of interest. You might want to elaborate on the various Saints depicted in the church or make sure no one misses the brass under the carpet, for example. A lengthy description of the function of a rood screen, for example, would be familiar to the serious 'church crawler'.
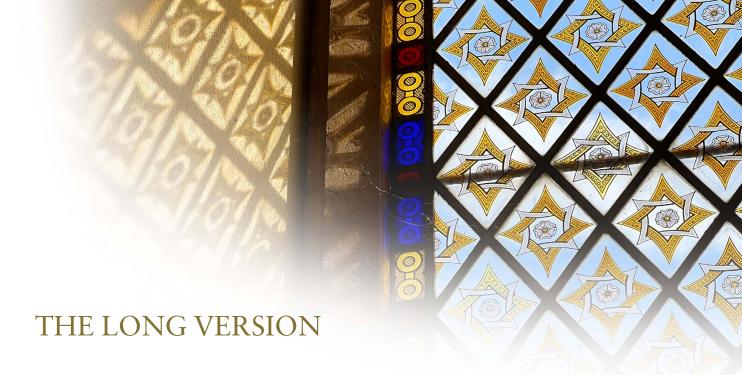
Please see the full list of church treasures in the next chapter.

Images
There does not need to be a formal limited structure. The inclusion of colour images saves a lot of time explaining a specific feature in words. Images can be resized to fill the gaps between the words (or vice versa). It would be sufficient to have 3-5 images per page.

Additional information
A separate sheet can be provided to welcome newcomers to the parish and inform them about the various services offered by the Benefice or the various societies, clubs, and so on. This information is frequently displayed on outdoor church noticeboards, but it may be of little interest to the casual visitor.

THE LONG VERSION

1. GREETING AND WELCOMING

The cover of your guidebook with compelling visuals can help make a connection with visitors before they even read a single word about your church. Add one or a few images of the church and/or some if its features and artefacts. Include the church name in a clearly readable font style and size, followed by 'A Guide for Visitors' or 'Welcome to our church' line. You might wish to add your church website's address as well.

Since church is not only about the building but its people, begin with **a welcoming message or a letter from your vicar** (with or without photo) where s/he greets visitors and encourages them to explore the church and churchyard and enjoy their visit. If you have a Friends group, this could include a message from the chair of the Friends group, to show the church works collaboratively with its local community. The opening of the guidebook – as a summary of your church – can mention what you are especially proud of and your hopes for the future of the church. Do not forget to mention other churches in your Benefice or ministry to encourage visitors to see them too.

2. BRIEF HISTORY

This is a section where you might want to answer 'Who are we?' and write a short history of the church, land, the surrounding community and your village/town. As this is the guide to the church, it is advisable to keep the historical section short as long blocks of text can be off-putting.
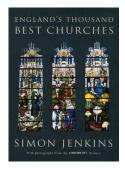
Consider the following questions:
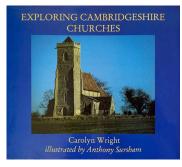
About your community
- Tell about the village and its location?
- What does the name of your village mean?
- What it is known for?
- What is distinctive about a mix of people in your area?
- Are there any institutions nearby that shape your community's identity?
- What does the community do really well, pride itself in?
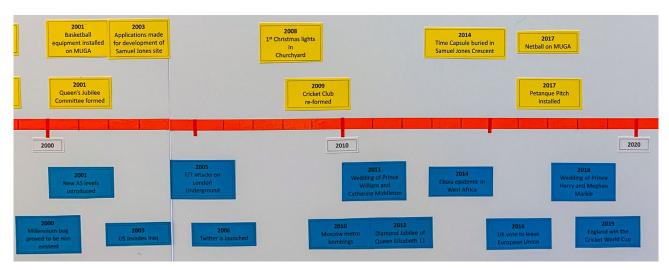
About the church
- When was the church (original and present buildings) constructed?
- What is your church's dedication (e.g. Holy Trinity) and what does that mean?
- What is the oldest part of the church building that still survives today?
- What is/are the architectural style(s) of the church: Saxon, Norman, Transitional, Early English, Decorated, Perpendicular, Victorian, modernist etc.?
- Who are the notable families/people/funders/architects who left their mark on your church history or buried in the church/yard?
- Is your church significant in wider culture e.g. art, literature, cinema, etc?
- What are special artefacts (you will provide details on them all in the next section of the guidebook) your church is known for, e.g. a royal burial place, wall paintings, exquisite woodwork etc.?

You might wish to add a **timeline of your church history**, its place in the history of the village/town, notable figures and families linked with your church, significant alterations made in your church building, restoration dates, and key funders. As an option, your church timeline can also incorporate the dates and milestones of national historical and world events, e.g. Signing of Magna Carta, Coronation of Queen Victoria etc., which will help relate your church to major global events and memorise facts. For example: "*A north porch extension added to the church building – 1989 – Tim Berners-Lee invents the World Wide Web/Internet*".

If your church is featured in popular guides on English parish churches – e.g. *Exploring Cambridgeshire Churches* by Carolyn Wright and *England's Thousand Best Churches* by Simon Jenkins – it is worth highlighting it in the guidebook.

A sample of a church timeline (St James', Little Paxton)

3. CHURCH TREASURES

This will probably be the lengthiest part of your church guidebook. Take photographs (or ask photo enthusiasts from your community to do that) of each church artefact you would like to feature in the guidebook. Make sure the artefacts are well-lit with light when taking photographs. There is no preferred order of describing artefacts in the guidebook, however, the simplest way is to arrange them in the order in which a visitor would walk around the building, e.g. the church exterior, proceeding with the interior, and finally reaching the altar.

When describing the interiors, a **floor plan of the church** with numbered artefacts might help visitors orient themselves and look for your church treasures.

Below we provide **the list of church artefacts** (with some questions and prompts to help you describe them) you may wish to feature in the guidebook. Select the artefacts you have in your church and give a brief information about them. It is better to write no more 3-4 sentences about each of them.

Points to consider when describing church artefacts:

- What is this, what is depicted?
- What is the symbolical meaning of it?
- Who designed it?
- Which material was used?
- When was it created?
- What's the story behind it?
- When and why was it installed?
- How it came to be in your church?
- How it functions nowadays?
- What's the significance of it?

Church Exteriors

Memorials, e.g. war memorials

Oldest headstones

Sculpture, e.g. Saxon sculpture

Church window (architectural style)

Quoin, i.e. an external angle of the church wall

Tower, spire, weathervane, tower clock

Roof, e.g. thatched roof

Roof decorations (the cross, animals etc)

Window decorations, glass

Doorways and archways, e.g. a Norman doorway

Porch, extensions and additions

Trees in the churchyard

Community garden (see the next section)

Benchmarks and inscriptions on church walls

Church building material, e.g. stone, brick etc.

Scratch dials

Gargoyles

Memorial benches

Public footpath

Places of interest nearby, e.g. a dyke, a river, ancient monuments etc.

Church Interiors

Church door
Interior War memorial with names
Tower
Floor mosaic
Commandment boards
Roof woodwork, e.g. angels
Roof, e.g. fan vault roof, wagon roof
Mythical creatures, e.g. animals, Green Men, fertility symbols etc.
Pews, box pews, 'horse box' family pew
Pew-end carvings
Kneelers, e.g. symbols and coat of arms on kneelers
Graffiti, wall marks, inscriptions and wall paintings
Font and font lid decorations
Holy Water stoup
Bells and inscriptions in bell chamber
Coats of arms (woodwork, in the stained glass window, on walls, on the ceiling)
Carved stone archway in the wall, i.e. a memorial
Stonework, e.g. carved faces, ornaments, mutilated stonework and other signs of deliberate historic damage
Corbels and corbel figures
Medieval chest
Interior arcades
Rood screen
The organ
Wall paintings
Medieval brasses with effigies
Brass plates
Notable burials in the church, e.g. tomb slab
Medieval coffin lid
Bier
Ledger stones and floor tablets
Rood screen
The organ

Wall paintings
Medieval brasses with effigies
Brass plates
Notable burials in the church, e.g. tomb slab
Medieval coffin lid
Bier
Ledger stones and floor tablets
Monuments, statues, and marble memorials
Banners, armour and hatchments
Wall memorials, i.e. wall tablets
Pulpit and the reading desk
Redundant stair cases to rood lofts and upper rooms
Vestry door
Priest door into the chancel
Plaques and floor plaques
Paintings and portraits
Lectern
Side chapels
Hymn board
Altar rails
Communion table
The Cross and cross shape
Tables, e.g. Jacobean tables
Easter Sepulchre
Altarpiece
Tabernacle
Windows and stained glass
Piscina
Sedilia
Chalice Church Plate (*It is advisable not to mention valuable treasures in the church safe, e.g. silverware. If you must, you should say it is not kept in the church (even if it is!)*
Choir stalls
Relics
Blind wall arcading
Traces of earlier restorations

Church Hall

Although church halls are often modern-day constructions and attachments to the main church building, you may wish to describe briefly special artefacts in the church hall, if there are any. Explain the purpose of the church hall and what events and activities are usually held there.

4. EXTERIOR SPACES

Most churches are situated within grounds, most typically a churchyard. Some churches (e.g. St Mary's Linton, a REACH Ely case study) have created garden spaces within or near their churchyards, which they encourage people to use recreationally. These spaces can create a friendly interface between the more formal churchyard and the community beyond. Churchyards and gardens are also important sites for biodiversity, and many churchyards host rare species. Your county wildlife trust will be able to advise whether your churchyard contains any interesting flora and fauna. Information about the natural history of the churchyard will help to widen the audience for your church guide.

A drawn **map of the area** would be a nice addition to your guidebook.

5. CHURCH TRAILS AND WALKS

Trails and walking paths are great addition to any church visit experience (*see REACH Ely case studies: Bartlow, Little Gransden, Hildersham, Comberton, and Caxton*). Church trails can lead visitors around a single church site, or can include a number of churches. You could create a walking trail map or a cycle route taking to other places of interest. The trail map could be part of your church guidebook or a separate leaflet. If the walking tour involved other churches in your area, make sure that the walking maps are available in each church to encourage tourists to move from one church to another.

You can get together with other churches to create heritage trails or churchyard discovery projects to promote your church. Local tourism agencies like 'packaged' activities they can promote as part of a day out and your church could benefit greatly from exposure on their websites.

6. CHURCH FOR CHILDREN

Should be an integral part of the church, and should be catered for in the material churches provide to visitors, as children love to explore church buildings and churchyards. From bug hunts to nature inspired crafts there are a variety of ways you can engage children in the natural and built heritage.

To make children's experience in your church fun and help them learn something new, your guidebook can feature a **treasure hunt map for children** to explore the church building and the churchyard and identify church objects and artefacts. Brief explanations of all 'treasures' can be given in the map. For example, "The font – a piece of church furniture used in Christening service – where people are baptized and begin their journey as new church members and as followers of Jesus."

7. LIVING CHURCH

Your church visitors have explored your church and are ready to go. What is next? For some tourists or visitors your church can be seen as a beautiful building from the past which now stands empty. Think about how to communicate the life that exists in your church, and how you can invite church visitors to contribute to your church's future or even join the Friends of the church group (if you have one).

On the final page of the guidebook we recommend to include What's On information and list the schedule of your church services, courses and social events (e.g. Alpha, Toddler groups, parents and family events, women's groups etc.), Christian Festivals, church fete and concerts. Add a warm message of welcome to visit a church café (if you have one). Make sure to refer your church visitors to where information on church events can also be found: locations in your church building (e.g. noticeboards, information stand by the entrance, newsletter etc.), church café, in your village, on social media, and church/benefice websites.

8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Church events

If you prefer to keep the information of church events separately from the guidebook, a detachable one or two-page **leaflet** with details on church services and events could be inserted into your church guidebook. Remember: by doing this, you are reminding visitors that the church is not a museum but very much a part of the fabric of a village or town, **a living community asset** used by active people who care about it. Perhaps you could have a **photograph** to show what your services and events look like? If you have very few services, you can signpost visitors to a church nearby.

The final page

Complete the final page of your guidebook with adding **key contact information**: church address, phone numbers, church/benefice website, A Church Near You website (if you have one), Friends of the church contacts (if established).

Finally, looking back at the written guidebook, think about an option of **adding a personal touch** to your guidebook to make it a more engaging read. For example, inserting short quotes from the Bible related to various themes, e.g. welcome, hospitality, Jesus's love, children, sheltering, faith, travel etc. Or adding quotes from visitors from your Visitors' Book (if you have one) especially their comments on the building, artefacts and your area. Quotes can be featured on every even page throughout your church guidebook. Include **acknowledgements** with thanks to everyone who helped develop and write your church guidebook.

There are **two more things** to add at the end of the guidebook. Invite your visitors to sign the Visitors' Book at the end of their visit as well as use a unique #hashtag to encourage visitors, for example, to tweet their comments and photos to #YourChurchName. And finally, it is a good time to ask for donation: "*We hope you have enjoyed your visit. Please spare some change to support this cherished church building*". Give instruction where to find the collection box, a contactless terminal, or refer to online giving by text or QR code (if available).

9. DESIGNING YOUR GUIDEBOOK

Ideally, your guidebook document should follow the same 'design language' and style of your church website and other publications, e.g. church newsletter (e.g. similar colour combination). For resources and inspiration on following a church style, please visit the Church of England website: www.churchofengland.org/resources/digital-labs/blogs/creating-style-guide-your-church

Fonts
- Avoid ornate, too heavy or too light fonts
- Avoid underlining text and capital letters as these come across as 'shouty'
- Use no more than one or two different types and sizes of font. Select either Serif (with extending features, e.g. ABC) or San Serif (without extending features, e.g. ABC) typefaces, or a combination of both, for example, when San Serif is used in titles and Serif is applied to body text.
- Examples of Serif fonts: Cambria, Garamond, Georgia. Examples of San Serif fonts: Gill Sans MT, Calibri, Helvetica.
- Use headings to help the reader navigate the material and also see at a glance what is on the page. Headings also help to break up the page visually

Colour
- The best colour contrasts are black on white, black on yellow, black on cream, blue on cream or a very dark colour on a very light colour
- Avoid using reds and greens together as some people have difficulty distinguishing them

Printing
- Consider printing costs for the Long version of your guidebook, which will depend on the number of prints and the type of paper. Usually 150 gsm coated (matt or gloss) paper is a great paper type for guidebooks with colour images.
- The Short version of the guidebook can be printed on standard A4 copy paper sheets for a two-side fordable A5 guidebook. Two A4 sheets can be stapled together to make an eight-page A5 guidebook.

Software

- **Adobe InDesign** – www.adobe.com/uk/products/indesign/free-trial-download. html (Subscription required, free trial 7 days. Pricing: £19.97 per month). A powerful desktop publishing tool and page layout designing software (in fact, this guide you are holding now was made in Adobe InDesign). Your content can be printed and shared online as PDF documents.

- **Microsof Word (for Windows and Mac).** Select the menu File – New from Template to use flyer, report or newsletter templates populated with text and image entries for you to fill and replace.

- **Apple Pages (for Mac)** – www.apple.com/uk/pages. Select the menu File – New and choose a preferrable template, e.g. Flyers and Posters, Reports or Newsletters, populated with text and image entries for you to fill and replace.

- **Scribus** – www.scribus.net (Free to use). Open source desktop publishing for Windows, MacOS, Linux.

- **LucidPress** – www.lucidpress.com/pages (Free for 3 documents). Web-based page layout application.

- **Canva** – www.canva.com/en_gb (Free to use). Web-based application for simple graphics and small projects.

Online Newsletter Builders

- **Fotor** – www.fotor.com/design/newsletter (Free to use). A user-friendly resource to design guidebooks using reports templates.

- **Visme** – www.visme.co/newsletter-maker (Free to use). Online tools and newsletter templates to create professionally looking guidebook using your uploaded images. By selecting Report Templates (https://www.visme.co/templates/reports), you can choose a style for your guidebook and begin editing.

- **Venngage** – https://venngage.com/features/newsletter-design (Free to use). A collection of adjustable templates.

USING
THE TEMPLATES

See the accompanying notes for how to change the sample image above.

Please use the A4 or A5 format Microsoft Word template:

Replace images. Right-click on the image, select Change Picture, select where your picture is located (if it is saved on your computer select From File), find your picture, double-click and it should appear in the document. This method should retain the formatting, but if it doesn't simply right-click on the image, then select Wrap Text and select Top and Bottom.

Insert more pages

The templates contain pages populated with sample text prompts and images (from REACH Ely case studies). To add more pages, select the contents on page 2, copy and paste it on page 3 and 4. Then replace text and images with your contents.

Before printing

Remember to delete all the notes/instructions (*highlighted in blue*) in the template.

It is good idea to get someone who hasn't been involved in writing the welcome guide to read it.

Cover photography collage *features artefacts and architectural details of churches in Carlton, Comberton, Duxford, Elton, Feltwell, Foxton, Grantchester, Haveringland, Hildersham, Landbeach, Little Paxton, March, Seething, Upwell and Waterbeach.*
Photo credits*: Timur Alexandrov).*