



FOOD ECO- CULTURE EDU

Connecting Disciplines in European Higher Academia



Module 4

**FOOD, TOURISM &
PLACE-BASED
EXPERIENCES**

www.foodecocultureedu.eu



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01

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

Food is more than nourishment – it is culture, identity, economy, and place. Across Europe and beyond, what we eat, and when, where, and how, we eat all shape how destinations are experienced, remembered, and valued.

From local markets and family farms to food festivals and culinary trails, gastronomy plays a central role in how communities tell their stories and how visitors connect with place.

This module explores the intersection of food, tourism, and place-based development, with a strong emphasis on experiential learning, sustainability, and community value.



02

LEARNING OUTCOMES



Learning Outcomes

Learners at the end of the module will be able to:

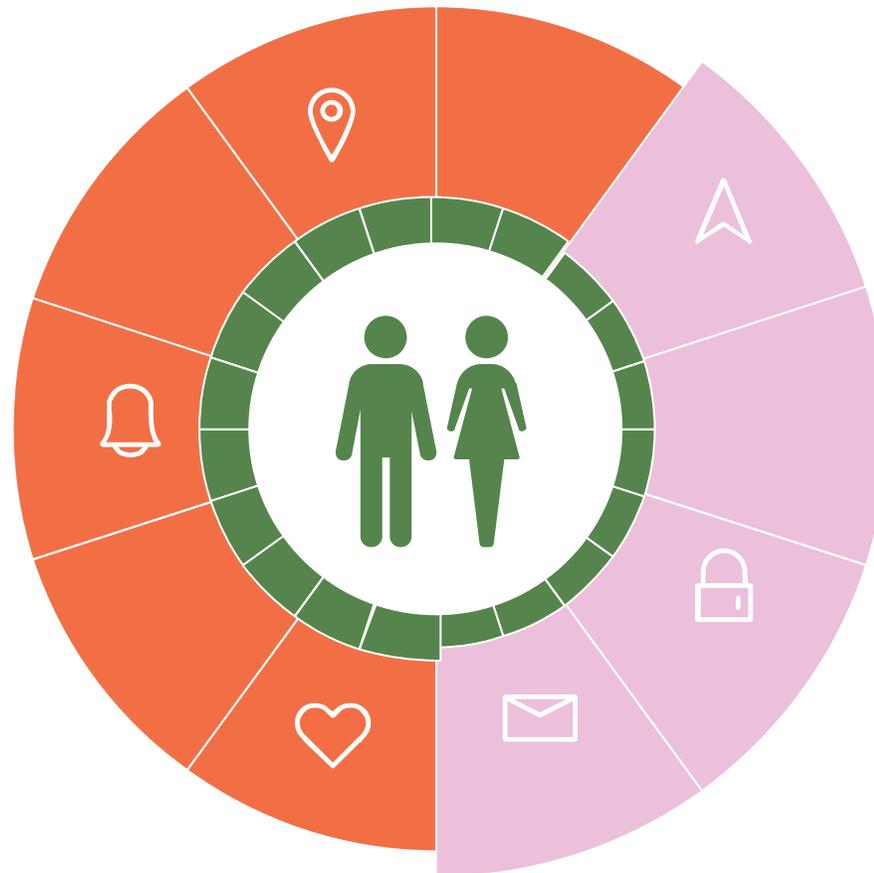
Understand the connections between food, culture, and tourism



Design and evaluate engaging food tourism experiences



Gain practical skills through field visits, sensory exploration, and destination analysis



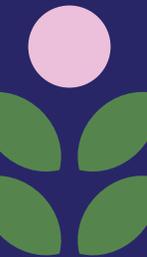
Apply principles of sustainable and place-based food tourism development



Collaborate with community and industry stakeholders to explore innovation in food tourism



Analyse and map food destinations and local culinary resources



03

MODULE STRUCTURE



Module Structure

Part A
Food, Culture
and Tourism
Foundations

Part B
Place-Based
Development:
Concepts and
Practice

Part C
Food Systems
and
Sustainability

Part D
Designing Food
Tourism
Experiences

Part E
Innovation,
Community and
Industry
Perspectives

Part F
Experiential
Component



Part A

Food, Culture and Tourism Foundations: Key Topics

- Food as cultural expression: identity, tradition, storytelling.
- Food tourism: definitions, typologies, global trends.
- Experiential tourism and the role of gastronomy.

Food tourism is defined as a **cultural anthropology concept that encompasses the interactions of tourists with a place through food, reflecting the history, traditions, and identities of a destination**. It emphasises the importance of authenticity and experiential engagement in the consumption of local cuisine as part of the tourism experience.

– Definition based on: Tourism Management, 2018

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/food-tourism>

Click to learn more



CASE STUDY

The Burren Food Trail

The Burren is a distinctive limestone landscape in the west of Ireland, known for its biodiversity, farming traditions, and strong sense of place.

The Burren Food Trail is a network of farmers, producers, cafés, restaurants, and food experiences.

Food here is not an add-on — it is a gateway to understand the place. Watch the videos on the following slides to see how food becomes part of the identity and the region's story

[Click to Read](#)



<https://burren.ie/taste-the-burren/burren-food-trail/>

BURREN
FOOD
Trail



[Burren Food Trail - Ballyvaughan](#)



[Burren Food Trail - Doolin](#)

Click to
view



BURREN
FOOD
Trail



Click to
view

[Burren Food Trails – Kilfenora](#)

[Burren Food Trails – Smoked Salmon,
Craft Beers and Whiskey!](#)

Learner Exercise



Reflection Exercise – Food, Memory and Place

Purpose: Build awareness of food as cultural identity and storytelling

Think of a food that strongly represents *where you come from*

Write short answers to:

- What is the food?
- Where is it usually eaten or produced?
- Who prepares it?
- What memories, emotions, or stories does it carry?
- Would this food make sense in a tourism experience? Why / why not?

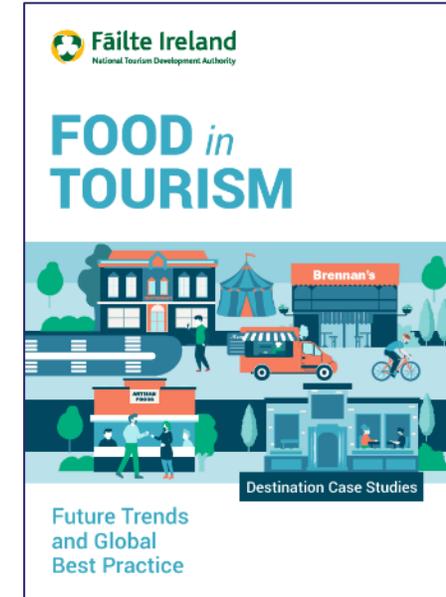
Part B

Place-Based Development: Concepts and Practice

- What is place-based development?
- Food as a driver of rural and urban regeneration.
- Mapping regional food identities and gastronomic heritage.

Local stories told through food will become more commonplace as visitor experiences blend a place's heritage with its local food story.

Global tourism trends, combined with new food tourism behaviour patterns, highlight the significant role food will play in destination recovery and future resilience.



[Future-Trends Best-Practice Destination s.pdf](#) Fáilte Ireland

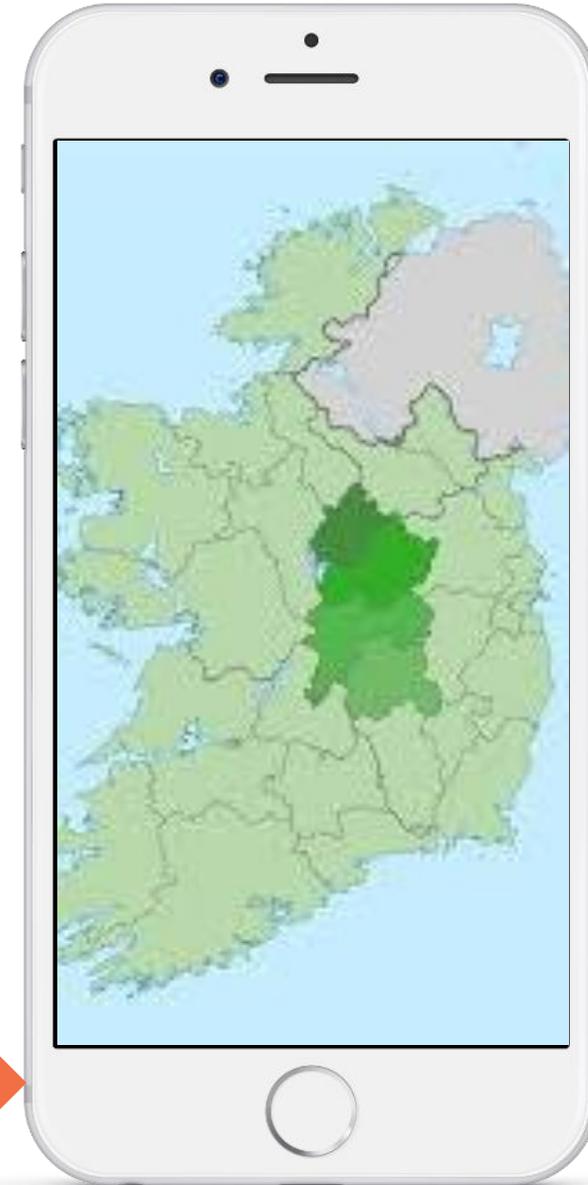
Click to
learn more

CASE STUDY

Midlands Flavours

The Irish Midlands is a region characterised by farmland, waterways, small towns, and strong agricultural traditions. Historically, the region has been less visible in Ireland's tourism narrative compared to coastal or urban destinations. The Midlands comprises 4 counties: Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath. Much of the region is wetland bog, which was intensively harvested for peat (turf) usage in electricity production and home heating. The region is famous for agricultural produce, particularly the meat and dairy industries. There is also a long association with the whiskey industry.

[Click to Read](https://designedly.ie/case-study/midlands-flavours/)



<https://designedly.ie/case-study/midlands-flavours/>

CASE STUDY

Midlands Flavours is a regional food initiative and network that brings together:

- **Local producers**
- **Food businesses and artisans**
- **Tourism and community stakeholders**

It aims to strengthen the Midlands' food identity, support Local enterprise, and position food as a catalyst for place-Based development.

In 2024, the Midlands produced a novel skills needs audit to better understand the educational and training offerings and skills gaps across the region.

[Click to Read](#)



Learner Exercise



Reflection Exercise – Mapping the Taste of a Place

Purpose: To apply place-based development concepts through food mapping

Task

1. Choose a town, rural area, or region you know
2. On a blank page, sketch a simple map and add:
 - Local food products or ingredients
 - Producers, markets, or food businesses
 - Food-related traditions or events
 - Landscapes linked to food (farms, rivers, streets)
3. Identify:
 - What makes this place distinct?
 - What food stories are visible?
 - What stories are missing or underrepresented?

Part C

Food Systems and Sustainability

- Local food systems: production, distribution, and value chains.
- Sustainability issues: food miles, seasonality, waste, resilience.
- Aligning food tourism with [SDGs](#) and [circular economy](#) principles.
- Governance and policy players: Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), EU frameworks.

A local food system doesn't mean growing a few vegetables for the neighbourhood. It means completely rethinking how we approach agriculture, our diets and our food origin. Moving toward a more local food system creates a more resilient, climate-adaptive and sustainable community.

Click to
learn more



[Local food and global food security](#)
Emily Folk

CASE STUDY

Sustainability for Food & Drinks Businesses West Cork

Is a programme that aims to provide practical training support to food and drink businesses wishing to pursue more environmentally conscious actions within their business operations.

The programme aligns with SDG priorities such as Responsible Consumption and Production and Sustainable Communities, because participants learn to reduce waste, lower emissions, and build sustainable value chains

[Click to Read](#)



<https://training.secad.ie/courses/sustainable-food-training/>

Learner Exercise



Reflection Exercise – Tracing the Journey of a Meal

Purpose: To understand food systems, sustainability challenges, and policy alignment

Task: Choose one meal from a restaurant, café, or food tourism experience

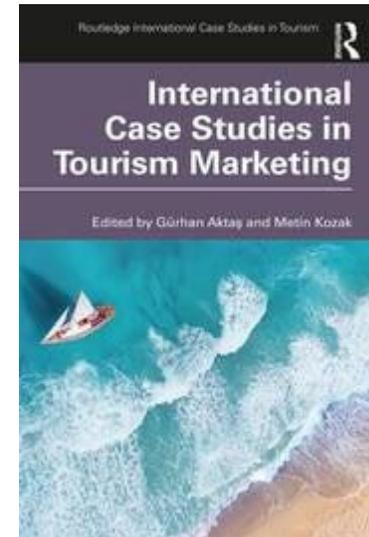
1. Trace the food system behind it:
 - Where were the main ingredients produced?
 - How were they processed and distributed?
 - Who benefits economically?
2. Identify sustainability factors:
 - Food miles (local / national / international)
 - Seasonal or non-seasonal ingredients
 - Waste generation and reduction practices

Part D

Designing Food Tourism Experiences

- Place branding and food narratives.
- Principles of experience design for food routes, festivals, and tasting events.
- Role of digital media and storytelling in food destinations.

Food tour operators must challenge themselves to develop unique and innovative tourism products and services by combining a broader aspect of food values with the destination's culture, natural environment, local people's lifestyle, health benefits or sustainability issues to satisfy different needs of food tourist markets.



[Designing gastronomic identity-based food tours](#)
[| 16 | International C](#)

Click to
learn more

CASE STUDY

Blas na hÉireann (*Taste of Ireland*)

Blas na hÉireann, the Irish Food Awards, is the biggest competition for quality Irish produce on the island of Ireland. The annual festival events build into the biggest celebration in Irish food and it's producers.

The awards are presented in the Blas Village in Dingle. The village becomes a central point for producers across the country to come together and celebrate the very best of Irish food and drink.

[Click to Read](#)



<https://www.irishfoodawards.com/about-blas-na-heireann/>

Learner Exercise



Reflection Exercise Design a Food-Related Festival

Purpose: To apply principles of place branding, experience design, and storytelling through a festival-led food tourism model

- First, choose a place (town, village, city district, or rural area) to host your potential festival.
- Next, conduct some preliminary online research on what is already available in that region. Do they have markets/ festivals/ training?



Learner Exercise - continued



Define the festival concept:

- Festival name
- Time of year (and why this season matters)
- Core food theme (ingredient, product, tradition, or cuisine)

Identify the place-based narrative:

- What story does this place want to tell through food?
- How does the festival reflect local culture, landscape, or heritage?



Part E

Innovation, Community and Industry Perspectives

- Entrepreneurship in food tourism: SMEs and start-up ecosystems (for example Food Incubation Units).
- Innovation in food tourism: technology, immersive experiences, regenerative practices.
- Ethical considerations: community voice, cultural representation, fair labour.
- Guest seminars from chefs, local producers, DMOs, or heritage experts.

Food systems require urgent and profound transformation to become sustainable, both in Europe and worldwide. Social innovation plays a pivotal role in transforming today's food systems into ones that are economically and socially feasible, and sustainable within planetary boundaries.

[Reimagining the food system through social innovations | Publications | European Environment Agency \(EEA\)](#)



Click to learn more

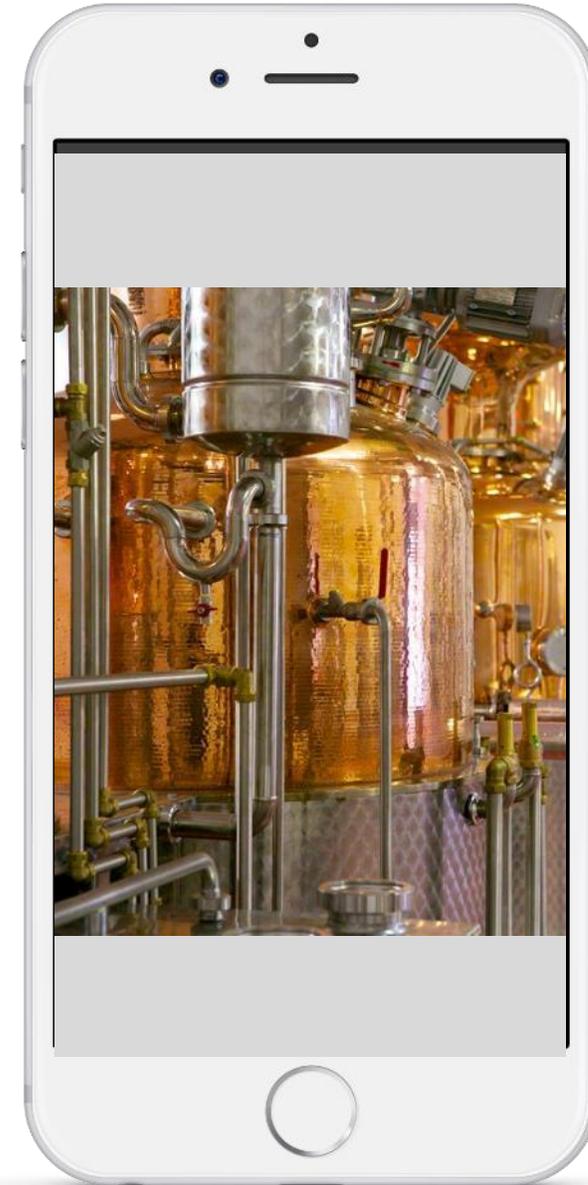
CASE STUDY

The Food Hub

The Food Hub is a best practice food production and education facility based in Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim. Since its establishment in 2004, it has emerged as Ireland's premier artisan multi-tenant food production enterprise centre, established by a social enterprise.

Innovation in food tourism can be quiet, collaborative, and deeply place-based, not just high-tech. [The Shed Distillery](#) is a great example of this in Drumshanbo

[Click to Read](#)



<http://thefoodhub.com/>

Learner Exercise



Reflection Exercise – **Who Wins? Who Decides?**

Purpose: To critically explore innovation, entrepreneurship, and ethics in food tourism

Scenario: You are part of a local advisory panel for a food tourism innovation project.

Choose one innovation:

- A new food incubator in a rural town
- An immersive food experience linked to local heritage

Discuss with key stakeholders: Entrepreneurs/SMEs, Locals, Workers, Visitors, Local authorities—

- What do they gain?
- What do they risk losing?
- Whose voice is strongest?
- Whose voice is missing?

Part F

Experiential Component

- Field visit(s) to farms, markets, food trails, festivals.
- Learning from local stakeholders (chefs, policy makers, producers).
- Destination analysis, food mapping, sensory exploration.

Visitors are looking for active experiences within destinations, providing tourists with the opportunity to combine their active pursuit interests with new ways of telling the food story, e.g. cycle or walking tours with food experience elements with local producers or local restaurants



[Future Trends Best Practice Destination final .pdf](#) - Fáilte Ireland

Click to learn more

CASE STUDY

The Kilkenny Food and Craft Experience Trail

Fusing history, culture and gastronomy, this trail comes from Trail Kilkenny – an award-winning non-profit organisation that specialises in a range of routes around Kilkenny.

Chefs & Brewers: visitors engage with chefs and craft brewers to understand recipe development, heritage ingredients, and storytelling in gastronomy.

[Click to Read](https://www.smithwicksexperience.com/the-final-draft/kilkenny-food-and-craft-trail)



<https://www.smithwicksexperience.com/the-final-draft/kilkenny-food-and-craft-trail>

Learner Exercise



Reflection Exercise – Heritage & Food Mapping in Kilkenny

Purpose: To understand the integration of food, heritage, and tourism in a regional city and to develop skills in destination analysis.

- Create a map of Kilkenny linking key food producers, markets, restaurants, and heritage sites.
- Highlight routes that a food tourist could follow to experience local culinary traditions and medieval heritage.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOT) for Kilkenny as a food heritage destination.

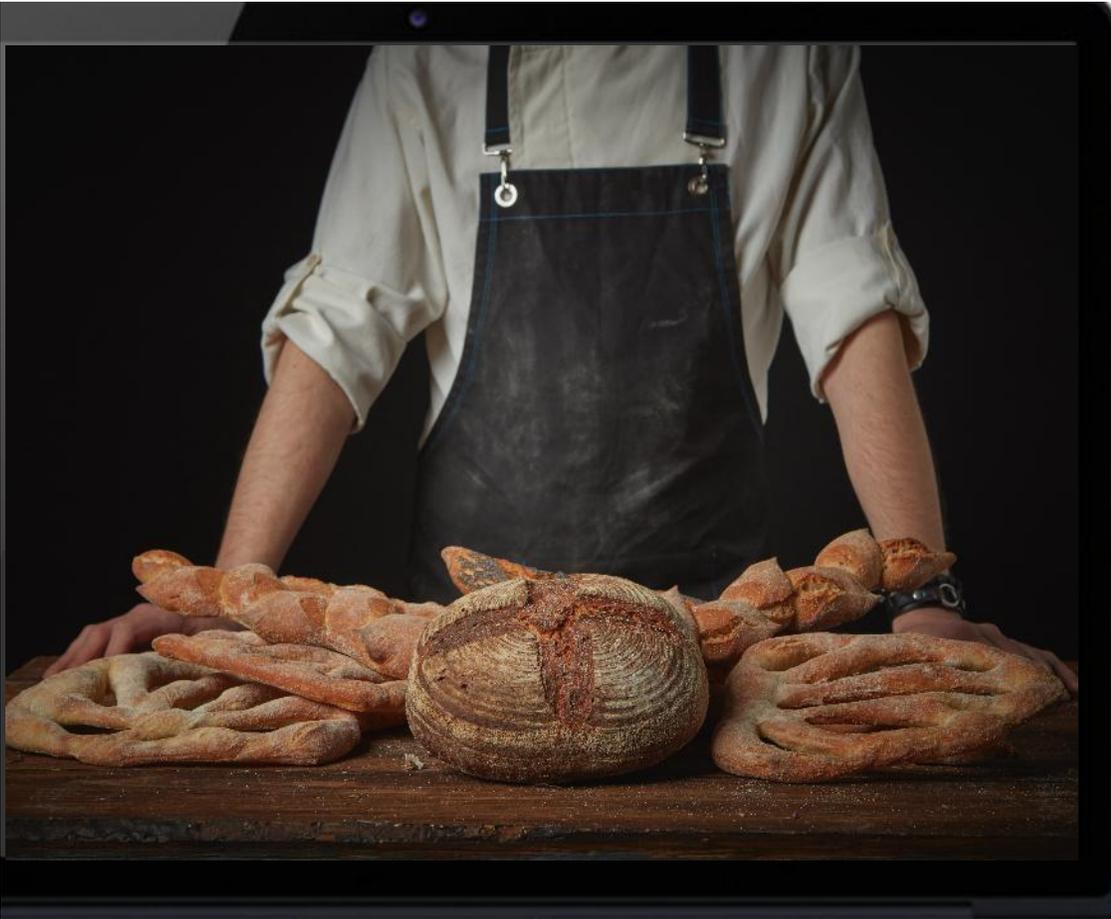
04

Conclusion/Summary



The Opportunities that lie within Food for Tourism

- Food tourism connects culture, place, and local food systems.
- Sustainable and place-based approaches support communities and local producers.
- Well-designed experiences enhance visitor engagement and promote regional identity.
- Collaboration between industry, community, and policymakers drives innovation in food tourism.
- Hands-on learning through field visits and sensory exploration strengthens practical skills.
- Understanding food, culture, and tourism helps create meaningful, responsible, and memorable visitor experiences.





“

***You have to taste a culture to
understand it***

– Deborah Cater.





Some Videos about Food Tourism

A picture tells a thousand words, a video holds thousands of pictures

An example of promoting rural flavours - taste the Island - a celebration of Ireland's food and drink



[Taste the Island - a celebration of Ireland's food and drink](#)

- Passionate artisan producers, high-calibre chefs who have worked in some of the world's best kitchens, fresh local ingredients and a distinguished brewing and distilling industry have created a food scene that is world-class.
- Meet the makers, feel the buzz of a food festival and a farmers' market, or follow a food trail along the windswept Wild Atlantic Way or through some of our city's best-kept secrets... Join us and Taste the Island.

An example of promoting food experiences, culture, and tourism



- Good Food Ireland® Experiences promotes great food; but shows how it is also about the passionate farmers, fishers, producers, chefs, and artisans who showcase Ireland's authentic food culture while championing sustainability.
- From farm tours and tastings to distillery visits, cookery classes, and private culinary adventures, the platform offers unique experiences crafted with pride and tradition. One can immerse oneself in Ireland's rich culinary heritage and warm hospitality.

Good Food Ireland® Launches First Irish Food & Drink Experiences Platform



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THANK YOU

Follow our journey



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