WALK *JOG* *RUN*

Website lets you plot courses for walking, running or biking anywhere in the world

I f you're a walker, runner or cyclist who wants to know how far your favorite routes are taking you, then **walkjogrun.net** is the website for you.

The site is a mashup of Google Maps and software that lets you plot and measure routes. You can enter an address for the area that you want to walk, run or bicycle in, and draw out the route you want to explore.

As you click on the points along your route to draw it on the map, the site calculates the distance to each point, the amount of time it takes to travel to it at different speeds, and even the number of calories you'll burn. When you're done, the entire route is displayed in the familiar Google Map style, with the same options of map, satellite, hybrid, terrain and Earth views.

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InSites

More than just mileage

At the bottom of the map are statistics based on your route, some of which you can edit. There's distance, which is fixed, and speed, which you can change based on whether you're walking, running or biking. There's also pace, which is editable and measured in minutes per mile. You can enter the time in minutes it takes you to do your route and the site will calculate your speed and pace. Enter your weight in the calorie counter and the site figures out how many calories you burn based on the distance and speed figures. Changing any of the editable statistics recalculates the others.

To the left of your map is a display that profiles the changing elevations above sea level of your route. It's a nice way to quickly see where the hills on the route rise and how steep they are. Below that is a point-to-point table detailing the distances and times of each section of the route. It also has a running total of the distance for any point along the way from beginning to end.

WalkJogRun is useful for more than just figuring out how far your current routes are. You can experiment with new routes on the site, plotting them based on the time and distance you want to travel. You can also look at routes posted by other users in the area that are organized by length.

More than just Main Street

If you like to keep up with your routine while you travel the site comes in handy. You can search for existing routes in the area you'll be visiting, or you can map out routes on your own in advance. You can print your routes out or purchase the site's iPhone app to use with your mobile devices.

The site has routes plotted in countries all around the world, from Afghanistan to Zambia. Clicking on the Cities link at the top of the page takes you to a list of all the countries with plotted routes. The number of routes in each country is next to the country's name on the list.

There are some accuracy issues with the numbers though. For instance, when I clicked on Afghanistan, which lists three routes, it took me to a page with two maps. Each of the maps was shown twice. Also, there's a separate list of the 10 countries with the most routes plotted. It lists the U.K., with 100,768 routes, and the United Kingdom, with 39,284 routes. I'm don't know what's going on with that. The U.S.A. has 89,483 routes currently plotted.

More than just maps

You can register to join the site for free, which allows you to save your routes in one place, join member groups, and get on a mailing list that claims to be "chock full of goodies." You don't have to register to view, plot or post routes though.

The Groups page lists the 30 most recently added groups, but it doesn't have a way to view or search all the groups on the site. There's also a Blog section for people to share their thoughts, and a Connect section to interface with Google, Twitter and Facebook. This section also has a survey you can fill out, a newletter and a contact page to e-mail the site.

The Deals section sells WalkJog-Run merchandise, such as apparel, water bottles and buttons. An Events section lists upcoming races, walks, rides, etc., in the U.S. You can search by location or browse by type of event. Finally, there's an About section that describes the site, profiles its creators, lists media mentions of the site and posts user feedback. Information for those who want to buy advertising on the site is also in this section.

Anyone who walks, jogs, runs or bikes will find this site useful. It's quick and easy to use, with simple navigation and only a few minor quirks. The menu bar at the top of the page is nicely designed and functions well. The main content on the various pages won't win any design awards, but it's organized and easy to follow. There are some annoying popup ads, but overall the site provides a nice online experience that delivers what it promises.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timesshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.