



The app allows pedestrians to find the shadiest path along their route | Photo source [Barcelona Regional](#)

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WAYFINDING APP HELPS PEDESTRIANS IN BARCELONA TO FIND THE SHADE

 HEALTH & WELLBEING

As the world heats up, in many places it is going to become ever-more difficult to find a shady spot on a sunny day

Spotted: While most wayfinding apps focus on helping drivers get around, a new app from Barcelona City Council, called Cool Walks, has been designed to make it easier for pedestrians to walk in the shade.

The app can be used to get walking directions around the city, but in addition to an option showing the fastest route, the app will also show two shady alternatives. One of these, “vampire mode,” allows walkers to completely avoid the sun. For those who prefer a bit of sun, the app also shows the locations of drinking fountains and places to take shelter during along your route.

The app was developed by the geographic information systems department at the Barcelona Regional urban planning agency. The team used LIDAR data and a variety of open datasets to map the shade from trees and buildings throughout the day, as the position of the sun changes. Barcelona is also no stranger to shade studies. The hot and sunny city has also developed a “tree master plan” to increase Barcelona’s overall tree canopy.

One big challenge in creating the app was to consider the street from the perspective of pedestrians rather than drivers. Lead analyst Albert Carbonell, pointed out that, “Since the shading is very different from one sidewalk to another, we needed to look at each sidewalk individually”. The apps developers also needed to manually add in shortcuts that don’t always show up on standard maps.

The work by Barcelona joins other wayfinding apps and systems we have seen recently that are aimed at pedestrians rather than vehicles. These range from a system designed to help people find

the most efficient path in large, crowded spaces to an intuitive lighting design that guides users through the [Moscow Metro](#).

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Website: bcnregional.com

Takeaway:

Wayfinding is not just about finding your way anymore. It is also about saving energy by using the most efficient route, saving time by pointing you towards the nearest shops or restaurants that meet specific criteria and now it is also about staying cool on a hot day. With extreme heat on the rise, apps like this could be in high demand. While the approach used by Barcelona may be difficult to replicate in cities that lack the same amount of shade, the focus on pedestrians is very welcome. It may even help encourage people to walk more.