

Road Trip Planner

Platform: Mac, iOS and iPadOS

Price: Free Lite version, Mac full version £4.99, iOS and iPadOS free viewer or full version.

We like: Comprehensive coverage and features
 Easy routing and routing changes

We dislike: Apple universe only
 Transfer between desktop and mobile.

Are you a planner? Do you want to spend some time thinking about where to go, what route to take, where to stay and what you might do on the way? If so, this could be precisely the application you have been looking for.

I have been using Road Trip Planner for a number of years to plan longer trips where we may want to visit various tourist attractions along the way and have a good idea of how far we might travel each day and for how long. I also need to be able to quickly amend that plan 'on the fly' for whatever reason, be it the weather or just a simple change of mind.

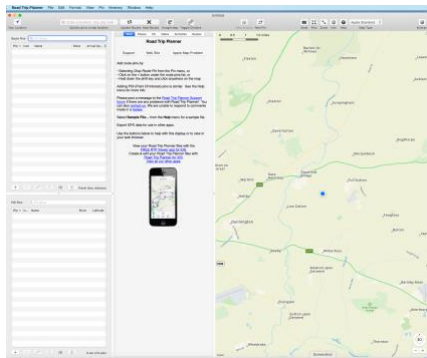
Road Trip Planner let's you randomly plot places to stay or visit, it will optimise your route, let you store detailed information about where you are going and even print a detailed itinerary complete with photos and maps.

In this article we will build a short trip to demonstrate how you might use the application. We will focus on the desktop version and cover off the phone and iPad options at the end.

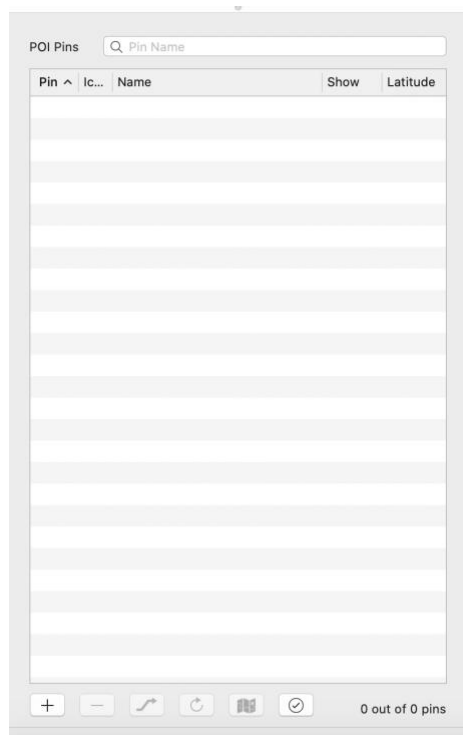
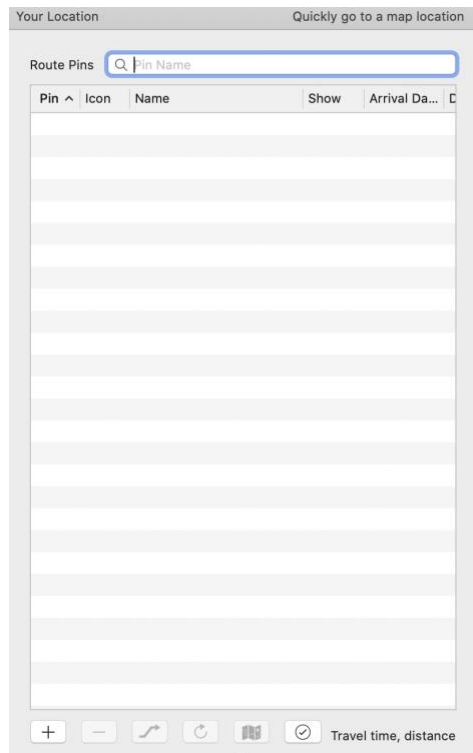
Where shall we go?

Here are some of the parameters I have set myself for a short trip to Paris...

I would like to stay three nights when I get there and would like to see a few of the sites. I am going to take the tunnel and I also don't really want to drive more than about two and a half hours a day preferring to arrive at places by lunch time when there is usually plenty of space available if it is an Aire and time to wander around the town. A friend has also told me I really should visit the aquarium in Boulogne so I think I will add that to my trip. I am not pressed for time overall so will see how things look as my planning comes together. So, let's dive straight in and open Road Trip Planner...



It opens to an empty plan including a map with your location. I want to focus on the left-hand panel which has two entry screens, Route Pins and Poi Pins.



The two panels look very similar but perform two different functions. Each panel allows you to plot pins on the map. Route pins are places you will actually drive to (and will be used to calculate your route). Poi Pins are places of interest you might like to visit. A neat feature is that Poi Pins can be linked to Route Pins i.e. if you are staying at a campsite in Boulogne you

can 'link' the aquarium to that Route pin and then both will form part of your itinerary even if you should decide to change your route.

Let's start by placing some Route and Poi Pins. I will be starting from Home – that will be a route pin, I am going via Eurotunnel so that will also be a route pin. I will visit the aquarium in Boulogne but I don't know where I am staying yet so will enter the aquarium as a Poi Pin.


To get started click the + button. A window opens allowing me to enter a place. This can be words as you see below or it can be GPS Coordinates (very handy for camp site plotting). I have entered Eurotunnel and it has offered me Coquelles which is fine. Along with Home, I will add it to the route. I need an Aire close by – a quick check on CamperContact gives me the co-ordinates which I can also add on to my route.



Enter a location, choose from your Contacts, or Import a file.
Click Go and one or more map pins will drop on the map.

Location

Contacts

Import



 Eurotunnel 

Address	Name
Eurotunnel, 62231 Coquelles, France	Eurotunnel Le Shuttle

Cancel


Go

Enter a location, choose from your Contacts, or Import a file.
Click Go and one or more map pins will drop on the map.

Location

Contacts

Import






Address	Name
Boulevard Sainte-Beuve, 62200 Boulogne-sur-Mer, F...	Boulevard Sainte-Beuve

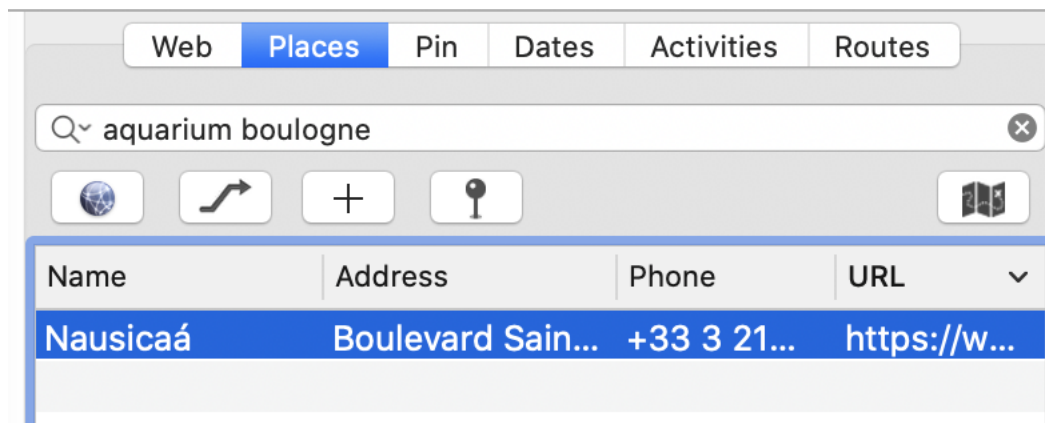
Cancel

Go

And my Route window now looks like this...

Route Pins					
<input type="text" value="Pin Name"/>					
Pin ^	Icon	Name	Show	Arrival Da...	D
1		Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2
2		Eurotunnel Le Shuttle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2
3		Boulogne Aire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2

Whilst at Boulogne I want to see the aquarium. Road Trip Planner will look up places of interest nearby, like restaurants or attractions – I choose the Places tab whilst the Aire is highlighted and type 'Aquarium Boulogne' – select it and save it as a Poi pin.



You are also provided with the phone number and web address among other details.

Let's choose a spot to stay in Paris next, not an Aire, I want to stay a few days.

SearchforSites has an entry at Camping de Paris – I will add that to my route pins. I will also add the Louvre and Eiffel Tower to my Poi pins and finally my return to Home via Eurotunnel to encapsulate the whole trip.

Here are my Route Pin and Poi Pin Windows

Route Pins					
Pin Name					
Pin ^	Icon	Name	Show	Arrival Da...	D
1		Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2
2		Eurotunnel Le Shuttle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2
3		Boulogne Aire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2
4		Camping de Paris	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2
5		Folkestone Eurotunnel...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2
6		Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...	2








POI Pins				
<input type="text" value="Pin Name"/>				
Pin ^	Icon	Name	Show	Latitude
3		Nausicaá	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	50.730...
4		Louvre Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	48.8611..
4		Eiffel Tower	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	48.858...

Plotting a route simply involves clicking Update Route on the toolbar – this is the portion from UK to Paris...



This is the route taking in Boulogne first. However, I have decided to visit Boulogne on the way back and to stop off at Amiens on the way. One of the excellent features of the

application is the use of simple drag and drop to change routes and add any additional item or change an item at any time. Here are my updated pins...

Route Pins				
Pin Name				
Pin ^	Icon	Name	Show	Arrival Da...
1		Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...
2		Eurotunnel Le Shuttle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...
3		Camping de Paris	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...
4		Amiens	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27/10/2...
5		Boulogne Aire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	26/10/2...
6		Folkestone Eurotunnel...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27/10/2...
7		Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27/10/2...








And my revised route automatically recalculated ...



Taking into account traffic you can see the proposed route is now quite different.

There are way too many other features to run through on a short article like this but one worth looking at is the itinerary. To create the itinerary, I simply add the date I want the trip to start and how long I will spend at each location.

The expanded route pin window shows the dates and durations – it also tells me how much driving I will be doing – given my parameters I would probably add more stops to shorten the driving distances.

Route Pins <input type="text" value="Pin Name"/>									
Pin ^	Icon	Name	Show	Arrival Da...	Departur...	Duration	Travel Ti...	Latitude	Distance
1		Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	05/11/2...	05/11/2...	0		53.934...	
2		Eurotunnel Le Shuttle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	05/11/2...	05/11/2...	0	6 hrs, 3...	50.922...	305 mi
3		Camping de Paris	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	05/11/2...	09/11/2...	4 days	2 hrs, 3...	48.8682	179 mi
4		Amiens	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10/11/20...	10/11/20...	0	1 hr, 33...	49.894...	87 mi
5		Boulogne Aire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10/11/20...	12/11/20...	2 days	1 hr, 16...	50.74415	82 mi
6		Folkestone Eurotunnel...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12/11/20...	12/11/20...	0	2 hrs, 2...	51.0965...	66 mi
7		Home	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12/11/20...	12/11/20...	0	4 hrs, 1...	53.934...	268 mi

iPhone and iPad

Two versions of the product are available – a free viewer – files created on your desktop can be opened and viewed – all the detail is there but you cannot make any amendments.

There is also a full version – I fail to see how you could really use this on an iPhone for planning – the screen is just too small. It is possible to plan on an iPad – not as easy as it is on a desktop given screen size but all the functionality is available.

Files created on Desktop can be opened on an iPad but it creates another version of the file. If you make changes on the iPad you will need to open the updated version on your desktop and vice versa. They are not precisely the same file format at this time. It is a minor inconvenience unless you want to plan significant amounts of time on one plan in two environments.

A thoughtful feature is the ability to 'share' files so, for example, your travelling partner can have the viewer and open and look at the file and itinerary.

iPad screenshot – all the same features are run from the menu bar at the bottom of the screen.