

TBA

TBA Review: Rimini Protokoll Turns an Ordinary Stroll Into Theater

The festival is over, but the interactive app The Walks remains, offering a new way to explore familiar surroundings.

by [Lindsay Costello](#) September 18, 2026 1:22 pm



Park



Pedestrian
Lights



Supermarket



Roundabout



Theatre



Water

Although this year's Time-Based Art Festival (TBA) ended September 13, one of its most interactive offerings is still available for download. Designed by German theater group Rimini Protokoll, composed of author-directors Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi, and Daniel Wetzl, The Walks is a psychogeographic smartphone app available for around \$5 on Android and iOS.

First unveiled in 2021 and featured as a ticketed offering at this year's TBA, the group describes their app as an invitation to "rediscover and interact with your environment." The app opens to a grid of 10 graphic icons, each leading to a different 16- to 30 minute audio-guided walk based on the user's general location: Departure, Park, Pedestrian Lights, Supermarket, Roundabout, Theatre, Water, Cemetery, Street, and Playground. Some walks are designed for two participants; others are solitary.

The important thing to know is The Walks isn't an audio tour describing exactly where you are. The app uses recorded voices to give you prompts—sometimes playful or observational, other times meditative or mildly uncomfortable—that ask the user to interact with their surroundings in new ways. What happens around you becomes part of the experience.

Rimini Protokoll's work has long pushed theatrical scenarios outside of traditional stages—for instance, their 2005 project Call Cutta required audience members to speak on the phone with actors at an Indian call center. The Walks takes that impulse even further. There is no stage, no live performer, no prescribed route. Just choose a walk, pop on headphones, and start moving.

Departure

For the purposes of this assignment, I first selected Departure, designed to be listened to during an open-ended walk in any direction. Narrated by what sounds like a child, the Departure walk asks the listener to remember the first place they ever walked independently.

As I strolled down SE Ash Street, I recalled my childhood friend Bonnie's house, a few blocks from mine: the chain-link fences, bahiagrass sprouting between the cracked Florida sidewalks, the way Bonnie painted her Labrador's toenails. The app said nothing about birds. But jolted from this memory, I stopped short, noticing a small gray bird with a yellow-tipped tail—a cedar waxwing, maybe shocked or injured—frozen in place on the sidewalk beneath a long window. Or was it a fledgling? Did it hit the window?

I paused the app, recognizing that it had directed me straight toward an unexpected experience, and tried to stay in the moment. But after 20 minutes of sitting and observing the bird, I texted my friend with avian knowledge for advice. When I looked up from my phone again, the cedar waxwing was gone.

After the Departure walk, I found myself a few blocks away from Lone Fir Cemetery, so it made sense to try the app's Cemetery walk next.



A bird surprise while using Rimini Protokoll's The Walks app. LINDSAY COSTELLO Credit: Lindsay Costello

Cemetery

Starting the Cemetery walk at the entrance to Lone Fir, I listened as its audio narrator advised me to notice what grew underfoot. I felt dry grass, dandelions, and softened pinecones, yet as I walked, I couldn't hear the crunch beneath my boots.

There's a limit to environmental immersion when you're wearing headphones, which may be The Walks' clearest shortcoming. As I moved through the cemetery listening to the app's instructions, I wondered what sensory information I might be missing.

The prompts ranged from simple (find a gravestone that intrigues you) to more awkward (offer the ground a spit offering, follow another cemetery visitor undetected). For the first prompt, I chose a grave dappled with light streaming through the lobed leaves of an oak tree.

Some of The Walks' prompts include taking photos, which are logged in a geotagged gallery users can view after completing their walk. After taking a photo of one grave covered in acorn caps and ivy, I spent a few minutes scrolling through cemetery photos in Iceland, Lithuania, and Japan, briefly becoming a silent observer of other people's walks.



Exploring Lone Fir Cemetery. LINDSAY COSTELLO Credit: Lindsay Costello

Street

While navigating home from the cemetery, I selected the app’s Street walk, which unfolds less as a series of prompts than as a conversation between two narrators who’ve spent a lot of time thinking about walking—counselor Katja Otto and Martin Schmitz, a “strollologist.” (That’s someone who studies walking and its impacts on perception.) The pair propose an intuitive style of walking: aimless, or guided by ever-changing goals.

As Otto and Schmitz discussed perception—how walking stimulates cerebral metabolism, how the brain’s hemispheres operate differently while walking, how the experience can take on a “cinematographic aspect”—the occasional directions felt beside the point. I tried to focus on my own experience navigating a residential street, but found myself paying more attention to the pair’s conversation.

At the end of the 25 minutes, the prompts became more concrete: reflect on the walk, recall your main impressions, return to the beginning.

The app’s walks tend to end somewhat suddenly, without much ceremony—no curtain call, no performer’s bow. Instead, the user can simply stop walking, or continue. This might be The Walks’ most interesting theatrical trick. It’s easy to use, requires little outside of mobility and a willingness to try new things, and offers something unusual: a way of making the familiar briefly unfamiliar, or vice versa.

The Walks doesn't require a theater or a stage. All it asks is that you pay attention.

Download [***Rimini Protokoll's The Walks***](#) on [***Android***](#) (\$4.99) or [***iOS***](#) (4,99 €).

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