

A to B

Circular

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Walk in

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from

eg SE1 7PB or London Eye

add via

+

to

direct

less busy

low pollution?

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Going green

Are you concerned about climate change and the health of the environment in your city or town?

At walkit.com we certainly are, and we're determined to help make a greener lifestyle easier for everyone.

Walking is simply the most environmentally-friendly way of getting from A to B. It uses no fossil fuels, produces no air pollution, and is generally a pretty quiet way of getting about. So if you're keen to go green, switching from driving to walking for short journeys is one of the easiest ways to make a real difference.

Why leave the car at home?

Every year, the average person in the UK makes about 44 car journeys which are under a mile long, either as a driver or passenger. That's about one a week.

Sometimes of course, you might need to hop in the car – perhaps if you need to transport something heavy, or give a lift to someone who isn't well. However, detailed studies show that of those 44 very short car journeys, 14 are made because the person is short of time, they feel that the journey is 'a long way', or just for convenience.

That's about one car journey each month which, with a little bit of planning, most of us could probably walk instead.

Now for the environment part: an average car emits 287g CO₂ per mile. According to the [Energy Saving Trust](#), emissions are almost double for short journeys, as vehicles use more fuel when the engine is cold. So a journey of 1 mile emits around 574g CO₂. Those 14 car journeys of 1 mile therefore produce a total of just over 8kg of CO₂.

That's not a massive amount per person, but multiplied by approximately 40 million adults in the uk, that's a potential saving of 320,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year. That's equivalent to the total emissions of 50,000 houses! And we can achieve that simply by leaving the car at home once a month and walking for 20 minutes instead.

If you want further inspiration for getting out and about without your car, [Car Free Walks](#) has loads of walking routes available, all of which are accessible by public transport.

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We at walkit.com like to ask hard questions... and we have a hunch that some of you will be the same!

Here are some tricky dilemmas, and our best stab at some answers – we'd love to hear your thoughts:

The tube or bus will run anyway, so does walking really save carbon?

That's a good question. First of all, please don't get us wrong – we're big fans of the principle (if not always the experience!) of public transport. It's a vital part of the 'green' transport mix for journeys longer than a couple of miles, and it's an important way of getting around for people who are less mobile.

You're absolutely right that if you decide to walk from Covent Garden to Leicester Square rather than taking the tube, for example, London Underground won't cancel one of their trains. But if many hundreds or thousands of people make the switch to walking, eventually the numbers add up, and the transport companies will start making changes to their services – running smaller buses and so on.

The fact is that nearly all buses and trains run on diesel, or electricity, which in the UK is mainly generated by burning coal and gas. These are fossil fuels, and produce greenhouse gases such as CO₂ which contribute to climate change.

The CO₂ savings that we quote on walkit.com when you generate a walking route are based on the government's own calculations of the impact of a single passenger travelling by public transport (see [here](#) for details). They're a way of indicating a potential CO₂ saving.

And when enough people make the switch, they may well translate into real savings, and real climate change benefits.

What about the environmental impact of all those shoes?

You might think that if you're walking more, you'll get through more shoes. Making those shoes uses up resources, and energy, and therefore has an environmental impact. So – is it really that green to walk?!

Two thoughts: Firstly, when was the last time you threw away of a pair of shoes because they were properly worn out? Just a cheeky question..!

Secondly, shoe manufacturers who take the environment seriously are now starting [to calculate their impact](#). Each new pair of [Timberland](#) shoes or boots, for example, comes with a nutrition label showing their carbon footprint.

So if you're really keen to calculate your personal carbon footprint in detail, you can subtract the CO₂ emissions of your new pair of shoes from the CO₂ you're saving by walking.

And what about the extra food I need to eat because I'm exercising more?

You're not the first to ask. In 2007, Chris Goodall, venture capitalist, green party member and author of 'Ten Technologies to Save the Planet' – put forward the argument that you consume more calories when you walk (compared with driving). And that the environmental impact of all that extra food actually outweighs the environmental benefits of making your journey on foot.

It's an interesting argument – but full of some rather simplistic assumptions. See [Jamie's blog response](#) for his thoughts, and links to other contributors to the debate.

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