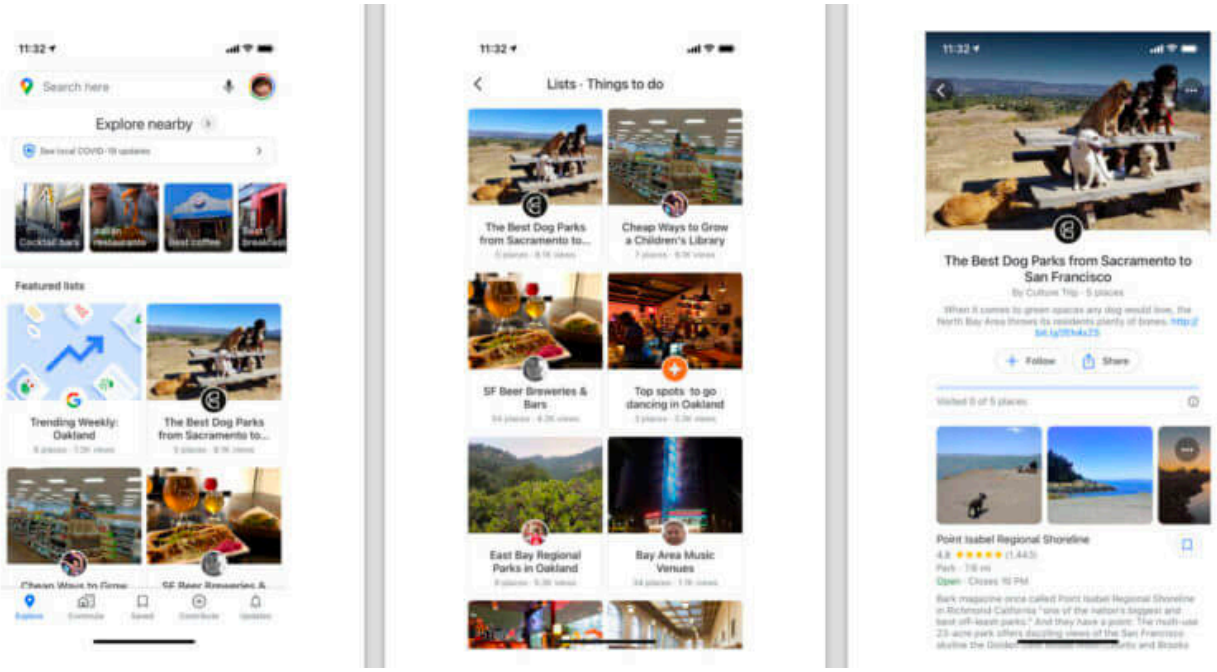
Google adds more discovery to Google Maps with ‘community feed’

Google is further developing the “social features” of Google Maps with the rollout of a new “community feed” under the Explore tab of Google Maps. This is happening globally for both Android and the iPhone.

Last November Google started enabling users to follow LocalGuides. That was done in the name of local discovery. Expanding on that concept, Google’s new community feed presents a different types of content (essentially lists) tied to the user’s location.

Places and activities. There are a range of activities and places showcased. The lists all appear to have been compiled by Google Local Guides. Example lists are “Parks & Gardens in Paris,” “New York City Local Favorites” and “Best Dog Parks from Sacramento to San Francisco.” The lists change by location and don’t appear to be generic. However, each place features a “Trending Weekly: [location]” list.

Local places and activities discovery in the Maps community feed



This is interesting and useful for consumers. But there's a clear marketing angle. Users are able to receive updates (Google Posts) from business locations on Google Maps. Collected in one place these basically resemble Instagram feeds.

More exposure for Google Posts. Google wrote in its blog post, "In early testing of the community feed we saw that posts from merchants are seen two times more than before the feed existed. So now more people can see if a local business is offering a new service, has a limited time specialty or opened outdoor seating."

Individual businesses can't be "followed" in the same way as the lists – using a simple follow button. But users can save individual places and those Posts appear under the Google Maps update tab. Google should probably make the mechanism consistent so there's no consumer confusion.

The update feed is not customized to your current location. It consists of every business saved regardless of location. So if you saved a bunch of places for that vacation a year ago (when that was still possible), you'll get ongoing updates from those businesses, even though you're no longer in Cincinnati, San Diego or Paris.

Why we should care. This is a very interesting development for Google Maps. It remains to be seen whether Google actively promotes the community feed and growing number of discovery tools in Maps. And it's not clear how many people use the Explore or Updates tabs in the app. But even if it's a tiny fraction of the overall base – more than 1 billion monthly active users – it's still a lot of people.

The community feed, which features Google Posts' content and links, could become an effective promotional tool for local-area businesses and retailers, even e-commerce. Of course, users need to opt-in to receive business updates. But once they do, I suspect Google sees increased engagement and a lift in conversions (e.g., order online).

About The Author



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