

The Big Parade - What we know, what you should.

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### **Is this FAQ up to date?**

As of 19 March 2012, the FAQ is being updated; some of the questions specific to previous Big Parades still are present. \

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### **How do I read this FAQ?**

Just skip to whatever questions you like. But there are a few holes left to fill. Hopefully, you'll find the basic information here. If you'd like to come, please be aware that space on the campout is limited, and that there are probably some physical things you should know if you're contemplating the full days. If you fall into that category, read the questions marked "DISTANCE WALKERS."

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### **How do I find the 2012 route, maps, and timetables?**

<http://www.bigparadela.com/page48/FAQ-2012.html>

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© 2011 Dan Koeppel

The Big Parade - What we know, what you should, how we find the 2012 route, maps, and timetables.

The 2012 information isn't posted until the week of the Parade. This helps keep the element of surprise intact

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### **What is the Big Parade?**

The Big Parade is a two-day walk through Los Angeles. It starts at the famous Angel's Flight Stairs, downtown, and works its way west, through multiple neighborhoods, stopping at the famous Music Box Stairs in Silverlake – named after Laurel & Hardy's Oscar-winning 1932 short film – for an overnight campout. Then, we continue through the stairways of Silverlake, on to the Franklin Hills and Los Feliz. We traverse Griffith Park, and wind up at the Hollywood Sign

But the Big Parade is more than just a walk. It is an event that is the product of years of walking – and the collaboration of multiple people who love to walk in Los Angeles, and each see walking in different ways, and all hope to express that love along the route. What does that mean? Hard to say, because the hope is that spontaneous things will happen, but the core of the event will be structured around getting members of each community we traverse to join us; stopping to visit with interesting people and groups along the way; uncovering secret (and not-so-secret) historic and cultural sites along the way; and spreading the message that Los Angeles is – not could be – a walkable city.

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### **When is it going to happen?**

Saturday May 19 and Sunday May 20th, 2012, with a prologue event on Friday, May 18.

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### **Why is it called a "Parade?"**

Because Parades are for everyone! This isn't meant to be an endurance event, a marathon, a competition, or anything like that. We're not raising money for anyone, charging anyone anything, or giving out trophies. And we're talking about a parade in the most honest sense – this isn't about spectators behind barricades watching giant floating cartoon characters (though if you happen to own a giant floating cartoon character, bring it along.) This is an old-fashioned parade, meaning that the participants and the people watching shouldn't be afraid to *be each other*.

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### **Why are you doing this?**

The short answer is that Los Angeles is a beautiful place to walk, and I wanted to find a way to express that. There's a lot of effort put into "proving" how walkable Los Angeles is. What I hope is that this is a second-generation journey; proof has already been provided, and by gathering people from across the city and exploring together, we will celebrate something that has been evident from the start: that L.A. is best seen, experienced, and navigated – not just for fun, but as a day-to-day practice – on foot.

Want a longer answer? Come along.

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### **How long is the walk?**

The total length of the walk is approximately 35 miles – 16.5 miles on Day One and 18 miles on Day Two. But the walk is broken into segments – including a main five mile loop each day – so that anyone can come along.

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### **Is the Big Parade free?**

Yes!

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### **Can I come along?**

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Of course! Come for a half-mile, a mile, an hour, a half-day, all day, or both days. There are a few things you should know, especially if you're planning to join us for more than an hour (see the questions marked "DISTANCE WALKERS." They're a little more strict than the rest of this.) Most important is that we're following a timetable. That's good – you'll be able to know where to meet us, and exactly where you'll be going. The timetable will be marked with interesting spots and some commentary, in case you're looking for a recommendation. Please remember that the trip is end-to-end, so that you'll need to turn around and get yourself home in a lot of cases (though there are several excellent places to close loops, short and long, that we'll point out.)

Remember to bring sunscreen, water, a snack, a little money, and whatever else you think you might need.

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### **Can I bring kids?**

Yes – and there's a special route for kids on Saturday morning, about two miles. Details to be posted. Of course, kids are welcome at all times.

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### **Is it going to be hard?**

No and yes! There are long, flat stretches. There are short stairways and long ones. There are segments with multiple stairways. On the timetable, we'll mark some of the segments by difficulty. But no matter what, it bears repeating that this is *not* a hard-core athletic event – in fact, it is the opposite. And remember, every single stairway is a public stairway; that means people walk up and down them every single day, so you can too.

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### **How many stairs will you climb?**

A lot?

The original Big Parade (in 2009) had over 100 stairways. In 2012, that number has been reduced – by just a bit. The goal is to make it so that more people can complete the entire walk.

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### **The route looks insane on Google Maps. I could make it so much more practical.**

See the "Is there a philosophy of the route" entry.

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### **Does the route have a design philosophy?**

When it comes to the stairways – especially my other stairway routes (I've got about 20 of them, ranging from five to forty miles), all follow some basic rules. I made up the rules, and I try to obey them at all times. Why? Because I think they make the routes into real treks, and give them an aesthetic consistency.

Here are the rules:

- 1) We never go up and down the same stairway – with one exception.
- 2) The exception is if the stairways is a circuit, meaning that it has a built-in split that allows us to ascend and descend it in a way that's fun (think of it as a revolving door.) There are about five stairways on the route that fall into this category, which I call "circuit stairs."
- 3) The route never doubles back on itself. Ideally, we should never walk the same stretch of street twice. Sometimes, this is impossible to avoid. If that's the case, I try to minimize doubling to as little as possible, and – if practical – walk on opposite sides of the street. This may sound nuts, and probably it is, but the point, again, is to make this a real exploration. Why see something twice?
- 4) We try to use only genuine public stairways. Sometimes, that's hard to determine, but property tax and city assessor's maps help.

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5) On walks that claim to be complete – for example, and "Every Stairway in Silverlake East of the Reservoir" walk – we will add any stairway we find, no matter how it forces us to change a seemingly-perfected route. That's part of the challenge. The new route must always meet the general rules.

6) Another design goal is to minimize the distance between stairs, so our routes tend to "tighten" over time as we find ways to make them more efficient.

7) The Big Parade is a little different in that it doesn't attempt to include every stairway within the set boundaries of the trip (it can't – we'd never get done in two days.) So the basic rule of what to include and what not to is that we don't "cut" stairways that are on the outer fringes of the route.

8) Stairs that are very close to each other should be done in sequence. This is because they are usually built in sequence, or to serve similar needs. Plus, they're fun to do all in a row.

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### **How did you come up with the route?**

My first stairway route was designed in 2003, and covered 47 sets in Silverlake and Echo Park. At the time, I thought I had them all. Now, six years later, I've learned to *never* claim completeness. My current list has about 150 stairways, of which the Big Parade route includes 100 (or more, depending on the final pathway.) But the route isn't mine, and neither are the stairs. People like Adah Bakalinsky and Larry Gordon, who wrote 1990's "Stairway Walks in Los Angeles," along with the Sierra Club (a list of 14 stairways in the Franklin Hills) and the Echo Park Historical Society (a constantly expanding stairway list in that neighborhood), along with individual stair enthusiasts like Alissa Walker, Andrew Lichtman, and Ying Chen, all contributed their stairway "finds," route corrections, and improvements.

Here's a [link](#) to my old web page, which includes downloadable versions of two of my earlier routes, as well as links to some media coverage and my original Backpacker story.

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### **What are some of the places you'll be visiting?**

Just a few: The Los Angeles Central Market; Vista Hermosa Park; the Corralitas Red Car site; Echo Park Lake; Elysian Park; Richard Neutra houses in Silverlake; the Fairy Tale Bridge; the Griffith Observatory, and The Hollywood Sign. Plus, six community sites, and more – our "sightseeing list" includes 30+ points of interest.

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### **How can I help you?**

We need help – volunteers to spread the word, help us at Echo Park Lake, at the campsite. Do you have connections at City Hall? Do you want to give foot massage? Do you have lemonade? Please let us know.

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### **I live or work along the route, and there's something I'd like you to see. How can I show it to you?**

Please! Though our time is limited, we'd love to hear from you. We're including a guide to the route, and we want to include you. Write up a paragraph, send us a link, and let us know how you'd like to participate.

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### **I have an idea!**

The walk is open. We've had suggestions for surveys, scavenger hunts, songs. As long as we keep to your timetable, making the walk your own is very encouraged.

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### **Do you hate cars? I'm asking because I live far away, and I have to drive.**

No, we want you to walk, and if you have to take your car to meet us, that's OK. But the Metro Red

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Line does stop just feet from our start point!

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**Does that mean I can follow you in car?**

No. If you're planning to photograph, blog, or just accompany us, you should do it on foot. Unicycles are OK, too.

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**Will my feet or any other part of me hurt?**

You should wear OK shoes. If your feet hurt, or if you get hurt, you can't hold us responsible, and we're going to give you a flier when you arrive that informs you of that.

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**Is my picture going to be used anywhere?**

There's a possibility. I'm a writer, and I will be writing about this for publication. We will have an official photographer, and other people will be blogging, videotaping, and otherwise recording the event (you are encouraged to do so, as well.) By coming along, you acknowledge that you're consenting to all these possibilities.

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**Will the walk be "led?" I'm afraid of getting lost.**

Yes. It bears repeating (again) that we have a timetable. In addition, there will always be core group members at the front and back of the group, as well as at the middle. When you join us, please try to say hello so we can say hello back.

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**Who else is involved? How can I learn about them?**

Lots of people. I've invited our other participants to introduce themselves on this website. Otherwise, you'll find them on the walk.

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**I'm part of the news media and I want more info.**

Contact us at [info@bigparadela.com](mailto:info@bigparadela.com)

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**Is there going to be media coverage?**

We hope so.

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**Can I live blog, twitter, put this up on flickr, or otherwise add it to my social media site?**

Yes, as long as you come along on foot. Or unicycle.

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**Can I take pictures or videos?**

Yes. This is a public event. Make it your own.

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**Will you be twittering?**

Yes, as a way of spreading the word, letting people know where we are, and generally updating the billions of people who are certain to take time from their busy lives to follow our progress. Follow us at Twitter [here](#).

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**I want to walk stairs on my own. Can I download your routes?**

Some of them, and maybe more when this is all done. Find them a

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[href="homepage.mac.com/discovolonte/stairs/"](http://homepage.mac.com/discovolonte/stairs/)> here.

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#### **DISTANCE WALKERS: What do I need to bring?**

Mostly, you'll need common sense. Look at the timetables. If you're planning to join us for more than a couple of hours, see if you'll be with us during meal breaks. If you won't, but think you'll be hungry, be ready to eat on the go. Also check if there are any official bathroom and/or water sources along the way. If there aren't, assume you won't find them.

Other than that, sunscreen. Water. Snacks. Hat. Money.

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#### **DISTANCE WALKERS: Doing the Whole Thing**

If you're planning on doing the whole thing, it would be great if you could come on a practice walk with us. But time is short, we know, so that might not be possible. So, please remember that you'll be responsible for maintaining the pace – which will be leisurely, to accomplish the goals of the walk – but will be highly structured as far as our rest breaks and visit stops are concerned. We'll have a printed timetable, and keeping to it will be essential, so that others can join us. Finally, if you are interested in doing the whole thing, please let me know in advance.

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#### **Who is answering these questions?**

My name is Dan Koeppel. I'm a writer and resident of the Silverlake section of Los Angeles. I've been obsessively walking stairs – and coming up with stairway routes – for about six years, and I wrote a story about my initial 17-mile, 48-stairway walk that appeared in Backpacker magazine in 2003. I'm also the author of "Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World," which is a very good book that a lot of smart people like. To learn more about my previous encounters with stairways, visit my old website, [here](#). To learn more about my book – and why bananas are threatened with disappearance worldwide, and why that matters – click [here](#).

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#### **How do I contact you?**

Our email is [bigparadela@gmail.com](mailto:bigparadela@gmail.com). But if you have a question that you think should go on this FAQ, please see below.

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#### **Can I download or subscribe to this FAQ?**

Yes, see the links at the right.

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#### **The Big Parade is stupid.**

You might be right. But not having one would be even stupider.

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#### **There's a question missing from this FAQ.**

Send it to this special [FAQ mailbox](#).

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#### **Are you crazy? Walk in Los Angeles?**

No. Yes.

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#### **Will there be churros?**

If the heavens are kind.

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