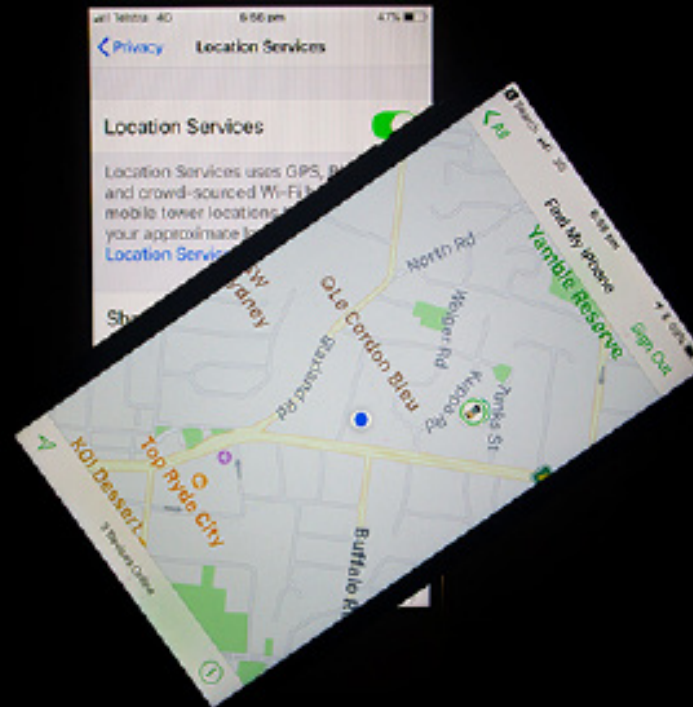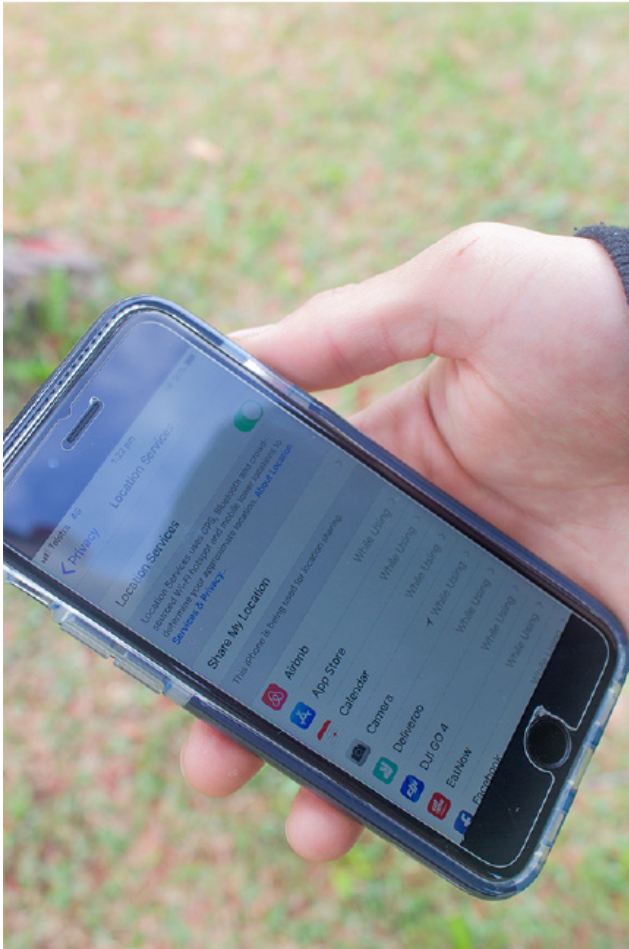Daniel Saupin

Is apple stalking you?

Location services and how apple uses it to invade your privacy

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Daniel Saupin

Location Services and Privacy settings are a key feature of the Apple iPhone. Location Services allows Apple, third-party apps and websites to collect and use information based on the iPhone or Apple Watch location to offer location-based services to users. This may range from use of location data and location search query to help identify a nearby café to automatic time zone setting when travelling. Users, in allowing Location Services, also enable the following features:

Traffic — when moving, including traveling in a car, the Apple will record user locations by periodically sending GPS locations and travel speed information logged through the iPhone. This is received in an anonymous and encrypted form to Apple and is used for enhancing a crowd-sourced road traffic database.

Popular Near Me — an iPhone sends the location of where, and when purchases have been made or used Apps. This is done will by periodic data collection in an anonymous and encrypted form, where Apple applies the data to improve a crowd-sourced database for geographically relevant Apps and other Apple products and services.

Significant Locations — an iPhone tracks a user's most recently visited places, including how often and when the visit took place, recording the places of significance to the user. Apple states the data is encrypted and stored on the iPhone does not share it without consent. Apple uses this information to offer personalised services, such as predictive traffic routing, and to enhance Photos Memories.

Location-Based Apple Ads —, including its travel speed and direction, to Apple. Enabling Apple to send geographically relevant ads on Apple News and in the App Store.

Location-Based Suggestions — an iPhone records the user's location to enable relevant search locations and news. Location Services can be turned off resulting in your precise location not being sent to Apple. Apple also can use the IP address of an internet connection to approximate a location and match it to a geographic region.

Location-Based Alerts — the iPhone determines a user's location to send alerts which are geographically relevant, this is used to offer iPhones users additional service options

such as advising when you should leave for an appointment.

Share My Location — the iPhone allows their users to share current locations with others, on a temporary or ongoing basis, from within certain apps such as Messages and Find My Friends.
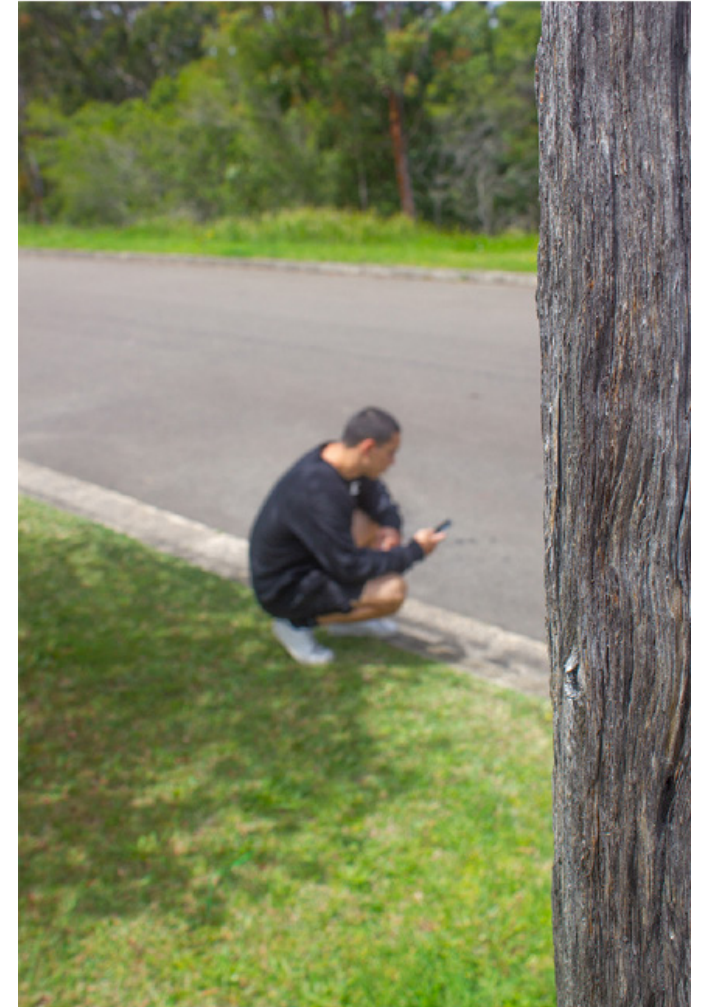
HomeKit — the iPhone can locate the user's location to enable an application of accessories to turn on or off when arriving at or leaving a specific location, such as turning on your lights when you get home.

Emergency Calls & SOS — in the event of an emergency and an emergency call is made, where supported, an iPhone gives location data through the Enhanced Emergency Data service. In addition, an emergency SOS can be triggered which sends a user's location to nominated emergency contacts at the end of the call.

PRIVACY

Apple sees a user's enabling of Location Services on an iPhone as permission for location-based system services. In doing so, essentially the iPhone user agrees and consents to the transmission, collection, maintenance, processing, and use of location data and location search queries by Apple, its partners and licensees.

With the Apple holding 45 per cent market share in 2018, accounting for 8.6 million iPhone users, privacy concerns have been raised both locally and globally. With the widely adopted use of location services by users, concerns of data collection and storage continues to be front and centre in discussion. Despite Apple stating the data received is anonymous and can be disabled by users, it appears that turning off location services doesn't disable the storage of location data on iPhones.

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