

GOOGLE MAPS HACKS

*Tips and Tools for Geographic
Searching and Remixing*



O'REILLY®

Rich Gibson & Schuyler Erle

Google Maps Hacks™

by Rich Gibson and Schuyler Erle

Copyright © 2006 O'Reilly Media, Inc. All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America.

Published by O'Reilly Media, Inc., 1005 Gravenstein Highway North,
Sebastopol, CA 95472.

O'Reilly books may be purchased for educational, business, or sales promotional use. Online editions are also available for most titles (*safari.oreilly.com*). For more information, contact our corporate/institutional sales department: (800) 998-9938 or *corporate@oreilly.com*.

Editor: Simon St.Laurent
Production Editor: Jamie Peppard
Copyeditor: Derek Di Matteo
Indexer: Nancy Crompton

Cover Designer: Marcia Friedman
Interior Designer: David Futato
Cover Illustrator: Karen Montgomery
Illustrators: Robert Romano, Jessamyn
Read, and Lesley Borash

Printing History:

January 2006: First Edition.

Nutshell Handbook, the Nutshell Handbook logo, and the O'Reilly logo are registered trademarks of O'Reilly Media, Inc. The *Hacks* series designations, *Google Maps Hacks*, the image of an antique globe, and related trade dress are trademarks of O'Reilly Media, Inc.

Many of the designations used by manufacturers and sellers to distinguish their products are claimed as trademarks. Where those designations appear in this book, and O'Reilly Media, Inc. was aware of a trademark claim, the designations have been printed in caps or initial caps.

While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, the publisher and authors assume no responsibility for errors or omissions, or for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.

Small print: The technologies discussed in this publication, the limitations on these technologies that technology and content owners seek to impose, and the laws actually limiting the use of these technologies are constantly changing. Thus, some of the hacks described in this publication may not work, may cause unintended harm to systems on which they are used, or may not be consistent with applicable user agreements. Your use of these hacks is at your own risk, and O'Reilly Media, Inc. disclaims responsibility for any damage or expense resulting from their use. In any event, you should take care that your use of these hacks does not violate any applicable laws, including copyright laws.



This book uses RepKover™, a durable and flexible lay-flat binding.

ISBN: 0-596-10161-9
[M]

[5/06]

This excerpt is protected by copyright law. It is your responsibility to obtain permissions necessary for any proposed use of this material. Please direct your inquiries to permissions@oreilly.com.

**HACK** Find the Best Gasoline Prices**#29** Drive your mouse for cheaper fuel—and then catch a movie.

My friends in construction spend a lot of time driving up and down Highway 101, and they all know where the cheap gas is. I spend my time sitting in front of a computer, but thanks to <http://www.ahding.com/cheapgas/>, I also know where the cheap gas flows.

What a Gas!

The Cheap Gas site in Figure 4-1 uses data from <http://www.gasbuddy.com/>, which aggregates user reports of gas prices so that everyone can benefit. You can also contribute to the Gas Buddy web site by becoming one of their volunteer spotters, thus gratifying your natural human desire to tell other people something that they don't know.

Cheap Gas Search Movie

Regular Unleaded **Cheapest gas in:** All California (select a specific city for better results) Diesel Fuel

Powered by **gasbuddy** and **Google Maps**

Map Satellite New Interface by permission of Paul Rademacher | Disclaimer | Send Feedback

Price	Name	Address	City	Updated
\$2.36	Costco	1600 Expo Parkway	Sacramento	Fri 1:48 PM
\$2.37	Fastrip	345 S. China Lake Bl	Ridgecrest	Sat 8:52 AM
\$2.37	1st Stop - Independent	248 Bridge St & Independence	Yuba City	Sat 3:48 AM
\$2.37	Howards	851 W Uppjohn & Downs	Ridgecrest	Fri 10:12 PM
\$2.37	Costco	198 PLAZA DR	VALLEJO	Fri 2:36 PM
\$2.37	Minit Shop	843 E. Ridgecrest Bl	Ridgecrest	Fri 9:13 AM
\$2.37	Minit Mart	843 E Ridgecrest Bl & Gateway	Ridgecrest	Thu 2:53 PM
\$2.37	One Stop Market	1501 N China Lake Bl	Ridgecrest	Thu 2:53 PM
\$2.37	Sam's Club	Greenback & Fountain Square	Citrus Heights	Thu 7:38 AM
\$2.38	Valero	Arden & Royal Oaks	Sacramento	Fri 11:41 AM
\$2.39	Aroo ampm	Sunset Blvd & Park Dr	Rockin	Sat 3:48 PM
\$2.39	Aroo ampm	999 Washington & Junction	Roseville	Sat 3:47 PM
\$2.39	VALERO	6700 Five Star Bl & Stanford Ranch	Rockin	Sat 3:47 PM
\$2.39	Shell	Five Star & Stanford Ranch	Rockin	Sat 3:47 PM
\$2.39	Aroo ampm	Fairway Dr & Stanford Ranch	Rockin	Sat 3:47 PM
\$2.39	AM PM Mini Mart	San Juan & Northgate 95834	Sacramento	Sat 1:09 PM

Map interface ©2005 Google Map data ©2005 NAVTEQ™, Tele Atlas

Figure 4-1. Where are the deals?

After you pick a city, the site lists gas stations on the side bar and markers on the map. The green icons represent the lowest half of gas stations by price and the red icons are the high half. As shown in Figure 4-1, each station has a marker with more information.

What is interesting about this example is the integration with <http://www.gasbuddy.com/>. GasBuddy.com provides the database of cheap gas, but is not run by cartographers, so Ahding.com was able to create the now-classic mashup.

What causes gas price variations? An interesting project in geospatial analysis would be to see if one could draw any conclusions about why there is such variation in prices from station to station. Overlaying different thematic layers and doing calculations based on multiple data sets is exactly what a Geographic Information System (GIS) is all about, but Google Maps has shown that there has been an enormous demand for an easy-to-use “put a push pin on a map” solution. That is now a solved problem!



Once you get your fuel price woes straightened out, you can click on the Movies link at <http://www.ahding.com/movie/> and use the same basic interface to query the Internet Movie Database (<http://www.imdb.com>) to check out local movies.

GasWatch

Another low-cost-gasoline solution is GasWatch by Adrian Gonzales, which is available from <http://www.widgetgallery.com/view.php?widget=36500>. This is a widget that will run under Konfabulator for Windows and Mac OS X (the grass is greener on both sides) and show you the best prices for gas. “GasWatch shows you the lowest priced gas in your ZIP Code. It also provides a handy button to show a map to the gas station. Maps for Mac users provided by Google Maps.”

To install the widget you need Konfabulator (<http://www.konfabulator.com/download>). Konfabulator is a JavaScript environment for your desktop. People can write small programs called *widgets*, and you can run them under Konfabulator.

For Mac OS X, download the disk image (*.dmg*) file. When it is finished downloading, mount the *.dmg* by double-clicking on it. When the folder opens, drag the icon into your applications folder. Now you can download the GasWatch widget. Double-click and it will prompt for your ZIP Code, and then sit quietly on your Desktop, as shown in Figure 4-2, letting you know the current cheapest local gas prices.

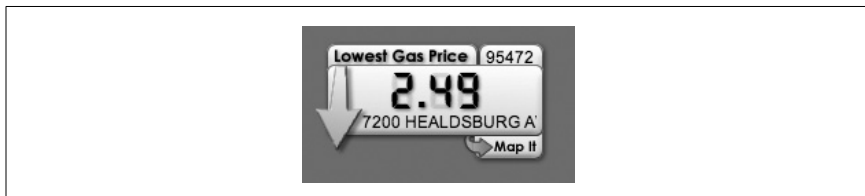


Figure 4-2. Cheap gas on your desktop

Clicking on the Map button will bring up Google Maps with this address highlighted. This is a great example of the value to be gained from connecting different sources of data in new ways.