

Hi everyone, I hope this finds you and your loved ones healthy and well during these challenging times.

I've been speaking with Erin and Scott about using [Zwift](#) to get the team together to train, race, and to facilitate group fun runs. For those not familiar with Zwift, it started as a destination for people who love riding bikes, allowing them to gamify indoor cycling workouts into dynamic ones with teammates and friends. Though the majority of people using Zwift are cyclists, they have opened it up to runners for free- and it's quite good.

To run in these virtual worlds with a customizable avatar, you'll need a couple of things.

(1) [Something to track your speed:](#)

- A supported treadmill
- A supported footpod (e.g., [Zwift RunPod](#), Stryd footpods, Milestone Pod, Polar & Garmin models)
- A supported watch (e.g., select Garmin watches with the Virtual Run function)
- Supported BLE enabled shoes (e.g., Under Armour)
- A supported treadmill sensor (e.g., [NPE Runn](#))

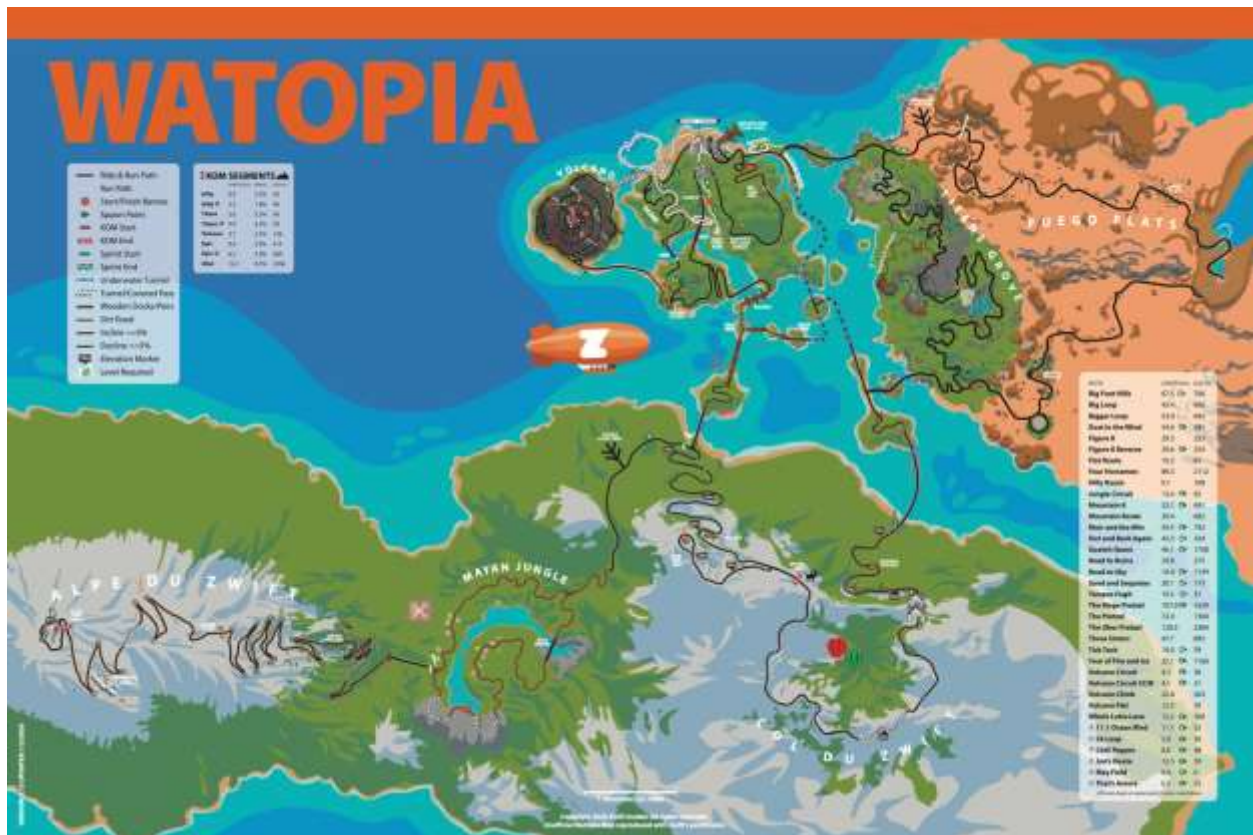
(2) [A device to run Zwift:](#)

- Computer (e.g., Windows 7 64bit or higher, or MacOS 10.10 or higher)
- Smartphone or tablet (e.g., Android 7.0 or higher, iOS 9.0 or higher)
- [Apple TV](#) (4th generation or higher)

(3) [Zwift software](#)

Technically you also need a treadmill (if you don't have one of the supported treadmills listed in the above link). Still, you can theoretically [run outside](#) with the [Zwift Companion App](#) and a footpod, watch, or BLE enabled shoes.

I started with a non-supported treadmill, a Zwift RunPod, and an iPad. I signed up for Zwift and was happy to see that Zwift is FREE for runners; for cyclists, it's \$15/month. The RunPod allows Zwift to accurately track your cadence and speed/pace after you do a quick 5 min calibration. Your avatar then runs in their virtual world at the pace you're running on the treadmill. Zwift also allows you to pair a Bluetooth heart rate monitor, and that also works well. From there, you can just start running, do one of their training workouts (also free, e.g., hills), casually run with others as part of a meetup, or even run in a race or tour of runs. You follow other runners and they can follow you, and there's a chat feature allowing you to text others while you're in their virtual world. Granted, that probably works better for cycling than for running. Still, it's a good option to have. Their main world is called [Watopia](#), and they've got a TON of roads to run on- including [May Field](#), an outdoor 400M track for speedwork. They also have several other worlds, including NY, London, and many, many others.



Throughout your runs, you level up and acquire new gear (including race shirts for any races/tours you've completed). Once you've finished your run, you can save it within Zwift and you can also export it to other sites (e.g., Garmin, Strava, etc.)

I've had a great experience with Zwift. So much so that I upgraded my treadmill setup with a TV and Apple TV primarily for Zwift. It works really well to create a more immersive environment, but it's not necessary at all. I have been invited on several runs by a group of runners from Italy, including a 15K into the mountains. And that's what made me think this could be a good option for us during this COVID-19 outbreak- and even for training after it subsides. Here is a link to a brief [overview of Zwift](#), along with their [How-To playlist](#) on their [YouTube channel](#).

I'm hoping other team members can join me on Zwift. Like other Zwift users on teams, I've added our team name after my Zwift name: *R.Rivera [ShoreAC]*. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to email me at [riverr02@mac.com](mailto:rivr02@mac.com) or call/text my cell at 917.497.5935. If you sign up, please let Erin, Scott and I know so can add you to a list and start creating team runs.

Here's to hopefully seeing you soon in Watopia!