

# No Wall Too Tall

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In his hometown in the Czech Republic, Mikeš Korinek and his childhood friends spent countless hours trying to conquer what they called “the concrete”—a towering wall of about 10 feet, or at least that’s how Korinek remembers it. For this group of scrappy neighborhood kids, scaling that slab of cement became more than just a challenge; it was a rite of passage to becoming a man.

“The concrete taught me everything I know,” Korinek said, speaking to fellow parkour enthusiasts. “Back home, everyone would try to conquer it. I finally scaled the wall and thought, ‘Okay, what’s next?’”

Now, almost a decade later and a world away in Cincinnati, Korinek finds himself among like-minded practitioners at Cincy Jam, one of the biggest parkour gatherings in the Midwest. This year’s Cincy Jam, held from October 11-13, brought athletes from across the

country to three unique locations in the Cincinnati area: Swift Movement Studio, the University of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky University.

The festival is hosted by Swift Movement Studio, a parkour and freerunning gym founded by Seth Rujiraviriyapinyo, a veteran traceur who saw the growing need for community and structured training in the sport. Rujiraviriyapinyo instituted the annual “jam” as a way to bring parkour enthusiasts together for a mix of freeform practice, skill-sharing and community building.

“When we started in 2013, we only had about 30 people, mostly from Cincinnati,” Rujiraviriyapinyo said. “But over the years, Cincy Jam has become one of the defining events in the Midwest. In 2023, we had 167 people, and we’re seeing similar numbers each year now.”

Swift Movement Studio, as the organizer of Cincy Jam, acts as a training ground for local parkour athletes, as well as a community hub. According to Rujiraviriyapinyo, Swift has roughly 20-30 local practitioners who regularly train together. The jam, however, brings in far more, drawing both newcomers and veteran athletes who come for the unique mix of structured and open-format sessions, all set in an environment that changes daily.

This unique structure is a big part of Cincy Jam’s appeal. Rujiraviriyapinyo explained that they deliberately guide participants through different locations, which allows the athletes to interpret and navigate the environment in their own ways. “Every parkour event is unique because each site has its own challenges,” he said. “This year, with spots at Swift, UC and NKU, we made sure each location offers opportunities to test skills and creativity.”



For many at Cincy Jam, parkour is about more than just moving efficiently through space. Buildings, walls, railings and even trees turn into tools for practicing movement. But for many of the participants, parkour is an act of creative expression.

“It’s the one time of the year that all the local communities in the Midwest unite in one place,” said University of Cincinnati student and frequent Cincy Jam attendee Ethan Garrett. “There are a lot of small [parkour] communities throughout the United States, but Cincy Jam has made a name for itself. People make an effort to come out to this one.”

Garrett has attended eight Cincy Jam festivals in a row, attending since he was 11 years old. He watched this year’s jam from the sidelines, wearing a brace on his right ankle from a recent parkour injury—an inevitable occurrence for anyone in the sport, he noted. Despite being unable to participate this time, the sense of community drew him back.

“Some people come from the East Coast, some from Texas, Colorado—and even further,” Garrett said. “You get to train with people you see on social media and actually meet them. It’s really good for building connections and making a name for yourself. You start to see the same people at all these events, and people begin to recognize you.”

The event brought in prominent figures from the parkour scene, including Korinek, Max Henry, Caleb Craig, and Connor Pennington—all from various parts of the world. For these athletes, Cincy Jam is a place to build connections, push limits, and celebrate a shared passion.



For 15-year-old Wesley Yoshida, the experience was worth the trip from Indianapolis. “I’ve always loved moving,” said Yoshida, who started in Taekwondo before transitioning to parkour. “The integration between the human body and all the obstacles around it—I found that really fascinating. Just personally, flips are one of my loves. I just like the freedom that it gives. It’s really fun.”

Yoshida explained that the support from other athletes at the jam has helped him tackle techniques he wouldn’t normally attempt on his own. “It’s fairly scary sometimes,” he said. “But the instant relief of doing it and knowing you can trust your body—it feels amazing.”



To outsiders, parkour may appear as spontaneous jumping and hopping, but there's a vocabulary and discipline to the sport that many practitioners build on. At the most basic level, moves like vaults and jumps form the foundation. A vault might involve placing both hands on a ledge and pulling the body over it, while a jump is simply a leap from one surface to another. But to make these moves look seamless, practitioners train tirelessly, ensuring their bodies are in sync with each movement's demands.

A popular maneuver is the "Kong," a vault where both hands press against a wall or ledge while the body is pulled through between them. For Aiden Delforge, an attendee at Cincy Jam, the Kong has become a mainstay. "It's just a vault to get over a wall," Delforge said. "You put both hands down and then pull your body through. It's super versatile." Yet the skill and confidence required can be demanding. "You just have to be confident that you've done these before and that your body knows what to do."

Others like Yoshida favor more acrobatic techniques, like flips. His favorite, the side flip, requires a precise sideways leap that involves rotating the body while landing on a narrow surface, sometimes just four or five inches wide. "When trusting your body, knowing how to fall is really important," he said. "Opening up and just slapping the wall—that's one of the most fun parts."

Parkour isn't just about individual moves; it's about chaining them together into "lines," or sequences of movement. This concept is especially popular in freerunning, an offshoot of parkour that incorporates flips and spins. "Don't think of things as a single trick," Korinek said. "It should be part of one bigger line of movements."



Each city and setting contributes its own influence on parkour styles. For those who travel to jams, the architecture can shape their approach. "The Midwest is very flip-heavy," said Connor Costello, a "parkour-er" who spends his free time at jams across the country. "But in Chicago, it's much more about walls and gaps to jump between. The spots are different."

Costello tailors his training to the environment around him. "For me, I like doing jumps and then adding some flips in, kind of get the best of both worlds," he said. "It's cool to be at a jam, exploring the city's architecture with everyone putting their own kind of unique twist on how they perceive the space."

Caleb Craig, a Texas-based parkour instructor and six-year veteran of the sport, feels that parkour takes him back to the innocence of childhood. “It’s kind of just like playing on a playground,” Craig said. “But with everyone bringing their unique preferences for challenges or jumps, you’re exploring in a way that you can really make your own.”



To the untrained eye, parkour moves can look like uncalculated risk-taking, but athletes at Cincy Jam are often more cautious and deliberate than they appear. “It’s all about efficiency of movement,” said Max Henry, a seasoned parkour instructor from Boulder, Colorado, who led a session on injury prevention during the jam.

“The key to finding consistency in your jumps is giving your body a cue,” Henry said to a group of attendees. For him, that cue is tightening his ankles before every jump—a motion that reminds his body to brace for impact and reinforces safe technique.

Garett, who started parkour after being inspired by YouTube videos, said that the sport demands a high awareness of one’s own physical limits. “Parkour is really good at getting you to know your body and exactly what you’re capable of,” he said. “When you’re working a big challenge, maybe a big jump, you have to know exactly what you’re capable of.”

“You learn a lot from injuries,” Garrett continued. “It’s almost essential—it’s part of training. Injuries happen when you push yourself more than you should have. It’s like calibration. Now I know my body’s limits even better.”

## **The Power of Community**

The support in the parkour community is transformative for many of the athletes who attend Cincy Jam. “You push each other,” Garrett said. “You accomplish things that you might not have thought possible. It’s kind of crazy what you can do when you’re with people who are just as passionate as you are. There’s an energy here that makes you believe in yourself.”

For Yoshida, seeing people push their limits in such an encouraging space makes him feel part of something bigger. “Everyone is really nice. Everyone coming together just to show a love for one discipline—it really fosters the movement,” he said. “Even though I’m not from here, it feels like a second home. The atmosphere of everyone supporting you and giving you tips—it makes all the difference.”

Connor Costello, a longtime parkour enthusiast, echoed this sentiment. “This community is one of the most welcoming I’ve found. People in parkour are a little quirky, you know? You have to be, to want to jump on walls and climb things for fun,” he said, laughing. “But if you find a group of people who just want to jump on walls together, you can really be yourself. Some of my closest friends, I met through parkour.”

The friendships forged at events like Cincy Jam often become lifelong bonds. “I’ve known some of these people for over 10 years, and even if I don’t see them for a while, it’s like we pick up right where we left off,” Garrett said.

Craig also described how the community aspect of parkour has enriched his life, giving him the chance to travel, connect with people, and see cities in a unique way. “There’s just something special about going to a new city, exploring it in your own way, and meeting others who see the world as one big playground,” he said. “It’s like seeing the world through a different lens.”

Cincy Jam isn’t just a local event; it’s part of a broader movement. Parkour is relatively new in the United States, with its roots only reaching back to around 2006, according to Rujiraviryapinyo. Events like Cincy Jam have contributed to its spread, giving people who might only practice in isolation or small groups a chance to feel part of something bigger.

“Parkour is an online-first kind of sport,” Rujiraviriyapinyo said. “A lot of people find it through videos on social media or YouTube. Jams became a way for people to meet in person, to connect in real life, to turn the online community into something tangible. And each event, each jam, has its own vibe because of the different locations and people.”

For many newcomers, seeing parkour athletes leap across rooftops or execute intricate flips in viral videos is captivating. But jams like Cincy Jam ground the sport, reminding people of the careful planning and skill-building that goes into every jump and movement. “People might think it’s all about big stunts, but parkour is just as much about discipline and awareness of your body,” said Henry. “You don’t go for the biggest jump first. You build up to it, and the community supports you every step of the way.”

As the festival drew to a close, attendees reflected on the growth of parkour and what it means to them. “Parkour encourages you to see things differently, to think, ‘How can I interact with this space?’” Costello said. “Every wall, every railing becomes a possibility, and that mindset carries over into life. It’s about facing challenges head-on and knowing you can adapt.”

As participants headed home, carrying the spirit of Cincy Jam with them, many already looked forward to next year’s event. And for parkour athletes like Korinek, Yoshida and Costello, the friendships and memories forged in Cincinnati’s streets and walls are just as important as the skills they’ve mastered.

“There’s a thrill in being free and creative, but the number one thing is doing it safely, together, and knowing you’re part of something bigger,” Craig said. “That’s what keeps me coming back, year after year.”