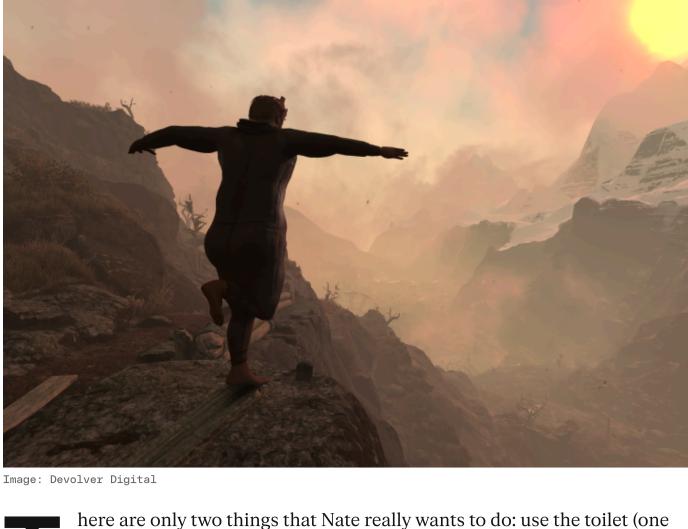
The Verge **NEW!** Follow topics and + GAMING + ENTERTAINMENT + GAMES REVIEW authors to stay updated on your personal interests. Baby Steps hits on the hell and h open-world exploration game where the journey is the point. by + Khee Hoon Chan Sep 23, 2025, 4:00 PM UTC

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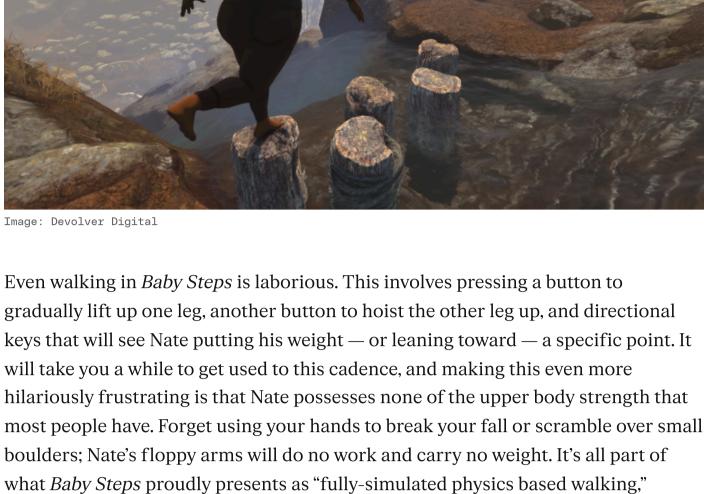
that, he emphasizes, comes with three walls and a door) and go home. He

of the other, before landing with a gentle plop. At times, he teeters to one side, nearly off balance, as he strives to hike up a very tall, steep, and seemingly belligerent mountain. Nate's a ragdoll barely held together by a severely compromised musculoskeletal system, powered by a deep-seated urge to trudge toward an outhouse. Nate is also you. The incongruity of the tedium of hiking, an activity he perennially curses, and the earnestness of hiking culture makes the comedy of *Baby Steps* — an open-world exploration game from a trio of indie developers, including QWOPdesigner Bennett Foddy — surprisingly cathartic. Its hilarity is drawn from the

harrowing experiences of a reluctant, athletically challenged hiker. Every step has

also walks with a strange gait, with one tiny foot raised awkwardly in front

to be micromanaged. Walk too quickly and you can lose your balance; miscalculate the size of your stride and you will probably tumble off a cliff. Then there are the fellow hikers you meet along the way, and the contrast between Nate's awkward, morose outlook versus their unbridled enthusiasm for clambering over dirt and rocks is sublime. Thus, there's a nearly perverse dimension to hiking that Baby Steps instinctively understands: it's really exhausting for the innately clumsy.



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Beyond just walking, *Baby Steps* doesn't give you any sort of goals, aside from

heading to the next campsite. This means you can saunter to wherever takes your

fancy, be it strutting toward a crumbling tower or climbing a small hill just to see

what's at its peak. Unlike the goal-driven structure of traditional games, *Baby Steps*

offers neither quests nor rewards for your trek. The game also eschews the staples

of open-world games with massive maps, such as fast travel, mini maps, and

next.

hike.

Image: Devolver Digital

upgradeable gear — features that will ease your traversal from one point to the

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geared toward encouraging sheer buffoonery.

You can, of course, make your way toward the end with minimal detours, but this approach will make *Baby Steps* feel very banal, very quickly. To enjoy what *Baby* Steps has to offer, then, is to find a point in its hike even when there's no discernible point at all. In a way, it's a game that offers one of the purest expressions of hiking. Any hiking enthusiast will talk your ears off about how the process *is* the point: you're here to take in the sights of the trail, to marinate in the beauty of the wilderness, and to dirty your feet trudging across some of the muddiest terrains in existence. Even as an avowed hiking skeptic, I can't help but grudgingly agree with this

perspective; Baby Steps does have many sights worth slogging for. Littered across

its landscapes are several trees bearing glowing fruits, which you can pick — and

noisily devour — if you can reach them. There are several non-collectible hats to

easily go missing if you fall from a great height; I've lost many precious hats in my

owners. Chancing upon these make up some of the most memorable events of my

discover, which you can plonk on your head gingerly. Unfortunately, these can

own perilous journey. Then there are the items you can find and return to their

In my first playthrough, I found a set of keys while breaking into a seemingly abandoned hut (just another regular hiking activity), but Nate's less-than-stellar grip strength means that he has a tendency to drop the item whenever he trips over his own feet. This led me on an extensive wild goose chase as I sought to retrieve the keys: painstakingly search through a grassy field, scramble around the rocky chasm of a pit, and waddle after the offending item as it floats down a river. I did lose the keys in the end, but all the scouting led me to discover several landmarks and other delectable secrets. I won't spoil what they are for you. Beneath the absurd slapstick of *Baby Steps*, however, lies an axiom that many hiking detractors have known for ages: hiking is hell. The more Nate walks, the more soiled his onesie gets. The soles of his bare feet are stained with an indelible brown, and he sometimes lays on his back with a defeated sigh after suffering a spectacular fall. It's how the game stands out from the burgeoning genre of hiking simulators like *Death Stranding*, *A Short Hike*, and *Firewatch* — titles that depict the activity as a meditative, serene experience. But in Baby Steps, you aren't just traversing treacherous environments, but also

getting around with your own ramshackle body. Your legs betray your exhaustion;

your head screams as you make another agonizing misstep. It's a hiking experience

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that reflects the reality of folks who lose their motor skills when faced with the

prospect of climbing up yet another craggy hill. /

Baby Steps launches on September 23rd on the PS5 and Steam.

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