

Germans join Pokemon hunt as hit game reaches Europe

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German consumers are the first country in Europe to get their hands on the new Pokemon Go game

The Pokemon Go mobile gaming craze reached European fans on Wednesday, with players in Germany the first to get their hands on the augmented reality sensation.

The game has until now only been available in the United States,

Australia and New Zealand—although some particularly avid Europeans fans downloaded copies in recent days by pretending to be connecting from those countries.

Players can join for free and set off on a quest to collect the 250 cartoon "pocket monsters" first conceived for the primitive Game Boy handheld in the late 1990s.

The real novelty of the 2016 version is that progress in the game can only be made by physically moving around in real life.

AFP journalists were able to download the game from Apple's iTunes store and Google's Play store in Berlin.

GPS chips in player's smartphones are used to map their real-life movements onto the game world, while software overlays the 3D characters onto the view through the phone's camera.

With Pokemon and other in-game items only appearing at certain real-world locations, swarms of budding collectors have gathered in public places as the game's popularity has spread.

The wild success of the game—owned by Nintendo subsidiary the Pokemon Company and developed by studio Niantic Labs—had already seen the Japanese game-maker's stock price rocket by 59 percent in four days by Tuesday.

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