

Nokia to offer free mobile navigation services

The Associated Press

Nokia Corp. said Thursday it will offer free navigation services globally for users of its smart phones, in a drive to counter a similar move by Google Inc.

The service, with detailed maps for more than 180 countries, will also have voice guidance in 46 languages in 74 countries.

The service will be immediately available for download on Nokia's Ovi Map site, and from March all new Nokia GPS-enabled smart phones will include the new version of Ovi Maps. They will also have free access to Lonely Planet and Michelin travel guides that have information on more than 1,000 destinations globally.

"This move has the potential to nearly double the size of the current mobile navigation market," Nokia said. "The new version of Ovi Maps includes high-end car and pedestrian navigation features, such as turn-by-turn voice guidance."

The announcement follows a similar move by Google Inc. to provide free navigation services on handsets.

Nokia said that research firm Canalys estimates that in 2009 some 27 million people worldwide were using the global positioning system, or GPS, on handsets. The Finnish company's new service could increase the number of GPS navigation users to 50 million, through a download of the new Ovi Maps available immediately, Nokia said.

The Finland-based phone maker is increasingly turning to providing services for users, such as music and video downloads, navigational maps and games, and said that by the end of 2011 it will have some 300 million "active users of its services."

In an \$8 billion deal in 2008, Nokia bought U.S. navigation-software maker Navteq Corp., a major provider of digital map data and content.

In 2008, Nokia sold 468 million handsets, up 7 percent on 2007.

In the third quarter last year, Nokia maintained its No. 1 position in global mobile phone sales with a 38 percent market share and sales of 108.5 million handsets.

Nokia is due to release its fourth-quarter and 2009 full-year earnings on Jan. 28.

The company, based in Espoo employs 123,350 people worldwide.

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