Android Photo Library App

All your photos in your pocket with Aves Gallery

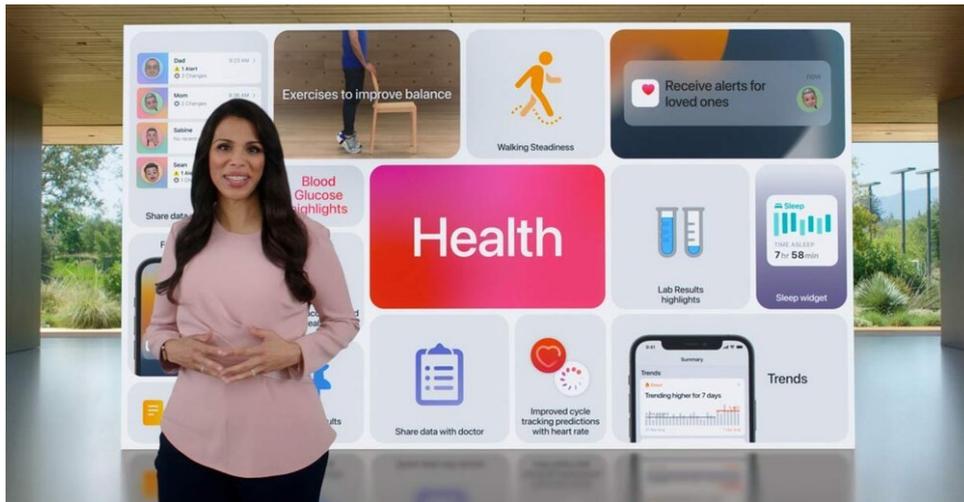Willem L. Middelkoop
Aug. 19, 2025

In Europe the summer holidays are nearing their end and if you are like many young parents, you probably shot a ton of new photos and videos. These are not just a bunch of files, they are like windows into our personal memories. This post is about an Android app that you can use to look at all your memories, right from your pocket, no cloud or subscription required.

Maybe it is because I get a little older, but I have increased my emphasis on the *good*. Things like durability, respect for other people, health and freedom are more important to me now than ever before. I hold no grudge towards any company, but I do not like the modern trend of needing a subscription for everything. The tools I use and the things I do reflect that, like these previous posts on my laptop and smartphone:

- [Durable Smartphone: Fairphone with Google Free /e/OS (Mar. 5, 2025)](#)
- [Better Laptop: Assembling the DIY Framework 13 (Feb. 10, 2025)](#)

Vitamins for the Mind

While I had my grumpy old man reasons for leaving iCloud Photos, one thing I think Apple understands well is how important photos and videos are for our wellbeing. In an interview on YouTube, Dr. Sumbul Desai (Apple Vice President of Health) mentions the importance of photos right along heart monitoring and fall detection. Memories of loved ones can make us feel good. Apple integrates this vision into their products with features like "on this day" and the photo watch face, automatically showing different memories. Easy access to your photos and videos helps you reflect and can be a perfect antidote for other things that might cause anxiety or stress.

Apple is serious about health and photos (Dr. Sumbul Desai)

Aves Gallery

Standard photo gallery apps work well with smaller collections of photos, but if you are like me and want to carry your entire photo and videos collection they often fall short compared to cloud and subscription based services like Apple iCloud Photos or Google Photos. Basic things like simply being able to handle large amounts of files and more advanced features like using metadata to find certain photos. After trying various apps, I found Aves Gallery (Google Play, F-Droid, Github) to be really good. It is a libre/free app released under BSD3 license created by Thilbault Deckers. I like it because:

- **Gesture support**: swipe with your fingers through your photos, just like Apple Photos or Google Photos. It works fast, fluid and, unlike many other Android gallery apps: continuously and multidirectional. There are also gestures available to return to the overview (swipe down from detail view), pinch-to-zoom and a single tap to show/hide textual info on any photo.
- **Scrollability**: Most gallery apps can scroll, but with Aves you get an extra powerful scrollbar which enables you to scroll both fast *and* accurate.
- **Search and filtering**: Aves indexes the metadata from your photos and enables advanced searching and filtering by city, state or country. You can also filter on date, media type or a combination of these.
- **Customisation**: You can set main menu buttons, tab bar buttons, colours, and photo action buttons to match your style of browsing. You can change the look of

the overview by changing thumbnail size, dimension (square versus rectangles) and sorting.

Aves in action showing the powerful scrollbar which enables fast and accurate scrolling

So that if your remember your wedding date (..), you'll be able to return to that specific day in a simple swipe
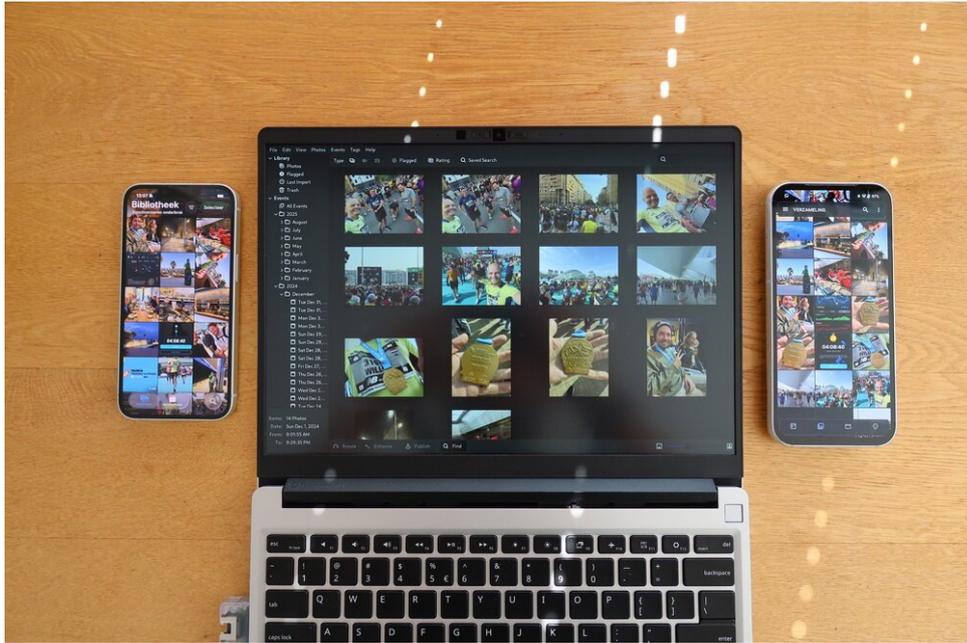
Just like Apple Photos, you can search by location - like going back to Valencia where I ran a marathon with by buddy Niels

Syncing Photos

New photos you take automatically appear in the Aves Gallery app. You can set Android to use Aves as default media viewer and picker app. If you're currently using a cloud photo service, you might first need to retake control over your photos. I did that in 2020 and wrote the following post on it:

- Free from the iCloud: Escaping Apple Photos : Using offline photo library management software (Aug. 31, 2020)

In that post I describe the app I use on my laptop, Shotwell and the steps I took to manage my own photo library. You could use rsync, Syncopoli or Syncthing to setup automatic synchronisation between your smartphone and other devices.

Syncing photos between laptop and smartphones - Shotwell and Aves Gallery app working together

Conclusion

Don't dismiss your photos and videos as just files. With the right app they can really bring you bits of joy. Using the Aves gallery app that joy does not require a subscription, not a cloud and is fully free+libre!