

GPS: NEVER ASK FOR DIRECTIONS AGAIN

By Bianca Wright

If your sense of direction is anything like mine, the advent of the GPS (Global Positioning System) must be a God-send. But even if you aren't as directionally-challenged, a GPS unit can be a lifesaver when you're on a road trip, visiting an unfamiliar city on business or even just trying to find your way to a client's office.

More importantly though, it can greatly increase your efficiency and cut costs by calculating the fastest route to your destination. Some of RiskSA's road warriors have managed to almost double the number of appointments they can get to in a day thanks to the use of a GPS unit.

First things first, though, what is GPS? According to the US National Space-Based Positioning, Navigation and Timing Coordination Office, GPS "is a US space-based radio navigation system that provides reliable positioning, navigation and timing services to civilian users on a continuous worldwide basis – freely available to all." All that is needed to access real-time geographical data is a GPS receiver and the benefits both for the citizenry and for government are numerous. "The promise of GPS technology for increasing safety and security, reducing congestion and improving efficiency are limitless. Quite simply, GPS has become the enabling technology for transportation," said Jeffrey Shane, under-secretary for Policy at the US Department of Transportation.

With so many options on the market, which should you choose?

Mio Moov

Mio's range of Moov GPS devices offers everything: from an entry level GPS system, the Mio Moov 200 GPS, to a more robust high-end option, the Mio Moov 560 GPS.



Starting with the entry level option, the Mio Moov 200 is a compact 3.5 inch portable GPS system that integrates the Mio Map 2008 software with Navman technology and offers text-to-speech conversion, multi-segment routing and multiple language support. The Mio Moov 200 also features a mileage reporter to help keep track of your journeys, especially useful for business trips.

The 200's big brother is the Mio Moov 560 GPS which offers a larger 4.7 inch touch screen, Bluetooth hands-free phone facilities that allow you to make and receive calls and text-to-speech conversion, which means you can concentrate on the road without having to look at the unit all the time. It runs Windows CE .Net 5.0 on a Samsung 2443 processor

clocked at 400 MHz with 64 Mb of internal memory. Weighing in at 180 grams, the lightweight GPS's major weakness is its battery life, which runs at just two hours.

The 560 is easy to use, but the one frustration is that it sometimes chooses a route that as a local you know is less efficient. The touch screen display can also be a little finicky for larger-fingered users. These are minor inconveniences as for the most part it offers excellent functionality. There is a limited choice of navigator voices available, including an Afrikaans one. The British voice does tend to stumble over certain South African place names, but is still understandable.

The USB slot makes for an easy interface with your PC. Its internal in-built antenna is integrated with a 20-channel SirfStar III GPS receiver.

The Mio Moov 560 GPS retails for around R2 999.

Garmin nüvi

When you think GPS, you probably think Garmin. Garmin tends to dominate the local GPS market with its extensive range of products.



Garmin's latest GPS device, the nüvi 1410 GPS navigator, features an ultra-slim design and a large five-inch touch screen, which takes the frustration out of trying to decipher what is written on small screens. Its lightweight design makes it ideal for pedestrian as well as vehicle navigation. A useful feature is its ecoRoute function which calculates a more fuel-efficient route to your destination.

The nüvi 1410's advanced navigation features make it a good choice for travelling. With route planning you can save 10 routes, specify via points and preview simulated turns. In addition, nüvi 1410 automatically sorts multiple destinations to provide an efficient route for errands, deliveries or sales calls. A trip log saves up to 10 000 points, so you can see where you've been on the map.

The GPS navigator comes preloaded with Garmap Southern Africa Streetmaps – TMC and thousands of points of interest (POIs) in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho and

Angola. According to Garmin, the nüvi 1410 provides more than 890 000 kilometres of routable road data across 10 different countries and street level data for all cities, towns and villages in South Africa. You can also download the latest road hazards and safety camera positions to your nüvi 1410 from www.Garmap.co.za free of charge and use geotagged or location-tagged photos as your destination.

Garmin Lock, an anti-theft feature which allows you to lock your GPS unit with a PIN, is provided and the unit is compatible with Garmin Garage, a free service where you can download custom voices and vehicles. The nüvi 1410's Digital Elevation Model (DEM) maps show you shaded contours at higher zoom levels, giving you the big picture of the surrounding terrain.

The Garmin nüvi 1410 retails for R3 999 from TechShop (www.techshop.co.za).

Another option is the waterproof Garmin nuvi 500, which is touted as the ultimate on-road and off-road Garmin. It retails for R3 999 from TechShop (www.techshop.co.za).

TomTom types

The new TomTom Go 750 is the flagship product in the new trio unveiled by the popular GPS manufacturer for the SA market in November. In addition to enhanced graphics which make for a smoother user experience, TomTom has redesigned the planning menu to show off the benefits of using TomTom IQ Routes, with route plans showing expected delays based on the latest data.



A frequent destinations menu has been added and promises to calculate a route to a frequently visited destination easier and faster. There is also an Eco Routes option that, as with the Mio Moov and the Garmin nuvi, can provide details of the most fuel-efficient route to help reduce drivers' impact on the environment. According to TomTom, the Go 750 calculates the fastest routes based on "the world's largest collection of historical speed profiles. This ever-growing database forms the foundation for TomTom IQ Routes and now includes over 800 billion historic speed measurements of 15 million road kilometres across the world".



The TomTom Go 750 retails for R2 999. Entry level in the new range is the TomTom Start, which retails for R1 399 and mid-range is the large screen TomTom XXL for R2 499.

And for the ladies there is the TomTom White Pearl, a stylish fashion accessory of a GPS that offers the same functionality as the popular TomTom One but with a pearlescent finish that makes it a fashionista's must-have. The main drawback, though, is that it has a small 3.5-inch screen which can make the display difficult to read, but at 140 grams, it's easy to carry around in your purse.

Similar to the Garmin nüvi, it offers a Help Me function that can pinpoint your location, give directions to the nearest police station or hospital, and provide the phone number of the nearest emergency services. TomTom's MapShare lets you edit map data from your device and IQ Routes uses the driving experience of other TomTom users to calculate the shortest, safest route to your destination, while also offering advanced lane guidance.

It also offers some female-friendly points of interest such as 'Shop 'til you drop', 'Everyday fashion' and 'Places to be seen'. The TomTom White Pearl retails for R1 999.

Using a GPS, whether for work or leisure, will change the way you drive or travel and is sure to save you time and money if you make the most of its features.

Custom creatives

Being able to customise your GPS unit can better reflect your personality and needs and most GPS units offer at least some customisability, even if it is just choosing from a pre-set selection of voices.

If you opt for a Garmin device, you can choose some local is lekker flavour with GPS Creatives' range of recorded SA celeb voices for your GPS. Choose from singer Kurt Darren, model Minki van der Westhuizen, Nataniël, Oom Kallie Marie (Casper de Vries) and Dowwe Dolla (Margit Meyer-Rödenbeck) for a truly South African experience.

The voices include the usual directional information as well as jokes and commentary from your favourite star, literally adding a personality to your GPS unit. The company intends to add the voices of Brumilda van Rensburg, Riaan Cruywagen and Shaleen Surtie-Richards among others in the future. You can purchase the voices at <http://www.gps-creative.com/> either through Setcom, an online payment system like PayPal, or through a bank transfer.

With the TomTom Start you can opt for changeable covers called StartSkins, including matching protective bags in Flaming Red, Ice Blue, Electric Green and Deep Purple. The StartSkins are available at Makro and Game for R199 each.

All-in-one alternatives

Nowadays you don't have to opt for a fully-fledged GPS unit because your phone can perform the same function.



The navigation solution provided by the Nokia 6710 Navigator, for example, provides everything you would expect from a dedicated GPS device with all the benefits of a converged mobile device. The device includes the latest developments in the Maps software with real-time 'drive and walk' navigation, full regional maps and hardware elements like the dedicated navigator key, touch area for easy zooming and a large display optimised for outdoor viewing.

The recent integration of Maps with Ovi allows people to pre-plan their journey at home on their PC and synchronise with their mobile device. Additionally, Maps has been updated to include a number of new features such as high-resolution aerial images, 3D landmarks for over 200 cities, terrain maps, weather service, premium travel and events content and traffic and safety warnings. With both of the new devices including a compass, working in conjunction with the new features of Maps, the pedestrian navigation experience

has been significantly improved. Included is the Nokia CR-111 car holder, which cradles the Nokia 6710 Navigator easily in the car and completes the driving navigation solution. The Nokia 6710 features Nokia Maps 3.0, Nokia Web Browser 7.1 and Nokia Map Loader on Ovi, which lets you find places, favourites, routing and 'Good things'.

And if you add Garmin's Mobile XT to your GPS-enabled phone, you can access detailed maps and, more importantly, a voice prompt turn-by-turn direction system from your phone. This is a must-have for travellers who want a compact, take-anywhere, use-in-any-car system that offers the robust functionality of a GPS with the portability and accessibility of a mobile phone.

It retails for R990 and is available at leading retail outlets countrywide. Check compatibility with your mobile phone before purchase though as it works only with certain smart phones.



Shatterprufe windscreens save

lives. And that's the bottom line.

Available at  service centres countrywide.