



During last vacation I used the opportunity to test different mapping/navigation solutions.

NAVIT VERSUS GARMIN VERSUS MAPTHIS – WHAT IS BEST OVERALL GPS SOLUTION FOR VACATION?

The candidates were:

A: Palm Pre2/WebOS/navit + open street maps

B: Garmin Etrex HCx + Garmin City Navigator Middle East Map

C: Sony PSP + mapthis! + different map sources (google maps/ OSM/ Microsoft maps)

So what did I discover?

C: This is barely usable, because in daylight conditions you can barely read the display and GPS fix takes always long. The PSP is quite big and difficult to handle when driving. The maps are quite good for planning and the PSP can be used to show you, where you are currently. But there is no active navigation (only available in a very few countries). Entering/importing POIs I found to be far to difficult. You need external power to survive for longer than some 90 minutes.

A: This was quite useful and it could navigate (both visually and by text-to-speech) to a point you define on the map. Unfortunately the maps themselves don't

know a substantial amount of roads/cities. The Navit options are quite difficult to adjust and I couldn't get it to write the tracks to a file.

B: As before the Garmin disintegrated in southern sun and heat and the outer soft-shell came lose within days. But beside a few software flaws (sometimes it needs complete reset to restart properly, after some 9 or 10 days it stops recording tracks properly - even after deleting internal memory. Seems to be somehow related to have an SD-card inserted or not ...) it was the most usable device. Fast and very reliable in getting GPS fix, runs easily on 2 AA batteries (it works with rechargeable ones too, but only for a few hours and after a while that really sucks - even if you keep it connected to external power source (as I do leave the car from time to time ...)). It is easy to mark some POIs/set flags for later usage (promising restaurants I come across, cool spots not mentioned in any guide, some place I want to do some recherche on later ...). And the city navigator map was a great surprise too. It had lots and lots of ATMs, restaurants, hotels, even

the smallest village, many sights, shopping locations ... and it could not only advice on the such places around you by category, but it could actually give driving directions (visually only, but quite helpful even if the come rather late). The only downside is: these maps are extremely expensive and you have to buy quite a large area even if you might want to see a small part of only one country in that scope ... like I did.

BTW: I couldn't find any working navigation solution for Windows Mobile 6.5 phone for the middle east with non-arabic characters. Otherwise I would have loved to use them.

Even if any other solution may have worked better than the Garmin I'd probably have used the Garmin too because of handy tracking feature, it's long lasting batteries and robustness (beside the glue/softgrip issue). And: these Garmins are quite cheap if you can live with the basic worldmap they come with.

WHAT TEST WAS CONDUCTED?

I used the hardware I happen to own (SONY PSP with GPS module; Windows Phones like the HTC S740 and others; Palm Pre2 WebOS smartphone; Garmin Etrex Legend HCx) and tested several software products (none successful on Windows Phone; Navit is the only one currently for WebOS; well Garmin = Garmin ... and MapThis! For PSP) and scouted for usable map data and converters.

