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Via Michelin x930 GPS receiver

Via Michelin's latest GPS offering is the Via Michelin X930, is a slimline GPS unit that promises lots, but can it deliver?

by Stuart Miles published on 5 January 2006

Via Michelin's latest GPS offering is the Via Michelin X930, is a slimline GPS unit that promises lots, but can it deliver? The X930 has plenty going for it. An integrated GPS receiver that features the newer SIRF Star III technology means that we never had to wait long for a signal to be found and our location locking-in. The unit didn't even have problem with our heat reflective windscreen on the car - something that has effected other units in the past. Then there is the easy to read map page which gives you clear information of where you are on the screen, the choice of 2D or 3D imagery and further options to customise the information displayed so you know what is going on when you glance at the screen. Other elements we liked where the inclusion of some of the Michelin information from the guide books, however we would have like more of them, including the ability for the device to highlight all the star rated restaurants in a certain area and let us chose which one to go to for dinner. Unfortunately for the X930, however the excitement stops here. The biggest and most fundamental problem is the unit's mapping capabilities; it is never a good sign when you cannot actually find your home or your office in the GPS unit you are reviewing, or any address for that matter. Type in that you want to go to the centre of Ascot in Berkshire for example and the unit plots you a course for Victoria Road in Windsor some 10 miles away. Helpful. Ask it to find areas in Milton Keynes for example and you'll be hard pushed once again. In fact out of all the addresses we asked the device to direct us to it failed 8 times out of 10 - not good if you've bought the device to help you get from A to B. It would be like getting in a black cab only for the driver to tell you that he doesn't know where he is going; you wouldn't stand for it there and you shouldn't stand



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for it here. But it is not just the mapping where the Via Michelin x930 disappoints, it's also the voice directions; gems like "turn right" when you are on the motorway or "turn slightly left" only serve to annoy and puzzle you rather than making directions easy. Get past the mapping and voice directions, and the Point of Interest element is just as flawed. Michelin seem so keen to show off the fact that they have plenty of Points of Interest in the machine that the company has failed to actually give you any logical way of finding the information easily. What you get is a long list with Michelin entries first - for some reason golf courses - and then a long list of everything else. With no way of quickly getting to what you want you're left having to struggle through. The final annoyance for us was the screen mount. In what has to be the most convoluted system we've seen for a GPS mount, the unit was virtually impossible to remove from the mount without having to take the whole thing off the windscreen. Some will say this is a great security feature, but not us. Michelin will tell you that the new mount will allow you to have the GPS unit at any angle for better viewing, but frankly you don't need it any angle.

VERDICT

Aside from the price, the biggest complaint here is the mapping and the unit's inability to find any address you are likely to be looking for, which is strange considering the Michelin directions website is normally very good. Okay so when the device worked it worked well, giving us straight forward routes and clear on-screen directions, but these were few and far between. The ultimate killer is that through its incompetency, it even made Mrs Pocket-lint cry, and that for us, is the sign of a bad piece of kit. It should be avoided at all costs.

At a glance

What is it?

GPS receiver from Michelin

Good

Strong receiver for good signal, clear display page, information from the Michelin guide book

Bad

Poor mapping, poor instruction sets, poor Points of Interest listing

Verdict

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Price £275

Our score

2/10

Your score

?/10