

Mio P350 GPS receiver

PDA with embedded GPS system

by Chris Hall published on 29 October 2006

The Mio P350 is the latest GPS enabled PDA from the Mio "DigiWalker" stable. The distinct difference between this model and previous A201 version is that the GPS receiver is now part of the PDA case - no more flipping out an extra blob. This is good - right? It certainly looks better.

In tests, the P350 seemed reluctant to pick up a signal. The advantage of SiRFstar III is that it is happier inside, under bridges and in built-up areas than the previous incarnation. The P350 seemed to struggle with latching on to a signal and holding it. Of course, cold starting can take some time, but despite having the unit in sight of the sky, it wasn't playing.

Walking it to the car didn't help, and we were out of the end of the road before it started playing ball. It is at this stage where you see the navigation software perform. Or not, as the case may be. As this is a PDA running Windows Mobile 5 so you can install your own navigation software, but our test version came with the Mio Map software installed via the SD card slot.

Compared to the previous version of the software, it does now start faster, but not at lightening speed. Usage is far from logical, but covers most of the functions you'll find in other offerings. The menu system is not so straight-forward, and in places frustrating. We like to pick up and use the thing, rather than trawling through instructions to do something basic and MioMap didn't get us lost on the roads, but we soon got irritated with the device. An empty feeling left us wanting TomTom back.

It is difficult to judge whether the poor GPS functions were a result of the software, or the hardware, although you can connect an external antenna. Judging by the rest of the software, I'd stake the contents of my recycling bin on that being the problem.



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The rest of the box is something of a treat, you get the mains charger, car charger, suction mount and the USB cable for your PC, so this really is a complete PDA package. Frustratingly, however, it comes with a 2.5mm headphone jack, which means 9 out of 10 cats won't be using their normal headphones. The P350 also has Bluetooth, so you can integrate with your mobile phone to a certain extent.

VERDICT

Overall, we are not convinced by the MioMap software, but the PDA itself does what it says on the tin. The added advantage is that you can get portable, so you can use whatever mapping software you want, and you can go off road, so long as your battery holds out, which is documented at 4.5 hours, but we didn't ratify this in the tests.

At a glance

What is it?

PDA with embedded GPS system

Good

Compact, portable, PDA as well as GPS functions, complete kit in box

Bad

Ever so slow warm up, navigation software is frustrating, 2.5mm headphone jack

Verdict

A tidy option with everything in the box, but the navigation is not as logical as many competitors, and despite SiRFstar III chipset, it still feels sluggish

Price £175

Our score

7/10

Your score

4/10