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Mio A501 Digi Walker GPS PDA phone

Can Mio challenge the Nokia N95 with its all-in-one phone GPS?

by Stuart Miles published on 26 September 2007

The Nokia N95 isn't the only phone that promises, a phone, a camera and a GPS in one device to take with you wherever you go. But can the Mio A501 live up to the challenge? We take a closer look.

Best described as fat and stubby, the A501 is the follow-on to the company's A701 GPS phone last year.

The device combines a mobile phone, GPS, 2 megapixel camera, Bluetooth, music player and Windows Mobile 5.0 all in a box around the size of a bar of soap. It's wider than the N95, but not as tall.

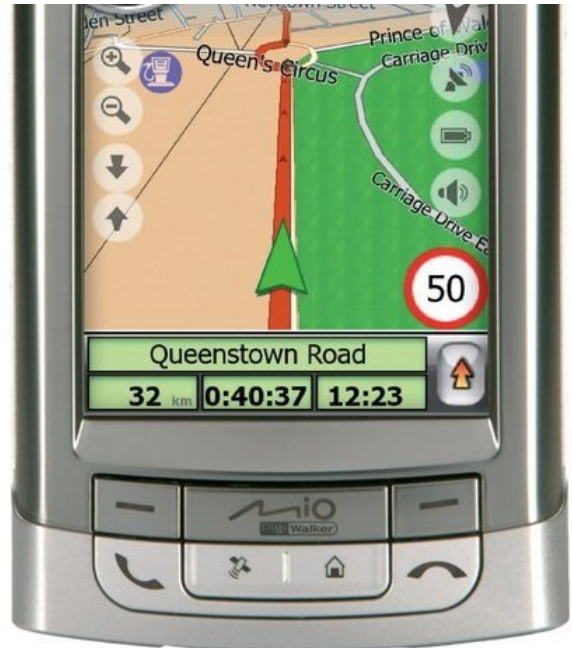
The A501 contains the SiRF Star III GPS receiver and boasts an intuitive interface for route planning including a focus on directions for pedestrians rather than just cars.

The device might be small and portable, but that hasn't stopped Mio bundling its Mio Maps v3 software on the phone and that means you get a decent satnav offering with access to thousands of Points of Interest, speed cameras and maps of 22 European countries.

The A501 also has a 2-megapixel camera with auto focus and flash (which you can use as a torch by pressing the home key down for 3 seconds) and the memory can be expanded up to 2GB with a standard SD/MMC card.

We'd have hoped for the more up-to-date Windows Mobile 6.0 operating system rather than Windows Mobile 5, but that doesn't stop the device performing well.

So what about it up against the Nokia N95? Well it falls short, a long way short.



...cont.

The camera, although a good performer, is still only 2 megapixels, and there is no 3G or Wi-Fi connectivity here either, an almost must for the PDA user these days.

Additionally everything is done via the touchscreen - there are buttons, but not many of them, and the joystick that has been placed on the side of the unit is small and fiddly to use. Things aren't helped by the size of the touchscreen and its frame. It is so small that you'll have to do everything with the included stylus rather than your fingers as with so many other touchscreen devices at the moment. There will be no Apple zoom pinching here.

VERDICT

As a mini satnav device the Mio A501 Digi Walker is good, but falls down in a number of areas.

That said, if you aren't fussed about a push button keyboard, not having a fast connection for surfing, and not worried about the latest version of Windows Mobile on your phone then this is worth looking into.

If you look at the Mio A501 as a GPS first and a phone/PDA second then it's cracking, but chances are your priorities will probably be around the other way, in which case you might be disappointed.

At a glance

What is it?

GPS PDA phone

Good

Good satnav application, digital camera, focus on pedestrian routes

Bad

Windows Mobile 5, no keypad, touchscreen small, no 3G, No Wi-Fi

Verdict

If you look at the Mio A501 as a GPS first and a phone/pda second then it's cracking, but chances are your priorities will probably be around the other way, in which case you might be disappointed

Price £339

Our score

7/10

Your score

?/10