

Navman S30 3D GPS receiver

A to B via 3D

by Chris Hall published on 2 October 2008

The number of options for in-car satnav is constantly expanding. Navman have long been associated with satellite navigation equipment, but can they compete with the likes of TomTom for easy to use, consumer-friendly devices? We look at the S30 3D, the entry-level device.

From a design point of view, the S30 3D leaves a lot to be desired. The two-tone black and silver plastic body lacks the modern look and feel of many rival devices. The front is dominated by the 3.5in touchscreen but otherwise it is free from buttons. There is a single slider switch on the top, with three positions: On, Off and Reset. The first thing you'll notice is that Off isn't really off, as when you connect it to the power, it will flash on, startup and then switch off again, which is slightly suspicious.

It was not apparent what the reset switch on the top does as we found it didn't actually reset anything like recent destinations or our home location, so it looks like a hard reset option. The only other feature on the device itself is an SD card slot hiding around the side, allowing for memory expansion. A few cut-outs in the bodywork allow for the attachment of the supplied windscreen mount which works very well and is easy to fit. You also get the 12V power cable, a USB cable and software in the box. GPS reception is handled by SiRF's InstantFix II, which is fast to lock on and in our tests seemed to be very accurate.

Into the device itself and everything, obviously, is controlled through touch. On a screen of this size, it can be a little fiddly. To help you find the address, the voice will read out the letters as you press them, although the voice trigger and the letter recognition don't seem to be connected, so it will say things without them appearing on the screen. It does however support full postcode entry which is the fastest method to find what you



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want.

Once you have entered your destination you can opt to find the route, or easily preview the location, meaning you can enter a location then scout around for exactly what you want, including zooming in and out so you have an overall idea of where you are heading. Into route planning itself and we found it was quick to plot routes and then to recalculate routes should you fail to make a turning or decide to go a different way.

Once you are driving the screen gives you various pieces of information which does feel a little cramped on the screen, however they can be changed with a few button presses, which is nice (if you're worried about safety you can disable touch functionality whilst the vehicle is moving). You can also easily switch from 2D to 3D navigation to make junctions clearer - a nice option and perhaps a necessary one.

One of the flaws of the system seems to be clarity in navigation. Occasionally you'll find yourself on top of a junction before you know exactly what you are supposed to be doing. There is no sense of forward planning that you get with some other systems. The colour schemes can also be confusing - they are customisable, but one of the options makes the route the exact same colour as the marking for major routes, meaning that as you approach something like a motorway junction, you can have orange lines going all over the place, with no clear indication of your actual route. Just make sure you look at the options before setting off into the unknown.

Besides single point-to-point trips you can plan trips with multiple destinations, including saving routes once you have put them together. You can include all the navigation options in this, including points of interest, recent locations as well as address entry, which is useful. The points of interest are fairly easy to get around, with the ability to search by type and location, so finding a hotel in a town is fairly straight-forward, but you

At a glance

What is it?

Satnav with 3D POIs

Good

Fast location fix, easy to use, customisable display info, easy to set-up routes, price

Bad

Exterior design a little cheap looking, on-screen display can let you down at complicated junctions

Verdict

The core elements of the S30 3D work well and the price is certainly appealing, but you get what you pay for

Price £99.99

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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will find they are not the most up-to-date and we found missing or moved points to be fairly common.

In the menu you'll find plenty of options and two features we like, the buttons for parking and fuel, allowing you to navigate straight to these locations. Traffic can also be enabled if you opt for the additional accessory.

But the headline feature here and the reason the title supports the "3D" tag is because of 3D landmark renderings. These are, however, few and far between so doesn't quite have the impact you might want it to. If you drive into London (as no tourist ever should) you'll find a fair number dotted around, but out and about they are a little harder to come by, which makes you feel that the "3D" moniker is something of a letdown.

Battery life is reported at just over 4 hours, but we found that this is perhaps higher than average. A 2 hour journey took almost all the juice out of our device, and despite the hard "off" switch, battery life still runs down quickly when you are not using it.

VERDICT

The accompanying NavDesk software suite enables some additional features, such as management of NavPix (geotagged images) including access to a Library of locations to download, although this is simply a link to launch the website and you can't help thinking that more could have been done. NavDesk also enables purchase of additional maps, although again you'll end up on the website.

Overall the core elements of the S30 3D work well. There is enough here to ensure you get from A to B without too much hassle. With Traffic support available, which is not always found on entry-level models it is certainly worth considering. However, the overall experience, doesn't really compare to that of the TomTom One, but the S30 3D is nearly £50 (on average)

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/3505/navman-s30-3d-gps-receiver>

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cheaper, so the price might be more appealing.