

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/443/magellan-sportrak-gps-handheld-color>

## The Magellan SporTrak color Handheld GPS

by Dan Leonard published on 25 May 2004

The SporTrak Color follows in the footsteps of the popular Meridian line, this model based on the SporTrak Pro in particular. The main change from its predecessors is the introduction of the VGA colour screen, measuring 2.2 x 1.4 inches with 240 x 160 pixel resolution. Colour screen aside, the handset itself remains largely the same as the SporTrak Pro - but with a slight saving in weight (6.1 ounces) and size (5.6 x 2.2 x 1.2) on previous meridian line models. Two levels of backlighting keep the screen visible in all conditions, although it is convex, rather than flat, as is the unit as a whole. The antenna is housed within, lending the handset a 90's mobile phone look and feel. The unit is designed for city, outdoor and marine use. All the required brackets are available as extras and the unit is resistant enough to bumps for storage in a rucksack. There's a nice rubber grip and a safety cord as standard, just to be on the safe side- although water resistant and designed to float, we don't recommend checking, nor did we tempt fate. We got a high-level of performance from the SporTrak color. Although buildings can prove problems with line of sight, average connection time to satellite was under a minute in open surroundings, sometimes as fast as 30 seconds. Tracking wise, even at when moving at speed, the pinpointing was top notch. On the fly waypoint, route and track point storage and the satellite status screens are all seamless to use. With a 3 way axis, you won't need to point the unit vertically to get a good fix. The unit is operated by a backlight 10-button cluster, using a navi key design for menu navigation. Data entry was slick, allocating notes to locations is pretty seamless thanks to an intuitive operating system. There are features galore: roadmap view (in car attachment available at additional cost), 16 times zoom on map view, 2 compass screens, bearing/heading/speed input view/long lat screens and trip odometer. If you get stuck, check out the CD Rom with a handy PDF



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guide. If you want to view street level maps and local points of interest (other than railway stations, which are already included) you'll need to download Magellan's optional MapSend DirectRoute software. There are two versions of MapSend DirectRoute to purchase, one for the continental United States and Canada, one for Europe. It's an added expense, unnecessary with many of the PDA driven alternatives, such as the TomTom Navigator. Power is drawn from 2x AA batteries. Expect to wring out 14 hours of use, less with the backlight turned on, before the battery-warning signal. You'll get 5 minutes max before the unit shuts down completely. Unfortunately, the included connection is a serial port, rather than a USB. The connection needs to be screwed in- not easy while at sea we imagine. A shame to opt for parallel really as a lithium ion battery with a USB power source would save the need for plugs (ideal for using on board ship) and allow for easier transfer of data. The lack of any data storage is a real problem- there's no storage card slot and the average map consumes a whopping 18 MB of memory with an excruciatingly slow 30min plus download time over the 9 pin serial cable. If covering a large area on your trip/voyage, you'll need a laptop handy in order to reload and overwrite the additional saved content.

## VERDICT

Another good all round piece of kit from Magellan. If you are looking for a self-contained handset that's tough, accurate and easy to use, look no further. For newcomers to GPS, this is extremely user friendly, without sacrificing advanced features or quality of service. However, if you have used GPS before, you may find the additional map price a little cheeky, especially when you lose the map as it is replaced. Magellan should really be considering a card reader for future models and a USB interface. In this day and age, AA batteries and 9 pin parallels are simply old hat. While a PDA based set up would solve some of these issues, when all is said and done, it's a good freestanding piece of kit marred

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## At a glance

### What is it?

Colour handheld GPS

### Good

Good performance, Backlight, tough

### Bad

Poor memory allocation, some might prefer a PDA based unit, Serial port connection

### Verdict

It's a good freestanding piece of kit marred only by poor memory allotment.

**Price** £285

**Our score**

**7/10**

**Your score**

**?/10**

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