

TomTom Go

by Stuart Miles published on 22 June 2004

Technology can promise so much sometimes and yet in practice gives little. Unfortunately the same can be said for the TomTom Go - an all in one portable GPS navigation device. The idea is simple. Offer a somewhat affordable in car navigation system with a large touch screen that sits on a stand hanging from your windscreen. In practice on the whole this is what the TomTom Go does, however there are so many hurdles that have to be jumped through that at the end of our testing we were ready to throw it out of the car window and reverse over it several times.

Although the pictures will make this unit look like the size of an apple iMac, it is in fact size of a coffee mug. Yet the size isn't the first major hurdle. That honour falls to the touch screen. While it's a lovely idea and one that makes the menu easy to navigate, it soon becomes dirtier than an old man in a porn shop. Smudges working against the sunlight meant that by the time we had tapped in where we wanted to go on the on-screen keyboard we couldn't see a damn thing. That's not to say we have dirty grubby mitts, but a bit of moisturiser seems to a short way into making this device unusable. Combined with the problem of the touch screen is that there seems to be no shading device for the unit. Sitting it in its cradle that then sticks to the windscreen using plastic suckers, seems an excellent way of giving it enough sunlight to make the screen almost impossible to see, yes there is a brightness control as well as a night light option, but neither seem to do nothing to help the situation and even on a cloudy day we had trouble. Battery power is good. We tested the Tom Tom Go for a good solid two days on the road and the batteries were still going at the end of the weekend ready to live another day. In case of longer trips, included in the box is a power charger for the home as well as standard cigarette lighter charger for recharging on the go. The system itself is fairly simple to use. Maps are stored on SD cards, which you can slot in depending on what country you are travelling



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through and the map options are clear and well presented. For those who like a bit of graphical nicety the TomTom Go also offers 3D maps and when driving (if you fortunate enough to see the screen) this makes it very easy to see where you are in relation to a junction or roundabout- a sort of climb in the map feature. Keeping track of where you are on the map again is very accurate, however again problems rear their ugly head. In testing we experienced a long delay in finding the satellites to navigate from. When TomTom Go did eventually find them, they would more often than not suddenly drop out leaving you high and dry (we are still on a t-junction in Eton according to the device, even now some 2 days later). We could maybe forgive this is we were travelling in the backwaters of Dartmoor or the peak district, but not around Surrey and London.

VERDICT

On paper the TomTom Go seems to have it all and for the moments that it did work in our tests we were very impressed, but working for moments isn't really good enough, hence our disappointment. TomTom might say what about the multilingual support, or the large screen maybe even the satellites where having a bad day due to Venus and Mercury in close orbit with the sun. We say if the device is as temperamental as it was with us this is one to steer clear of. Great when it works, trouble is it doesn't want to work all the time.

At a glance

What is it?

All in one portable navigation device

Good

swap out map SD cards, clear maps

Bad

screen gets dirty, brightness poor in sunlight

Verdict

When it works it works well, when it doesn't it might as well be a paperweight

Price £499

Our score

6/10

Your score

?/10