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TRUCK-SPECIFIC SAT NAV GROUP TEST

TRUCK SAT NAVS

We take the latest truck-specific satellite navigation aids out on the road for our in-depth GPS shootout

By Andy Stewart

PHOTOGRAPHY FUTURE PUBLISHING / SCANIA

Truck sat navs are still in the early days of evolution, though each of the major mobile GPS device manufacturers are now producing models specifically tailored to the needs of the HGV driver.

The facility to configure a vehicle's profile (including height, weight, weight per axle, overall length, width, load etc) is now offered pretty much across the board, and the theory is this data is taken into account by the devices when they calculate a route. This should ensure drivers are not directed to follow roads that are unsuitable for their vehicle, therefore meaning they should be taken around things like weak bridges, low overhangs and narrow lanes.

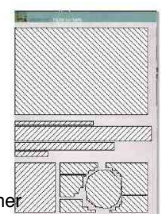
The degree of success in this regard is mixed, and there's still no substitute for common sense when you're driving a commercial vehicle while using

a sat nav. But that said, they can be very beneficial when negotiating tricky routes, and some even come with extra features that make the devices even more useful to have in the cab.

Real-life trials

To test these devices, we picked out a string of locations that if routed between normally (ie for a car, and without taking into account height, width and weight restrictions), would generate a journey that would be unsuitable for a truck due to a range of reasons. We then configured a truck vehicle profile in each sat nav and asked it to draw up a suitable route based on the height, width and weight data we entered.

Once the journey was planned, we set out on the road and used the devices to navigate us from point to point so we could get a real feel for how they operated.







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TOMTOM PRO 7150 TRUCK £389

Web www.tomtom.com Contact 020 7255 9774

Perhaps the most well-known name in sat navs, TomTom has been making car GPS devices for years – and most people will be instantly familiar with how this unit operates.

TomTom has always scored points for usability, and the PRO 7150 TRUCK is as easy to use as its smaller cousins. Menus are straightforward and plugging in destination information is a doddle.

The large 5-inch glossy display is bright and vibrant (though reflections may be a problem in extreme sunlight), and the onscreen information has been redesigned since last year's GO 7000 model to reduce clutter. Another bonus is TomTom's excellent traffic information service is integrated well to ensure drivers are routed around any problems.

We found the routing good and the device managed to avoid most of the obstacles we set in its way.

However, we could find no easy way to plan routes with more than three destinations, and the general responsiveness of the unit can feel a bit slow at times (such as when flicking around the map and menus, where it'll often pause). It also crashed on us once while we were planning a route. Build quality is high though, and the mount – albeit small – is very secure.

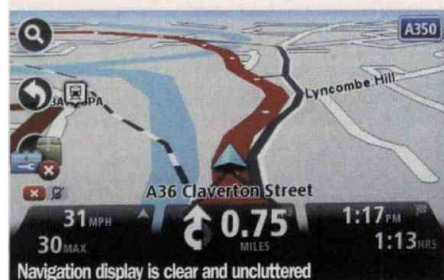
As an additional service, the 7150 TRUCK is able to communicate with TomTom's WEBFLEET telematics service and can even deliver driver performance feedback if connected to an ecoPLUS module (available separately).

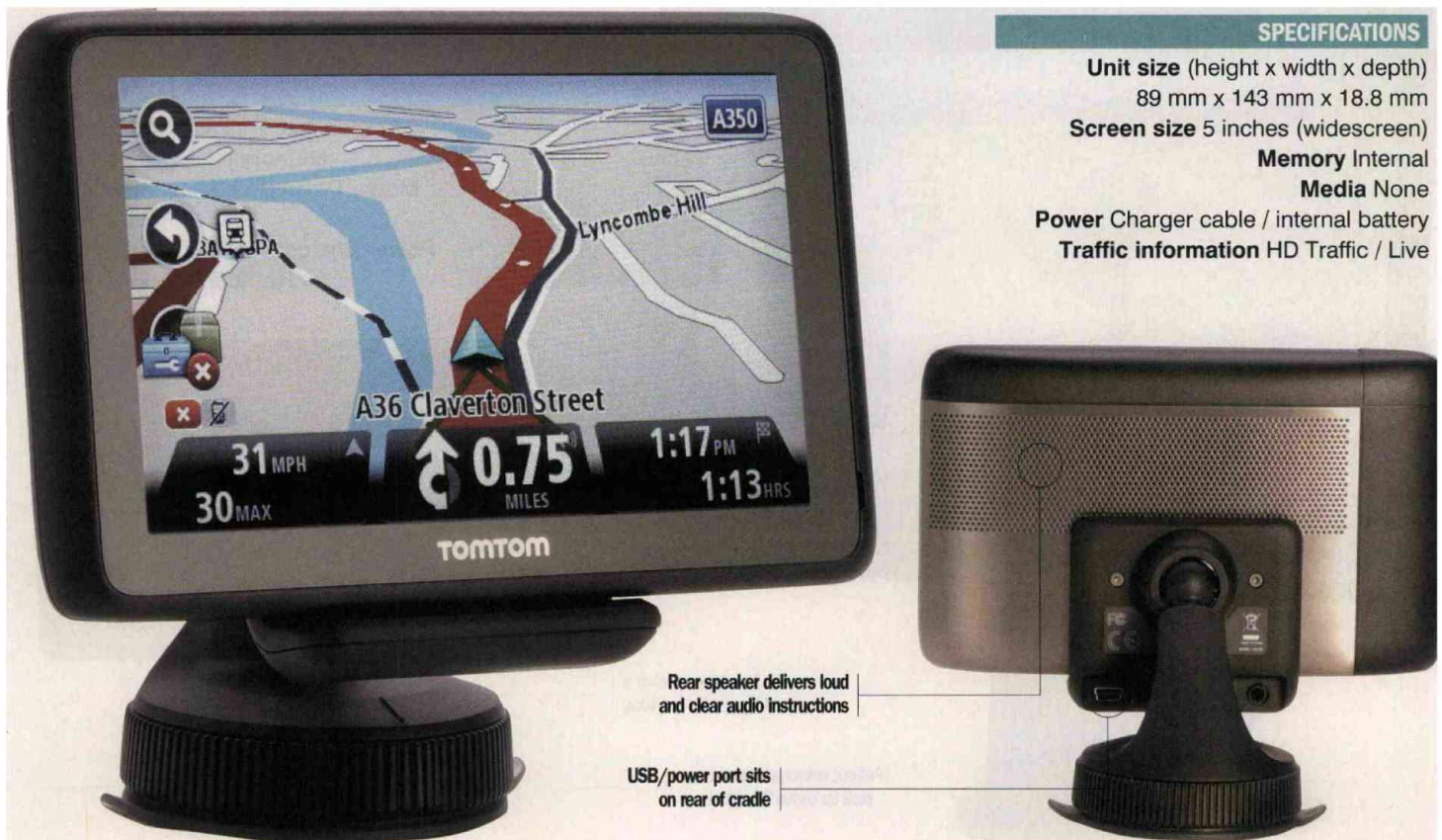
VERDICT

We like Easy to use, effective and reliable routing, excellent live traffic service is integrated well, sturdy build quality, bright and clear display, secure mount, loud speaker, natural voice when delivering audible navigation instructions

We don't like Occasionally sluggish responsiveness to touch commands, no easy way to plan routes with more than three waypoints, non-existent media options

RATING ★★☆☆☆







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SNOOPER TRUCKMATE S7000 £479

Web www.snooperuk.com Contact 01928 579579

Snooper's TRUCKMATE S7000 was one of the first dedicated truck sat navs on the market, and it has built up a reputation over the last few years as an exceptional device for HGV drivers.

Topping the list of features is the bright and clear extra-large 7-inch LCD. It's by far the largest in this test and its natural home is in the cab – so don't plan to stick it in your car window unless you want to suffer a fairly big blindspot.

Built around a Windows CE operating system, the S7000 feels a bit clunky to operate and its menu is a no-frills affair, yet it is functional and comprehensive.

Planning a multi-stop route is a cinch, and entering destination information is painless thanks to an extra-large onscreen keyboard and a good level of

responsiveness from the controls.

Routing (based on Navteq mapping) is first-class, and during our tests the device was able to avoid every width, height and weight restriction we threw at it.

We found the volume a bit on the quiet side, however, and the audible instructions may become slightly hard to hear inside a noisy cab. But we found the new Lane Guidance and Junction View facilities useful when negotiating tricky areas.

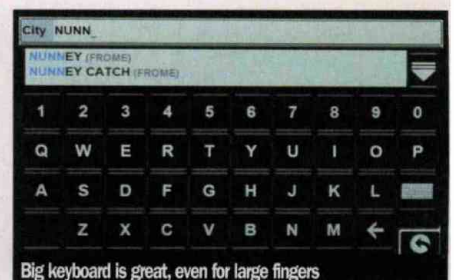
The onscreen mapping is easy to follow, and the built-in digital TV (complete with electronic programme guide) delivered via the pull-out aerial is a great addition and works really well in areas with decent reception. All in all, this is a very competent and useful package.

VERDICT

We like Superb extra-large screen, accurate and very reliable mapping, good level of control responsiveness, large onscreen keyboard, easy to programme multiple waypoints using built-in route planner, integrated TV works surprisingly well

We don't like Somewhat clunky look and feel, slow map panning, speaker a bit quiet and could make audible instructions hard to hear in a noisy cab

RATING ★★★★★





SPECIFICATIONS

- Unit size** (height x width x depth)
122 mm x 180 mm x 20 mm
- Screen size** 7 inches (widescreen)
- Memory** Internal, SD/SDHC
- Media** TV (DVB-T), MP3, MP4 Video, Photo, Radio
- Power** Charger cable / internal battery
- Traffic information** TMC

We found the speaker a bit quiet for our liking

Pull-out antenna is used to pick up digital TV signals

GARMIN DEZL 560LT £349

Web www.garmin.com/uk Contact 023 8052 4000

Garmin's devices are getting better and better each year, and the new truck-specific dezl 560LT has a lot going for it.

One of our main gripes with the manufacture's previous model – the nuvi 465T – was that it was unresponsive; but the good news here is the dezl 560LT has had a speed bump.

Indeed, it offers by far the smoothest control of any device in this test, making it an absolute joy to use. The screen responds to the slightest touch, which makes using the keyboard and flicking between menus fast and easy. Scrolling is also nice and quick.

We also found the built-in multiple-waypoint trip planner effortless to use, and the routing was fast and mostly kept

us out of trouble (though it did take us over a weak bridge with a 7.5-tonne restriction, even though we'd programmed in a vehicle profile with a gw of 24 tonnes).

Build quality is much improved over last year's model, and the device has an ultra-slim, yet durable feel. Its matte screen helps keep reflections down to a minimum in bright sunlight, and the colour-coded road drawing (eg, A-roads are green, B-roads are yellow) is a useful touch. That said, its cartoonish appearance may not be to all tastes.

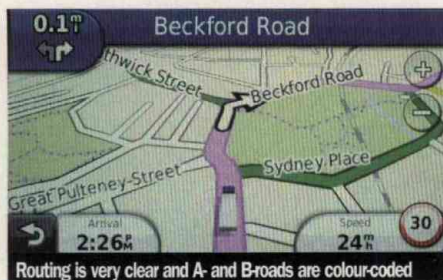
Finally, another tick in the plus box is the dezl 560LT comes with free lifetime traffic information, which is worth its weight in gold if you want to keep moving and avoid the jams.

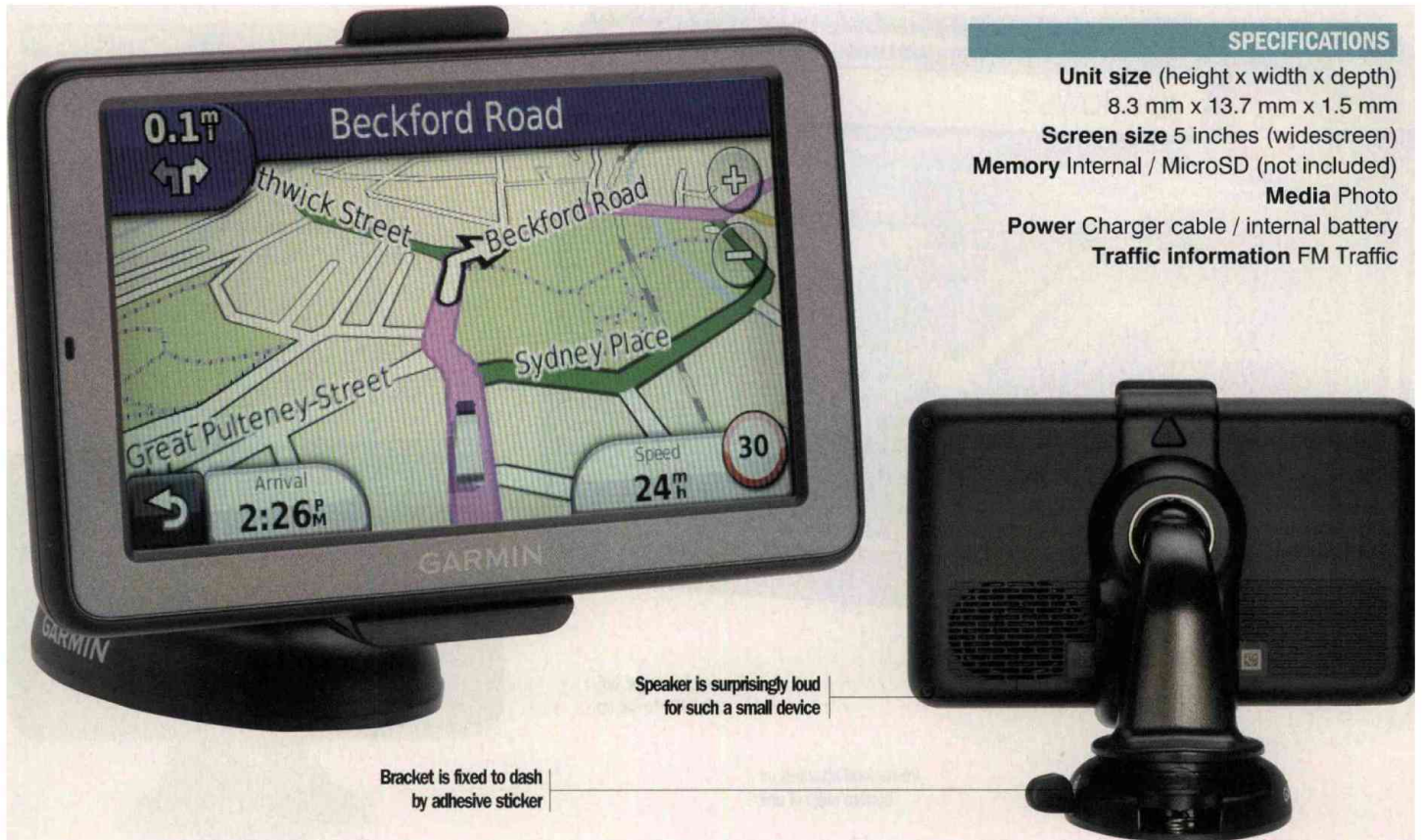
VERDICT

We like Exceptionally smooth and easy to operate, non-glare matte screen, very loud speaker, clear and comprehensive voice instructions, excellent multi-stop trip planner, free lifetime traffic alerts

We don't like Routing failed to take us around a weak bridge, adhesive-only dashboard mount (no suction cup for sticking to windscreen)

RATING ★★★★★







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NAVIGON 70 PREMIUM £328

Web www.navigon.com Contact 08712 880154

Navigon's 70 Premium sat nav looks pretty good with its large 5-inch matte touchscreen LCD, slim form factor and meaty, adaptable mounting bracket. However, fire it up and things aren't quite so inviting.

We found the unit takes a fair bit of prodding and poking to use, as the touchscreen requires firm presses before it registers commands – which soon becomes irritating when you're trying to tap in a place name.

Onscreen menus are quite utilitarian and it can take time to learn where everything is. That said, the built-in facilities are fairly comprehensive.

The device refused to calculate our test route once we'd loaded the waypoints into the trip planner, warning the journey

was unsuitable for trucks. As a workaround, we divided the route up into simpler A-to-B chunks and the 70 Premium was then able to take us on a generally suitable route (though it also fell foul of a weak bridge).

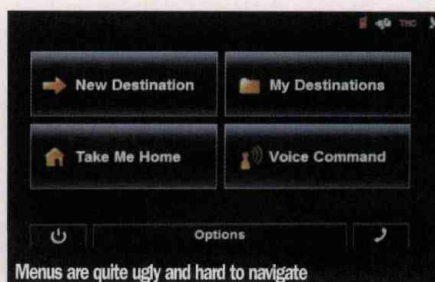
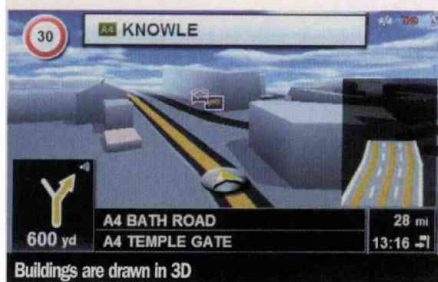
Navigon has built a motion sensor into the unit that responds to a wave of the hand (meaning you can access some functions without having to touch the screen), and there's also some nifty voice control technology (handy when driving). Its Active Lane Assistant is a nice touch, showing an animated diagram of your route when you reach complicated sections of road. It also shows maps in 3D with landscape contours and buildings, though to be honest we didn't find this particularly useful.

VERDICT

We like Aesthetics are good, clear voice instructions, quick routing with choice of multiple options, Active Lane Assistant, 3D landscape contours and buildings (pretty, but not all that useful)

We don't like Refused to calculate our test route on first attempt so hard to find a workaround, routing unreliable in places, menus are utilitarian and difficult to navigate, controls feel unresponsive, ugly menu system

RATING ★★☆☆☆





SPECIFICATIONS

- Unit size** (height x width x depth)
83 mm x 137.4 mm x 15.3 mm
- Screen size** 5 inches (widescreen)
- Memory** Internal / microSD
- Media** None
- Power** Charger cable / internal battery
- Traffic information** TMC

Bracket is secure, but a bit fiddly to set up

Power lead attaches on bottom edge of unit