

# Route masters

Sat-nav systems can help you avoid jams by accessing live traffic updates (although you may need to pay extra subscription fees or buy additional hardware for this). If they detect problems ahead, they divert you around them.

We put 14 systems to the test to see how well they helped us avoid congestion. We found that the systems work best when there is an exceptional hold-up, such as an accident or road works. On some roads congestion is so endemic that the systems are not alerted. And sometimes there is no alternative route available. So, although sat-nav can help, it's not a magic wand that will help you bypass jams completely.

Details of our five Best Buys are shown here. For information on other models we tested, see [www.which.co.uk/satnav](http://www.which.co.uk/satnav).

## Contacts

**Becker** 07740 369546; [www.harmanbecker.com](http://www.harmanbecker.com)

**Garmin** [www.garmin.com](http://www.garmin.com)

**Magellan** [www.magellangps.com](http://www.magellangps.com)

**Navicore** 020 7099 2037; [www.navicore.co.uk](http://www.navicore.co.uk)

**Tom Tom** [www.tomtom.com](http://www.tomtom.com)



## 88% Garmin Nuvi 300 £270

You stick the Garmin Nuvi on to the windscreen with a suction cup. The clear, bright 71x53mm liquid crystal display screen is touch sensitive: you operate it by pressing the options in the logically laid-out menus. This makes the unit pleasantly uncluttered.

Our testers found that the Nuvi delivered clear, accurate instructions and was simple to operate. It has some useful extra functions, too, such as a currency calculator. It can also play MP3 files through its tinny speaker. You can download information from the internet via a computer before you travel to warn you when you are approaching accident black spots (aka speed cameras).

Setting it up initially could have been a bit easier, and the screen suffered from glare in bright sunlight. Also, the standard maps cover only the UK. The Nuvi is available at Comet, Currys, Halfords and The Link.

**WORTH KNOWING** The traffic monitoring system costs an extra £150.

**Cheapest store** Currys and Halfords **Type** Portable  
**Traffic monitoring** Yes (extra cost) **European maps** Yes (extra cost)



## 86% Becker Cascade 7944 £900

The Becker Cascade has to be permanently fitted into the car stereo slot in your dashboard. Becker claims that you can fit it yourself, but we thought it would challenge even car audio enthusiasts – we recommend professional installation, which will cost around £70.

Once installed, the Becker is excellent: it's easy to program and delivers clear instructions. The display is wide and narrow so there is no map view, but our testers felt it was less distracting than some other systems. We were very impressed at the Cascade's accuracy: it could tell what lane we were in when approaching roundabouts and direct us into the correct one. But it was less impressive when we asked it to provide us with an alternative route during some city driving: we were instructed to perform a U-turn so risky that Evel Knievel would have been quaking in his boots. The Becker is widely available online.

**WORTH KNOWING** As well as playing CDs, it works as a Bluetooth hands-free kit for your mobile phone, too.

**Available Online** **Type** Permanent **Traffic monitoring** Yes  
**European maps** Yes



## STUCK WITH SUB-STANDARD SAT-NAV

**Barry Berman** 73, retired director  
Having spent more than £65,000 on his Jaguar XKR, *Which?* member Barry Berman quite reasonably expected his built-in sat-nav system (a £2,235 optional extra on other Jags at the time) to be a good 'un.

However, he found that it made basic mistakes, such as telling him to take the third exit on a roundabout when he needed to take the second.

Barry complained to Jaguar and said he wanted the system fixed, thinking that it would be pretty easy

for the company to update the software. But Jaguar said that it had 'no plans in the foreseeable future to provide updated discs for this system as the model being fitted to our new XK model is provided by another manufacturer and cannot be retrofitted'.

Even if the system worked perfectly, as new roads are built it would become out of date. We think that car manufacturers should offer sat-nav updates for the life of the vehicle.

Barry now uses a £300 portable Tom Tom system.

## MEMBER BENEFIT

### FREE website access

#### Full details of 14 sat-nav devices

Our exclusive members' only website has more details of our Best Buy sat-nav systems plus another nine that we tested and a description of how we test. Go to [www.which.co.uk/satnav](http://www.which.co.uk/satnav) for this extra information.



## 86% Tom Tom Go 910 £500

Setting up this unit was a real pain. The mounting bracket for the windscreen was too flimsy to support the system, so it had to rest on the dashboard. And when we switched it on, the system was set to the US by default. This meant that the map screen was blank – yet the manual didn't mention this.

Once it was set to the correct side of the Atlantic, the Tom Tom worked really well. Its crystal-clear touch screen displays intuitive menus that are easy to use. The verbal directions were the most comprehensive of all the products on test: we were primed when a turn was approaching, told how far away it was and given the name of the road we were about to join as well. As with the Garmin, you have to pay extra (from £130) for the traffic-monitoring system. The Tom Tom is available at Comet, Currys, Halfords, John Lewis and The Link.

**WE LIKE** The Tom Tom can direct you to nearby businesses such as restaurants.

**Cheapest store** Comet **Type** Portable **Traffic monitoring** Yes (extra cost) **European maps** Yes

## Security alert

Portable sat-nav systems are a target for thieves, as they currently have no security protection (such as a code or removable face-plate). If you have a removable sat-nav device, don't leave it in your car (even out of sight) and wipe the 'sucker mark' off the windscreen – thieves are using this tell-tale mark to find cars with sat-nav units. We think these devices should come with some sort of security, as they are responsible for a large proportion of car crime.

## Score

This ignores price and is based on:

Navigation performance 45%  
Ease of use 40%  
Features 15%



## 80% Magellan Roadmate 800 £400

The Roadmate is a portable system operated by a touch screen and a cluster of buttons. Setting up the unit was tricky because the windscreen mounting was a bit floppy and the adjustable arm too stiff. And the anti-glare protector that helps you see the screen on sunny days was a bit of a fiddle to fit, too.

Once set up, the Roadmate is very easy to use and delivers clear, timely directions. Our only major concern was when we instructed it to provide us with a route that avoided motorways. It seemed to interpret this as 'use the smallest roads possible' and resulted in a bizarrely lengthy route, culminating in a dirt road that wouldn't have been out of place in an episode of the 'Dukes of Hazzard'. The Roadmate is available online.

**WORTH KNOWING** The 20GB hard disk can store MP3s and photos, which can be viewed on screen.

**Available Online** Type Portable **Traffic monitoring** Yes **European maps** Yes



## 80% Navicore Personal £180

The Navicore was the best system we tried based on a mobile phone. But it works only with phones that use the Symbian operating system, so check the manufacturer's website ([www.navicore.co.uk](http://www.navicore.co.uk)) before you buy.

To set it up, you just insert a memory card with the software into your mobile, then place a small box with a GPS aerial on your dashboard. The phone and the box communicate via Bluetooth.

Inputting your destination is less logical than on some other units, but the instructions are clear once you've got going. However, your phone's small screen gets very busy when the system is telling you lots of things at once.

Live traffic updates are sent to your mobile. You don't have to pay Navicore for these, but your mobile operator may charge for receiving them. The Navicore is available at The Link.

**WE LIKE** It's very easy to store and retrieve your favourite routes.

**Cheapest store** The Link **Type** Phone **Traffic monitoring** Yes **European maps** Yes (extra cost)

## MEMBER BENEFIT

# Win a Best Buy sat-nav system and digital camera

To help you have a stress-free journey and capture special moments, we're offering a Garmin Nuvi 300 sat-nav and traffic monitoring system and a Canon PowerShot A540 digital camera

## TO ENTER, SIMPLY ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION

What does Midas stand for?

- A) motorway incident detection and automatic signalling
- B) motorists' impatience delivers additional stress
- C) motorists' indicator device and system

To enter our Best Buy competition online, go to [www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition](http://www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition) or send your entry on a postcard to 'Best Buy September 06', Which?, PO Box 44, Hertford X, SG14 1SH. Include your name, address and postcode, daytime phone number and Which? membership number (found on your Which? membership



Worth  
£650

card as your user name). Entries received by 29 September 2006 will be entered. Usual rules apply – go to [www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition](http://www.which.co.uk/bestbuycompetition) or see Which?, July 2006, p49.