



CAN YOU GUIDE ME NOW?

We try the latest cellphone-based GPS navigation systems to find out

DID YOU KNOW you're probably carrying a GPS device in your pocket? Since last year, cellphones have had a legally mandated tracking function so that 911 calls can be traced. Now carriers are letting you in on the navigation action, packing in more-powerful GPS receivers enhanced with triangulation from cell towers to do what a stand-alone GPS unit does: tell you where you are, guide you somewhere else, and find you a burger along the way.

I tested three of the newest mobile navigators, hitting the highways through the New Jersey 'burbs and strolling Manhattan on foot. Each had periodic connection problems—GPS, cellular or both—and made minor routing mistakes, and I missed the occasional turn. But they all handled Jersey's tricky traffic circles better than most drivers do. Just be sure to buy a dash mount: Navigating from your lap isn't so easy, or safe.—MICHAEL MYSER

SPECS

A MAPQUEST NAVIGATOR

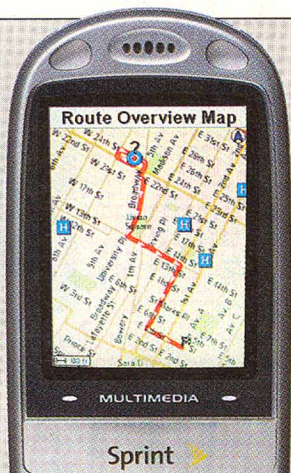
Sprint/Nextel;
\$10/month;
mapquest.com

B ALK TECHNOLOGIES COPILOT LIVE

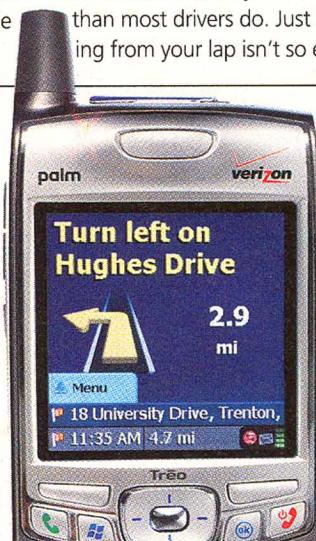
Any Pocket PC 6 phone;
\$400; alk.com

C VZ NAVIGATOR

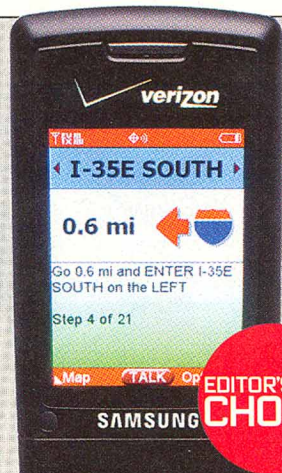
Verizon;
\$10/month or
\$3/day; verizon
wireless.com



A TESTED ON: Sanyo MM-9000



B TESTED ON: Treo 700w



C TESTED ON: Samsung A990

EDITOR'S CHOICE

USABILITY

Navigator works like Verizon's service [right], only not as well. Every screen took ages to load, and entering addresses was clunky. The phone didn't actively track me in "pedestrian" mode, so I had to manually scroll through the directions to figure out where I was going.

The CoPilot is the most feature-rich—edit mid-route, detour around traffic—but it uses a separate Bluetooth GPS receiver instead of the one in your phone. Maps come pre-loaded on an SD card. The Treo's keypad made for rapid address entry, but the app froze frequently.

Ever use a phone? Look at a map? You can use VZ Navigator. Entering a destination is a breeze. Hit "navigate" to get a route, and it will download maps over your phone's data connection. You can also search for points of interest such as restaurants, parks and gas stations.

NAVIGATION

Staid, basic maps with tiny directional arrows got the job done, and there were no routing mistakes. The voice direction was helpful, but it called out only turn instructions, not road names. Icons directly on the maps let me know when I was near food or fuel.

The 3-D map views helped me get my bearings. Since the app supports touchscreens, I could click directly on icons to quickly reroute for lunch. Too bad the maps were missing my two-year-old house, and the CoPilot struggled with connections indoors and in the city.

Simple maps with large, bright yellow arrows worked nicely on the small screen. Voice guidance from "Michelle" was soothing and helpful, pronouncing street names surprisingly well. Since VZ can also find your location with triangulation, I almost never lost the signal.

BEST FOR

Loyal Sprint customers desperate for directions or who are just getting to know a new area.

Road warriors, not walkers. Pedestrian routes were as-the-crow-flies, not directional.

Firing up for a quick road trip or when your tank—or your car's—is about to hit empty.

RATING

