

Is this the easiest to use Garmin yet? And OS Maps!



The Oregon is Garmin's latest generation of handheld mapping GPS receivers, the touchscreen graphics driven menu system makes them easy to use and consumer friendly. The Oregon takes advantage of the internal memory and 3D view to add mapping options like a worldwide basemap or 100K Topo Europe for 29 countries yet still leaves you the option of adding additional mapping like the soon to be available Ordnance Survey map using the micro SD card slot.

The Oregon 400T is a great package including as it does pre-loaded 100K Topo Europe, 3D map view, barometric altimeter, electronic compass, image viewer, wireless unit to unit transfer of data, pre-configured profiles for recreation, driving, Geocaching, boating and fitness, finally your mapping options can be expanded with additional maps, All this comes at a price of course with a RRP of £399.

Oregon 400T features include

- Electronic compass
- Barometric altimeter
- Geocaching mode
- Outdoor GPS games
- Hunting/Fishing calendar
- Sun and Moon information
- Tide tables
- Area calculation
- Custom POIs
- Wireless unit-to-unit transfer (shares data wirelessly with other similar units)
- Picture viewer
- Touchscreen



A less expensive option is the Oregon 200 (RRP £280) which lacks the electronic compass, altimeter, wireless unit to unit transfer, and has 24mb of internal memory and therefore a standard basemap (you can add additional maps using the SD card slot) is sensibly priced to take advantage of future mapping options. The Oregon 300 adds electronic compass, altimeter, worldwide basemap, and 3D view to the 200 at a RRP £330.

First impressions are always important; the Oregon grabs your attention straight away. The touchscreen operation makes you want to play immediately; the unit itself looks cool and fits nicely into the palm of your hand, feels substantial, and yet makes maximum use of the touchscreen option to deliver the largest possible screen size. The unit has a hard case, is waterproof and floats yet always feels nicely balanced in your hand (weight 6.8oz with batteries). It uses 2 AA batteries; Garmin recommend the use of NiHM or Lithium batteries.



We'll take a look at the features and then add our take on the product.

Moving round the Menu's

The main attraction of the touchscreen operation is the ease of use and intuitive one finger touch menu, no stylus is required making moving round the menus ideal for on the hill use. However using the unit with thick winter gloves on may be an issue, we recommend the use of a pair of thin thermal gloves in very cold temperatures.

Mapping

the 400T comes with 100K European topographic maps preloaded. Simply touching **Map** in the main menu takes you to the Map Page your position is shown in the centre of the map and scrolls as you move. You can Zoom in or out with the plus and minus symbols at the top right of the screen. To pan across the map, simply touch the screen and drag the map in any direction, a terrific feature that is intuitive and easy to use.

GPS Features

The Oregon range offers all the usual GPS features you would expect giving access to 1000 waypoints, 50 Routes, and 20 saved Tracks, uses fast USB cable for the transfer of data (in the box) and will even transfer data wirelessly between two compatible units.

For more information about a point of interest on the map, just touch it and an info-box pops up with precise location and distance-to data. Touch **Go** on the screen to navigate to selected destinations. It's easy to save and edit waypoints using the touchscreen, as well.



3D View

The Colorado 300, Oregon 300 & 400 all deliver a 3D view capability. I've used Topo GB mapping now for several years, and like many users would be quite lost without a usable map on screen. Until the advent of Garmin's Topo GB a GPS was good for confirming your position and route planning ect, but the map page delivered little information, Topo was the first step in changing the way GPS users think about GPS and maps, they now expect a useable map on screen and the ability to orientate yourself in the map. 3D adds a new dimension to maps on screen as seen in this example, very useful in giving an overview of the area, and for judging the size of hills and mountains you may need to traverse. On-screen arrows let you scan in any direction in 3D view.



Geocaching

Geocachers will love the Oregon; it will allow download Geocache coordinates and descriptions directly from Geocaching.com, and they will automatically appear in the unit's Geocache menu. Select "Geocaches" and tap on the name of the cache for a map overview. You will also be able to view its terrain rating, cache size description, whether it includes trackable items, and a full description. No need to take along a printout, means true paperless geocaching.

Customized Profiles

From the main menu select Setup then Profiles to choose to set your unit to one of the following preset modes: recreational, geocaching, automotive, marine, or fitness. Garmin is giving you the option of choosing from five specialized GPS functions in one unit. I guess at my time of life I'm beyond fitness training, but do admit to using the auto routing capability of my GPS from time to time.

Add OS Mapping to your new Oregon

Top on the wish list of outdoor enthusiasts has been to combine the features of a handheld GPS with full OS mapping; the Oregon range (and the Colorado 300) is the first GPS range to offer not only OS maps at both 50K and 25K but adds points of interest like tourist information sites, hotels, campsites, & train stations and the ability to navigate to them both on and off road with the OS mapping as a backdrop.

Each pre-programmed card will include an OS mapping title of your choice and whole of Britain 1:250K Ordnance Survey mapping to allow you to plan a journey and navigate to your destination on road with turn by turn routing.

Although we've not played with the new mapping yet Garmin promise us that you will be able to in theory plan a walk on say Blencathra on your PC based software like Memory-Map or Quo transfer that directly to your new Oregon using the provided USB cable. Then plan your route from home in Manchester say; navigate to the Lakes with turn by turn instructions and then on arrival at Blencathra navigate off road using the waypoints or route with 1:25K OS Explorer mapping on screen.

Like most users we are disappointed that we are going to have pay twice for our OS mapping once on our PC and then again to get full OS maps in our GPS. However for most users having a full OS map available on the hill without the limitations of use that a PDA offers is going to be a very exiting proposition

The latest information we have re OS mapping is that it will be made available in stages with National Parks & National Trails 1:25K (RRP £129.99) and Great Britain's National Parks 1:50K (no price yet) being released pre Christmas, with more 1:50K mapping available in time for the Outdoors Show in March.

GPST Summary

If your budget allows then we think that Garmin have done it again and stolen a huge march on any competitors in the field, the Oregon range is a winner. It will give the current range of PDA type products a hard time.

Easy to use with the touchscreen graphics menus, the added mapping options can add an international dimension, if this could be combined with OS mapping then it would deliver the outdoor enthusiasts wish list in full; a handheld GPS device with full GPS features and mapping capability.

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Oregon 200 with OS 1:25K Explorer map of Lakes