

Time is money to most people, and some people have more time than money. Nothing wrong with that.

Blue Heron Investigations has compiled a list of important questions to ask yourself and a GPS reseller as you research various tracking devices. Unfortunately, given the sheer number of different GPS units available on the market today, space won't allow for us to provide you with all the answers.

We hope that you'll find the following list of questions helpful, and that it might prevent you from making an expensive mistake.

First things first

Do I want a real-time unit or an historical unit?

What are the pros and cons of real-time GPS units versus historical GPS units for my particular situation?

What is the reputation of the device that I'm looking at – does it have a history of excellence, or of poor / spotty performance?

What is the initial cost of the device I'm thinking of purchasing? Can I find it elsewhere for less? How does it compare in price with other units of similar type?

What will be included with my purchase – mounting hardware, power supplies, enclosures, etc.? Or are these "options" that will cost me extra?

Do I want / need a device with a built-in antennae so that it's compact and easy to install, or a GPS that has an external antennae that can be mounted several feet from where the device is hidden?

What are the pros and cons of internal versus external antennas, and which would best suit my needs?

Size

How big is the unit that I'm interested in? Does it's size either help or hinder concealment / placement?

What's more important to me in a GPS unit – the size of the unit, or the length of tracking on battery power?

Mounting & Enclosures

Where is the best place on the vehicle to mount the device so that it has a “clear view” of the sky?

What does “clear view” of the sky mean, and just how necessary is it?

If the unit is small (and small is good for me), will I be forced to put it into a larger enclosure in order to protect it from the elements? Would this then make it larger than some of the larger units that are already waterproof?

If I want to mount the unit under the vehicle, does it have it’s own magnet to secure it to the underside of the vehicle, or will I need to put it in an enclosure with a magnet?

If the unit has it’s own magnet to secure it under the vehicle, is it strong enough to be considered reliable, or will I risk losing it?

If I decide that I need an enclosure, does the manufacturer sell the enclosure, or will I need to either make my own or buy it elsewhere? If elsewhere, then who sells an enclosure for the particular unit(s) that I’m interested in?

Power Requirements

Is the unit powered by the vehicle’s electrical system or by batteries?

If the unit is powered by batteries, is it a rechargeable internal battery, or does it take alkaline or lithium batteries?

Is the battery power method (regardless of internal rechargeable v replaceable alkaline) self-contained within the unit, or is it an “add-on” which will increase the overall size of the unit?

If the unit runs off of an internal rechargeable battery, what is the charge time?

What are the pros and cons of the various battery power methods, and which is best suited to my particular needs?

If the manufacturer or reseller quotes “run-time” in hours using battery power, is that “run-time” amount based on regular alkaline batteries or lithium batteries? Is there a big difference between the two? Is this even important to me?

If powered by the electrical system, how and where will I tap into that electrical power?

Do I have the skills necessary to tap into the vehicle’s electrical power?

If I tap into the car's electrical system for continuous operation, will I be risking that the driver experiences a dead battery?

If I tap into the car's electrical system, will the device "hibernate" when the car's off to avoid draining the car battery?

If powered by batteries, how long will the unit run without the need to change batteries?

Will the unit I'm interested in "go to sleep", when the car is stationary, or is it in a constant on "ready state"?

What are the pros and cons of "sleep mode" v "ready state" devices? Which best fits my particular situation?

If I'm using batteries, and the batteries go dead, will I lose all of the information stored internally?

If I'm buying a "real-time" unit, will it report to me the status of the batteries?

If I'm wiring to the vehicle electrical power, does my device come with that wiring, or is it extra?

If the device that I'm buying is powered by something other than 12VDC, is wiring to the vehicle even an option?

Obtaining Tracking Results

How will I obtain tracking results? By telephone? By Internet / website? By text messaging? By downloading data to my computer at a later date?

Do I feel comfortable enough with my computer to "download" information from an external hardware device?

Do I feel comfortable enough with my computer to correct computer glitches that might occur – i.e. "hardware not detected", malfunctioning USB ports, etc.?

Do I feel comfortable enough with computers to go online to find a "device driver", if necessary, and then to download that driver from an online source?

Reviewing the results

How will I actually see the results – i.e. street views, satellite views, data report?

What are the pros and cons of each of the above methods?

Will I need to download additional software from the Internet (mapping software, etc.), or is it included with the device?

If the unit comes with software (either mapping software or software required to download the unit), is it compatible with my computer's operating system?

Fees

What are the monthly fees, if any, associated with the unit?

Can I stop paying the fees at any time without consequences, or is it more like a cellular telephone contract where I'm obligated to continue to pay for a prolonged period of time?

What's covered in the monthly fees? Will I be charged based on the number of anticipated "pings" (calls to the device to inquire about its location), or a one-time-all-inclusive monthly fee that covers everything?

If I have the choice of various monthly plans that vary according to the number of "pings", then which plan should I choose – how many times do I anticipate calling the unit?

Privacy & Detection

If I order the unit through an online vendor (spy shop, etc.), where will I have the unit shipped? Can I ship it to my residence without fear of my spouse or employee getting the mail?

If I order the unit online, how can I pay for the device so it won't show up on my credit card?

If I have to install software onto my computer to download the data, do I need to worry about my spouse seeing the downloaded program in the "programs" menu of the computer?

Do I have to register the device using my real name? Will the "registrant" information be stored within the device somehow?

Do I have to provide my real name when setting up the monthly service?

Can the device be located by someone (TSCM provider) with electronic detection gear doing a "bug sweep" of the car?

Will the device make any noise, or do anything else (radio interference, etc.) that might call attention to it?

Does the device have any blinking lights to tell me that it's powered up and / or getting a satellite signal? If so – how will I deal with those blinking lights to minimize the risk of detection?

If the device is found, can it be traced to me in any way whatsoever?

Dealer Issues

Where can I obtain the device I'm interested in? Locally? By Internet?

What is the return / exchange policy of the dealer?

Can I trust the dealer, if dealing with a seller a thousand miles away?

Is the dealer an authorized reseller of the device, or a PI that will simply drop ship?

How soon, after I place the order, can I get the device?

Am I responsible for return shipping charges if the device proves defective?

What is the reputation of the dealer?

Legalities

What are the legal issues involving the tracking of motor vehicles?

Other

Wouldn't it just be a lot easier to trust a professional like Blue Heron Investigations, who's tested and experimented with a number of these various GPS devices, to do the thinking for me and get me set up with a device today – even if it might cost me a little more?

Yes – take me to your sales and rental page at <http://www.blueheronpi.com/GPS.html>