

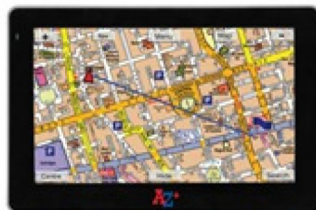
The Lost of London

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When you successfully complete The Knowledge you might expect that your day would entail the picking up of passengers and taking them to their destination with a little lively banter thrown in for good measure. What you're not prepared for is the second service we seem obliged to provide - that of a mobile tourist information office.

Now I don't mind directing the odd tourist to the theatre 10 minutes before the curtain is raised, or someone who is late for a job interview, but what I do object to is when a "professional" - courier, private hire or van driver - asks directions. They either don't possess a SatNav or have wasted their money on the wrong model.



A little over 2 years ago I wrote a [post](#) about the Navigation Master and recently I've upgraded to their [latest model](#), the A-Z+ Cabbie's Mate.

The first thing you notice is the size - a 5" screen larger than its predecessor and almost one-and-a-half times larger than a TomTom.

Only half an inch thick, with its rounded edges it's looks are more akin to an i-phone. So portable is the little gizmo the makers have thoughtfully produced a carrying wallet that can be slipped into a jacket pocket.

It has the usual accessories: window mounting bracket, 2 chargers, USB cable and for my fat fingered colleagues a rather clever stylus secreted within the housing.

As with the previous model there are two navigational systems. The one most drivers use, a complete A-Z of Greater London and a conventional Countrywide version.

Three databases are incorporated, a complete street directory and postcodes, not much different from White Van Man's SatNav.

But it's the database of over 450,000 points (23,000 in London) that make it worth the money. Clubs, hotels, museums, you name it Cabbie's Mate most probably has it logged. If not regular updates are available, in fact your first update is included in the purchase price.

Select a destination and Cabbie's Mate draws a straight line between your current position and the chosen destination. No trouble for London's cabbies then to drive to there armed with that information. However, if White Van Man cannot follow the straight line (known by cabbies as being 'on the cotton' from when on the Knowledge a piece of cotton would be put between two points to indicate the shortest route) they can switch instantly between the A-Z and the conventional mapping or back again. A robotic voice instructs them in which direction to take and the names of the individual roads with a clarity that even a minicab driver could understand.

Another nice touch, but just don't tell the wife if you are having some extra curricular activity. Cabbie's Mate draws a trace recording your movements, if you enter into a large non-descript housing estate, turn on the trace and retrace your steps.

The biggest fault with my old Cabbie's Mate was the conventional SatNav. Using Its new Navigation Master software this latest model has all the bells and whistles of my TomTom: speed cameras, it warns of exceeding the speed limit, lane assist, distance to next turn or destination, in fact everything you would expect from a SatNav.

And to wile away your time waiting on the rank you have a music player, video player, photo browser, there is even an e-book reader, alright its not a Kindle but try using a book reader to find your way round London.

It has hands free mobile answering with the Bluetooth function, it never fails to dismay me when I see a cabbie holding his phone while driving.

Three games are here, my favourite - Russian Block is their version of the timeless classic Tetris.

Pointless functions include a calculator and a unit converter (do I really need to work out how many gallons I've just put in my tank?). And it claims to have a web-browser, but with the limited time I spent trying to surf it failed to work.

But my real criticism is the name, it - well - just discourages non-cabbies to buy it, so I'm still going to have to answer those dam fool questions.