

Garmin GPSMAP 62 review

First impressions:

When I first opened the box and removed the GPSMAP 62 from the box I noticed right away that Garmin had gotten rid of the auxiliary connector mount and that the unit seemed sleeker than my GPSMAP 60CS. I also like the fact that they moved the power button from the top of the unit to the side. The top power button wasn't the easiest to use while wearing winter gloves.

GPS accuracy

To get an idea of the accuracy difference between the older Garmin GPSMAP 60CS receiver and the high-sensitivity receiver of the GPSMAP 62 series I ran a couple of tests. As a general test I turned both units on in an open area where there were no overhead obstructions. Both units were able to acquire 3-4 satellite locks within 60-90 seconds of powering up. To really test the units I took them to Downtown Calgary and powered them while I had tall buildings on three sides of me and a plus 15 bridge on the fourth side. The GPSMAP 62 was able to get a lock in 30-40 seconds. After 5 minutes the GPSMAP 60CS reported that it couldn't see enough satellites.

I wasn't able to test the GPSMAP 62 in a valley but with the results of the test in downtown Calgary I feel that it would be superior to the older receivers in wilderness environments where there is an overhead obstruction.

Menus

While the menus have changed on the GPSMAP62 they are still user friendly and intuitive to use. I found that I could quickly find what I was looking for without resorting to the user's manual.

Custom maps

When I read about the new option of the GPSMAP62 the custom maps option is what caught my eye. The custom maps option finally gave me a reason to upgrade from my GPSMAP60CS. As a Search and Rescue search manager I can see where the custom maps would be a great benefit. The ability to georeference satellite images then load them onto the GPS would be a huge benefit to teams in the field. Teams would be able to see how far through a grove of trees they are or if there are any clearings nearby that could be used to land a helicopter.

I ran a test where I georeferenced a satellite image I obtained from Google maps. After loading the image into the GPS I drove around to see how well the image matched the local roads. I was very happy with the result. While things didn't line up perfectly all the time a little bit of error is expected when you combine the GPS accuracy and some accuracy error introduced during the georeferencing process.

I'm looking forward to purchasing a GPSMAP62 GPS in the near future. I'll probably go with the base model since I don't need the magnetic compass and the altimeter the 62s has. With 1.7G of onboard memory I'll have lots of room for map storage (the GPSMAP60CS only has 56Mb of storage). The only downside of going to the GPSMAP62 GPS is that I'll have to purchase a couple of new mounts and power cables. I would highly recommend that any Search and Rescue group looking at purchasing GPS units consider the Garmin GPSMAP62.

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