

In this Issue. . . .

- ❖ Your Smart Device (Phone and/or Tablet) and Motorcycling (Craig O. Olsen)
- ❖ GAIA GPS and Off-road Motorcycling (Jason Abbott)
- ❖ Making the Most of the Time I had - My 2015 Challenge Adventure (Jim Jorgensen, Gold Level Winner)

Your Smart Phone or Tablet and Motorcycling

by Craig O. Olsen

Traditionally, I have used a Garmin GPS (Zumo 550) for my motorcycle navigation. It has worked well for me the past 8 years. Most motorcyclists I know who use a GPS also use a dedicated Garmin or TomTom device. During a recent IAMC GPS Clinic (March 26, 2016) put on by Ron Schinnerer, I had an "aha moment" when David O'Neal discussed the use of smart devices (phones and tablets) as a dedicated GPS device, and he reviewed some of the software apps available for this.



iPad Mini in fabricated holder behind David's KTM 950 windscreen.

article, I will give an overview of this topic and refer specifically to a few of what I consider the most promising and helpful apps. Please see the selected references at the end of this article for a more complete listing and review of the apps available.

First of all it is fair to ask why use your smart phone or tablet as a GPS instead of a dedicated commercial GPS unit and what are the pros and cons? Garmin and TomTom make the only motorcycle specific GPSs (Garmin Zumo series and TomTom Rider), and they are pricey - anywhere from \$500.00 to \$900.00 each. [1-2] Even the handheld devices commonly used by motorcyclists (Garmin GPSMAP 64 and Montana series) run between \$250.00 and \$600.00 each. [3] The maps and docking devices are sold separate. As dedicated GPSs, these units work well allowing you to create routes and waypoints on the device and in BaseCamp (the laptop/desktop software program for Garmin) and to transfer routes, waypoints and tracks to and from the device. The upper end Garmin Zumos and TomTom Rider allow turn-by-turn audio navigation prompts, weather and traffic alerts, wireless interface with your smart phone and interface with your music if you have a Bluetooth helmet intercom. The handheld devices are much more limited.

If you are going to use a smartphone or tablet as your motorcycle GPS, it is better to have a dedicated unit rather than using your current smartphone. An older model smartphone or tablet that will function fine as a dedicated GPS costs from \$50.00 to \$100.00 from eBay or Amazon. A tablet with cellular function has a built-in GPS so you will not need to connect an external Bluetooth GPS device to it. An separate external Bluetooth GPS device sells for \$60.00 to \$100.00. When used as a dedicated GPS, you do not need to have cellular service on the smartphone or tablet; you only need access to its internal GPS that works without WiFi, cellular connection or accruing any charges for its use.

I then spent the next 11 days riding with David and two other club members on an approximate 3,400 mile ride to and from doing the Arizona BDR and parts of the Utah BDR. David's GPS system, consisting of an iPad Mini with an external Bluetooth/GPS device to bring GPS to the iPad Mini and a self fabricated tablet holder wired directly to his bike battery, worked very well the entire trip.

In the last month I have found a treasure-trove of information on smart phone and tablet apps for motorcyclists. While it is impractical to review all these apps in this

The screen on a smartphone is as large or larger than those of the upper end Garmin and TomTom GPSs. A smart tablet screen is several times larger. The smartphone and tablet screens are also brighter and easier to read than the Garmin and TomTom GPS screens, and they all outperform the handheld Garmin GPS devices with the exception of the Montana that has similar screen size and brightness to an older model iPhone.

The smartphone or tablet will need to be secured to the motorcycle handlebar or cockpit behind the windscreen



Powered protective mount for iPhone.



Ram secure smart tablet mount.

(preferably in a rugged protective and waterproof case) and connected to a USB power source to be powered all the time. The internal battery life for smartphones and tablets is insufficient without a constant power source. [4-6]

One drawback of the smart phones and tablets is that gloves do not work on a touchscreen. There are some specialized motorcycle gloves for this purpose, but an alternative for any existing glove is to use Anyglove or Nanotips treatment that works well on leather and fabric surfaces. [7-8]



Galileo Offline Maps - Galileo Offline Maps is a map browsing app you can use offline. It makes life easier, when traveling without any Internet connection, because you can use previously saved offline maps on your mobile iOS device. Detailed and easy-to-use offline vector maps based on OpenStreetMap data are available to download within the app. [9-10] Galileo doesn't offer any routing or turn by turn directions. It does offer you the ability to record your GPS tracks for another \$1.99 InApp purchase. This could come in handy if you are geotagging and need the track to sync with your geotagging software. Basically, this is a handy app that lets you cache maps and use them offline.



OsmAnd Offline Mobile Maps & Navigation - OsmAnd works totally offline (no roaming charges when you are abroad) but also has a (fast) online option. It gives turn-by-turn voice guidance and announces traffic warnings like stop signs, pedestrian crosswalks, or when you are exceeding the speed limit. It gives optional lane guidance, street name display, and estimated time of arrival, and it supports intermediate points on your itinerary. It also supports automatic re-routing whenever you deviate from the route. You can search for places by address, by type (e.g.: restaurant, hotel, gas station, museum), or by geographical coordinates. You can display your position and orientation on the map, and you can optionally align the map according to compass or your direction of motion. You can save your most important places as Favorites and display POIs (points of interest) around you. You can also display satellite view (from Bing) and different overlays like touring/navigation GPX tracks and additional maps with customizable transparency. The offline maps include foot, hiking, and bike paths, great for outdoor

activities, and there is map display and navigation mode for bicycle and pedestrian. You can do trip recording to local GPX file or online service and display speed and altitude data with the purchased version (\$6.00). You can also display contour lines and hill-shading (via an additional plugin). OsmAnd uses OpenStreetMap and Wikipedia data, and there are unlimited free map downloads, directly from the app. Maps are updated at least once a month.



MotoMap - This navigation app is being designed specifically by motorcyclists for those who ride. It is currently in beta testing and will have turn-by-turn and voice navigation for routes with many via points. You can create routes from within the app and easily find scenic routes created by fellow riders, navigate them, and review and rate them. MotoMaps uses offline maps and can display in landscape mode, heading up mode and 3D map mode. It also supports bicycle and pedestrian routes. You can import GPX tracks as well as routes and waypoints and fully edit them on the fly. It has trip recording features that will display graphs, maps and pictures. It is currently available for \$2.00.



Gaia GPS: - Gaia GPS is widely considered the best outdoor mapping app by incorporating the best government topo maps for the US and Canada (USGS, USFS, NRCAN). In addition there are worldwide topo, road and aerial maps. There are unlimited downloads for offline use. You can use Gaia to sync your tracks, photos, maps and waypoints to all of your devices and share links to tracks and photos via email, Facebook, Twitter, SMS and more. You can import and export GPX/KLM files in a variety of ways (iTunes, Safari, DropBox and email). GaiaPro (\$3.99/month subscription) allows multilayered maps that you can mix and set opacity for many layers at once, as well as aerial and street maps (OpenStreetMap). Weather forecasts from Wunderground is also available. See Jason Abbott's article in this issue about this app.

These and several other apps for motorcyclists are reviewed in the selected references below. [11-17] Two of these that I recommend considering are Wilderness First Aid (\$0.99) and Emergency First Aid & Treatment (\$1.99). Another good use for your smart phone or tablet is to download a PDF file of your bike specific service manual to have available in the event you need it on a road trip or backcountry adventure.

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GAIA GPS and Off-road Motorcycling

by Jason Abbott

"Hold up a sec'," I yell through my helmet for the third time. My GPS unit keeps locking up. I have to stop, unscrew the back and pull the batteries to get it working again.

That was a couple years ago, the last time I used a purpose-built GPS unit. I'm sure you've noticed the same thing I did when I went to replace it: the speed, display quality and cost of a standard mobile device (Android or iOS) is now vastly better than the ruggedized GPS units we used to carry. Where before I had a grainy two inch screen that was cumbersome to navigate, I now see my trail options on a sharp and fluid seven inch screen.



So sold was I on the obvious superiority of the new technology that I've recently joined the company that creates the software I'd been using, Gaia GPS. Some of you probably saw my post about it in our Facebook group. With that background, I hope I can offer tips to evaluate your existing phone or tablet as your adventure GPS device.

WILL IT WORK WITHOUT A CELL SIGNAL?

Yes. Gaia and other navigation apps use the GPS chip inside most every mobile device. You can put your phone into airplane mode if you wish to save battery. The Google tablet I use has no cellular connectivity but still tracks GPS just fine in Idaho's backcountry.

WHAT ABOUT RAIN AND WRECKS?

I have had a few good tumbles on my KTM since mounting the tablet. Only once did it go flying (I think a branch caught the mount) and even then it was fine. And rain is easily dealt with. These modern gadgets are already sealed pretty well. They can take some incidental splashes. But if I see rain coming I slip it into an almost purpose-fit Ziploc and pop it back into the holder. If you're so inclined, you could instead get one of the many rugged cases available for mobile devices.

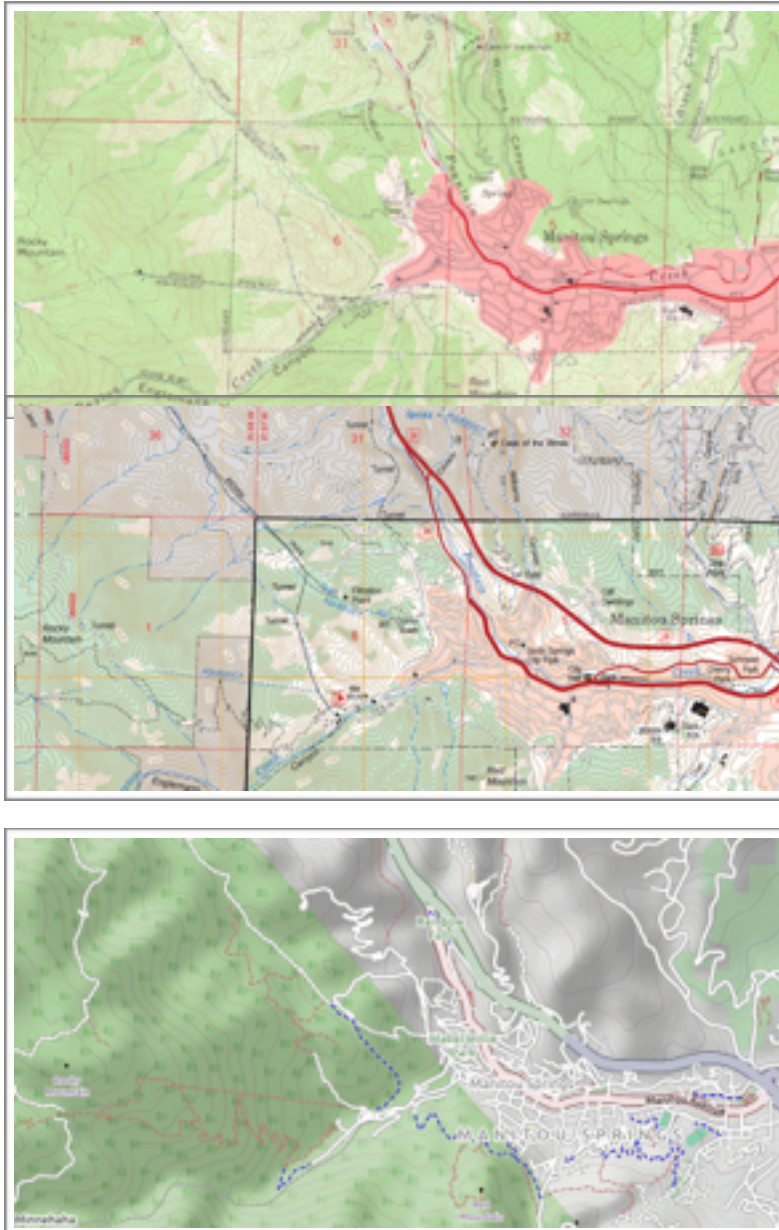


WHY NOT JUST USE GOOGLE MAPS OR SIMILAR ON MY PHONE?

Are you in the right club? Google's maps don't have dirt trails. Google Earth can be handy for route research but on the ride, you're better served with maps that show trails, old roads and elevation lines, with aerial views as an option.

Gaia has many maps to choose from. You can review them while your device is online then touch a button to download any you want for offline use on your ride. I was on the ridge above Fiddler Flat once and realized I didn't have a map I wanted. I was able to get just enough signal to download the map. It was pretty neat to do that. Here are a few map examples:





If you choose Gaia Pro, enhancements, in the same view. I like to overlay a detailed topographic map on hill shading so I can understand the terrain at a glance but look closer to see exactly how steep a trail is.

you can, among other combine maps in layers

HOW LONG DOES A CHARGE LAST?

I can go all day on the tablet battery but I don't need to since wiring a plug to the motorcycle battery. I bet most of you have already done the same for your phones. If you're also using your device for music or cell reception, you'd most likely want to wire a plug or carry an extra battery. If you're just out for an afternoon, your battery should be plenty, as usual.

MORE THAN A TRADITIONAL GPS UNIT

Using a small computer as your GPS unit brings many advantages. Photos you take within Gaia and other map apps are automatically geocoded, which is to say, placed on your map. And those photos, along with tracks and

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May 2016

"Discover Adventure Together"

Issue #2



waypoints you record, are optionally uploaded to the Gaia website as a backup or means of sharing with others — your choice.

Find me in the forums, a future article or out on the trails for more about creating and sharing routes. (We're working on some cool team features right now.) Thanks to the Gaia Communications team, particularly Aileen Gardner & Ashli Baldwin, for supplying application images and text used in this article.

Making the Most of the Time I Had - My 2015 Challenge Adventure



by *Jim Jorgensen*

Last year's challenge ended up being a bit of a whirlwind for me. My riding season began much differently than it ended. My Goal was to hit Gold level which I had not achieved yet. I had planned all year to ride the Idaho Back Country Discovery Route and pick up a number of challenge sites along the way. I spent the winter and spring meticulously planning my route, mapping out the IBDR with where I would stop each day, what detours I would have to make to pick up challenge sites and what challenge sites I would catch on the way to the beginning of the route and on my route home. With the route I had planned and the time off work I had set aside, I was looking forward to an amazing adventure full of places that I had never been and several challenge site check-ins.

Unfortunately, due to a very busy summer, I was not able to take the time off work until the end of August. I watched disappointingly as forest fire after forest fire began in northern Idaho. I watched the fires closely to see if it was possible to still ride my desired route, but after watching the Magruder Corridor and the Lolo Motorway being shut down and nearly the entire northern half of the IBDR closed, I came to the realization that the Idaho Back Country Discovery Route was not going to happen for me in 2015.

Now what? It is now Nearly September and I have only 5 challenge sites under my belt. The only challenge sites that I had picked up at this point were the easy ones that I could get to from my house on a Saturday afternoon. My goal of Gold seemed nearly out of reach.

I sat in my office staring at an Idaho map that I have on the wall. It is one of the maps I use for planning, and it was covered with little sticky notes attached to the challenge sites I was planning to visit on my trip. I realized that if I was going to achieve my goal of gold, I had to completely rethink how I was going to accomplish it. I began putting sticky notes up on all of the challenge site locations on the map. Labor Day was in a week. I had a three day weekend that I needed to make the most of.

With the fires going on up north I turned my attention east. Slowly but surely a route started to come together. I had three days to hit as many challenge sites as possible, and I was going to do just that. I always set my goals high and make adjustments along the way. The route I put together consisted of 25 sites. Looking at the map it seemed doable, but visiting 25 Idaho counties in three days on my Suzuki DR650 seemed a little aggressive; why not give it a try?

I continued planning for the next few days and began putting my gear and equipment together. This year would be a little different than the previous year. In 2014 I rode a Suzuki DR350, which I soon learned was not the best on the highway. It was a great bike. It did everything I asked of it and was perfect for the 2014 challenge that involved some tough routes to lakes and fire look-outs. This year I would be riding my new-to-me Suzuki DR650. Looking at the route I planned, I knew I would be grateful for the bigger bike visiting 25 counties in three days — I was going to be tearing up a whole lot of black-top.

IDAHO ADVENTURE MOTORCYCLE CLUB NEWSLETTER

May 2016

"Discover Adventure Together"

Issue #2

Other equipment this year that I did not have the previous year was a Garmin 62s GPS, a RAM Mount for my phone, panniers, better riding gear and a helmet with Bluetooth communication. Thanks to Dan Driscoll, who was kind enough to coach me on route planning, I was able to plan my route in Garmin Basecamp and download it to my GPS. This soon proved to be a big time saver on the trip because I did not have to stop and pull out a map at every intersection. As an experiment and just to keep things interesting, I experimented with a GPS app for my smartphone called Locus Pro. I downloaded my route into the phone app so that along the way I could do a side-by-side comparison of the app vs. the Garmin 62s GPS.

Day 1: My trip started off early Saturday morning. It was rainy and cold. I pulled into my first challenge site, Pickle Butte in Canyon County, wet and freezing. By the time I got to my second site, the Owyhee County Courthouse in Murphy, I was near calling it off and trying again another day; but this was a 3 day weekend, and those don't come around very often for me. The day continued to be a bit miserable. I left Fairfield, and the wind began to blow. My ride to Hailey Idaho was spent leaning my bike at an angle into the wind, but I diligently worked my way from site to site, passing places like Craters of the Moon and Arco, Idaho, eventually ending up in Idaho Falls for the night visiting a total of 9 sites for the day. I had planned on camping, but after such a cold, miserable day, I decided a hotel room sounded much better. Thank goodness for Priceline!



Pickle Butte in the rain.



View near Castle Rocks, Idaho.



Craters of the Moon near Arco, Idaho.

Day 2: My plan was to make it to a couple of challenge sites on my way to Dubois and arrive in Dubois about 9:00 so that I could attend church. While attending church there, I was asked about where I was going and what I was doing. I was told by locals that I absolutely had to ride the "Red Road" to St. Anthony. That had not been the direction I was headed; but I was there, and I did not want to miss an opportunity. The Red Road ended up being a wonderful ride through beautiful country. I took me right past the St. Anthony Sand Dunes, and I ended up in St. Anthony at the Courthouse, one of the challenge sites.

The rest of day 2 took me to several other amazing challenge sites and through some beautiful country including the Teton Dam Disaster site, Teton County with a wonderful view of the Tetons, Bear Lake, Palisade Reservoir, and many others. I ended up staying that night at my Sisters house in Lewiston Utah, completing the day with 8 sites visited. It was an amazing day.

On day 2 I put my Garmin 62s GPS in my panniers and never looked at it again the rest of the trip. I had discovered that the phone app was easier to read, easier to navigate with and did everything the Garmin did.



St. Anthony Sand Dunes.



Teton Dam.



View of the Tetons.

IDAHO ADVENTURE MOTORCYCLE CLUB NEWSLETTER

May 2016

"Discover Adventure Together"

Issue #2



The Dam Store near Palisade Reservoir dam.



Utah border near Lewiston, Utah.

Day 3: My third day of the trip started early and took me to the town of Mallad, Idaho. My wife's family has much history in this town. Back in the day her grandfather, Keith Budge, had a honey factory there and was very prominent in the community. I took a few hours there to visit the old honey factory site and the graves of her grandparents, and I was able to take several pictures that my wife and her family as well as our children enjoyed.

From Mallad I made my way to American Falls. I did not want to take freeway so I rode back roads, and this drive ended up being one of my favorites of the trip. I headed west out of Mallad on Hwy 38 and turned north on Arbon Valley Road. This was a great drive through some Idaho country that I had never before visited. From American Falls I zigzagged my way through several other counties picking up challenge sites along the way. To avoid the freeway working my way home, I road old Hwy 30 to King Hill, connected with Hwy 71 through Bruneau, and made my way back to good old Middleton Idaho. The day ended late, but I got to 9 more sites!

Mallad, Idaho.





Site of the old Budge honey factory.

Near Arbon, Idaho.



Petrified watermelons near King Hill, Idaho.

A few things I learned along the way:

1. Whether it is a Garmin or a smartphone App, a GPS is an incredible tool that saved me a ton of time on this trip. With the exception of it trying to send me down a road that was more of a two track through a farmer's field, it took me everywhere I needed to go. In it's defense though, it was a road, just not one I thought I should take.
2. I need a better windscreen if I am ever going to do this much road again. By the time I got home the buffeting from the wind had me completely exhausted.
3. The Suzuki DR650 is a very capable bike. I am very happy with my purchase. So far it has done everything I have asked of it.
4. Waterproof gear is awesome.
5. Heated grips are my favorite farkle.

IDAHO ADVENTURE MOTORCYCLE CLUB NEWSLETTER

May 2016

"Discover Adventure Together"

Issue #2

Overall the trip was amazing. I was tired, sore, chilled, windblown and completely filled with happiness and satisfaction. Although it was not the trip I had planned for all year, it ended up being a great trip full of wonderful experiences and memories. I exceeded my goal by visiting 26 sites that weekend going from nothing to the gold award in three days. What an adventure!

I would like to thank those that worked so hard to put the 2015 Challenge together. I am thankful to be part of the Idaho Adventure Motorcycle Club. Challenges like this have got me out to see parts and places in Idaho that I would not have otherwise experienced.