

When they first came out, global positioning systems were more of a novelty than a useful consumer electronics product. Of course, the military could use a global positioning system tracking unit as a way to pinpoint targets, keep track of its vehicles, and navigate the battlefield, but civilian GPS hadn't really been developed that well yet. Your average global positioning system was clumsy, inaccurate, and prone to mistakes. It is amazing how quickly things have changed. Nowadays, whether you are using them for navigation or security, global positioning units have vastly improved.

I tried out my first global positioning system this weekend. I was driving in my cousin's car, and wanted to try out his GPS navigation. He is notorious for getting lost. He can get lost on a route he has traveled a hundred times before. I don't know why - maybe he is absent-minded, or perhaps he is easily distractible, but whatever the reason, he has a really poor sense of direction. Since he got a global positioning system, however, he is almost always on time. Sometimes he will even get there early! This change is really remarkable, and I wanted to see what it was all about.

When I asked him about it, he explained that his car actually had two global positioning systems. One of them was meant as a GPS navigation system, the other one was hidden. The hidden one could be used to track his vehicle practically anywhere if it got stolen. It was a small transceiver on the back of the car, discreetly hidden but extremely powerful. The police could simply plug it in, find out where the car was, and go in to hunt it down.

The one I was more interested in was the global positioning navigation system. I was familiar with MapQuest and other online map programs like that, so the interface was not strange to me. The global positioning system pops up a map on the small screen. You put in a destination on the map, and it calculates a route there. You get directions every stop step away. You do not even have to look at the map, the instructions are given aloud. I was surprised by how easy it was to follow. I tried getting directions to some local sites and, although it didn't send me on my favorite route, it did plot a logical way to get there. All-in-all, it was quite an impressive demonstration, And I was glad to be able to try it out firsthand.