

Bill's Guide to GPS with 2018 Buyers Guide

What is covered in this message:

- Why Garmin?
- GPS Units that Santana supports
- Some common FAQ's
- Deciding what GPS unit will work best for you
- A listing of units with current pricing
- Some final thoughts

Things have come a long way since e-navigation was introduced on Santana tours back in 2009. After finding and hiring the right consultant (who spent long hours working with Garmin's hardware and software engineers) we achieved success during Santana's 2010 Barcelona-to-Lisbon Tour; by 2012 we worked out most of the challenges and increased the positives to over 98%. Today over 1000 Santana participants have relied on our GPS routing while participating in our events on five continents. Now that we've solved over 99% of the challenges—

I GUARANTEE you'll love the experience of GPS routing.

In case you're wondering, Garmin was chosen for the following four reasons:

1. Garmin devices are PC and Mac friendly.
2. Except for the long wait, Garmin's free phone support is excellent.
3. In addition to bike-specific "Edge" units, Garmin offers "outdoor" units with bike-specific options (handlebar mounts plus cadence & heart-rate sensors).
4. Garmin supports our sport (road and off-road)

Santana provides route files and support for the following units:

Dakota 20, Edge (800, 810, 1000, 1030, Touring and Explore 1000), **eTrex** (20 and higher), **Montana** (all models), **Oregon** (all models).

Some of you Garmin savvy folks will note the absence of the Edge 820. Unfortunately, this newest member of the problematic Edge 8xx family lacks a memory card slot---which is a necessity for Santana's tours. If you need an Edge for its racing and training features, the recently-discontinued Edge 1000 was always a better choice than the Edge 8xx. If you find one at closeout pricing, it will cost less than the new 820. Better yet, Garmin's Edge 1000 was replaced by the Edge 1030. If you need a GPS with racing and training features, the new 1030 is a quantum upgrade from all previous Edges, and is receiving rave reviews.

Pricing? Santana's updated Buyers Guide for 2018 follows a page of FAQs.

FAQ's that always arise before a tour:

- 1) Will there be cue sheets/maps? No, all rides will be GPS guided; you will need a GPS unit.
- 2) I really like my Magellan-Wahoo-Polar-TomTom-PucciManeuli bike GPS... Great! While these may be incredible units for workouts and single day club rides, without exception there have always been issues (read failures) whenever someone tries to use these other units on a Santana tour. Yes, the Garmins have idiosyncrasies too but they are the most reliable at getting you from Point "A to B."
- 3) I have a "Map My Ride" – "Ride with GPS" account and the phone app is AWESOME! Can I just load the rides on my iPhone/Android and use that? Well... yes and no; we agree the phone apps, especially "The Ride GPS" app works very well but there are many reasons not to go this way on a trip thousands of miles from home with potentially unreliable cell connectivity, limited battery life and potential damage to your phone. We highly recommend not going this route.
- 4) "Why can't I use my phone it can..." **Please DO NOT ignore the following!** Even if you find a phone app that interprets Santana's routes faithfully, a problem arises when routes need to be revised during a tour. Due to limited internet access, on most tours a smartphone is precluded from getting ride updates in timely fashion. Those that have followed this path against our advice have without exception been disappointed. Additionally, most phones that support GPS aren't waterproof. People who try to navigate their way through an unexpected rainstorm will not only trash their \$500+ device, they'll be lost and without a way to summon help. Lastly, when used as a GPS, a smartphone's battery can be drained in a couple of hours.
- 5) **Can I use my portable automotive GPS? DO NOT bring GPS units designed for cars and motorcycles (including Garmin's "Drives", "Nuvi" and "Zumo" models).** Automotive GPS (and most phone apps) are purposefully engineered to reject any course that can't be safely and legally navigated by a clueless tourist in a rented campervan. For Santana's tours, all automotive GPS units are 100% FAIL!
- 6) **Can I use my Edge 605/705?** These older Edge units are no longer supported due to the limited memory for rides and maps. Additionally, current Edge models that are not specifically listed are not supported.

Which Garmin unit should I get?

- 1) **I like to keep it simple:** Remember back in the day when you planned a road trip and went to AAA, and an agent helped you figure out the best way to get to your destination with map and highlighter pen? Simple, you followed the line provided on the map; you might have strayed once in a while but as long as you got yourself back on the highlighted line you would get to your destination. This is how all of the outdoor oriented GPS units work. They provide you guidance with a highlighted line and you follow it. If you get off the path use the underlying map to get yourself back on track. (units: Montana, Oregon, eTrex models)

- 2) **I need lots of encouragement:** I need to see call outs, text messages and hear beeps, bells and buzzes so I know when to turn and also want to be nagged with beeps, bells and buzzes when I get off route so I don't ride into the Mediterranean – Atlantic – Danube – South-China-Sea. (units: all endorsed Edge models)

All kidding aside the less complicated outdoor units have fewer problems and work great. Some cyclists want a “smarter unit” with race-training features, and the Edge units provide additional feedback. One caveat here, the Garmin Edges are much more temperamental, and setting them up correctly is critical. Otherwise you may have a different adventure than the rest of your traveling companions (who will arrive hours earlier).

ENDORSED outdoor models and approximated prices:

eTrex 20x at \$189 / eTrex touch 25 at \$249. The 20x has a small non-touch screen, but accepts Santana-supplied maps and route files without a problem. The Touch 25 has a slightly larger touch screen. The pricier 30/35 models aren't worth the upcharge.

Oregon 600 closeout at \$??? Still a favorite despite being superseded by the Oregon 700. If you find a new one at a closeout price of less than \$300, grab it.

Oregon 700 at \$399. The current base-model Oregon has always been our #1 choice. First, it's easier to use. Next, it's far more versatile and reliable than any of the Edge models. It has a fast processor, large bright touch screen, and works well on or off the bike.

Montana 610 at \$499. Nearly half-again bigger and heavier than the Oregon, the Montana's screen is 33% larger.

Supported EDGE models and approximated prices:

Edge Touring at \$249. If you'll only use your Garmin for on-road cycling, the Edge Touring has a small touch screen and is not as fussy or complicated as the numbered Edges (which are built for training & racing). A downside of any Edge is a cell-phone like internal battery that can leave you stranded if you forget to recharge it overnight. (Outdoor Garmins use AA batteries). The Touring Plus wasn't worth the upcharge, and has been discontinued.

Edge 800/810/820. AVOID. The 8xx trio is frustrating, glitchy and error prone. The 810 was the best of the bunch, but is no longer available. The 820's missing card slot is a fatal flaw.

Edge Explore 1000 at \$449 This upgraded version of the Edge Touring is aimed at the non-racing cyclist, and gives you the same large and bright screen as the Edge 1000 or Oregon. As easy to setup as the Touring and without the bugs and complication of the Edge 8xx / 1000.

Edge 1000 closeout at \$?? If you want a Garmin suited for training and road-racing, this recently discontinued unit eclipsed the Edge 8xx and has hit the sale rack. Same touch screen as an Oregon, plus lots of complicated and fussy features. A bargain at \$400?

NEW Edge 1030 at \$599. If you want a Garmin suited for training and road-racing, this is the one to find. All the complicated racer-boy features plus an advanced screen that's a bit bigger and nicer than the one on an Oregon.

Options? Edges include a handlebar mount (add \$15 for all other models). Heart-rate and cadence options are available for Oregon, Montana and Edge 1000. Also consider getting a memory card if you plan to load your own maps and routes; an 8GB microSD memory card will cost about \$6-8. On that note do not get a memory card with more capacity than 16GB; your GPS will choke.

If you live near an REI store, they stock the newest units at competitive prices, and offer great support and training. If you want to shop from your keyboard, www.gpscocity.com is a reliable company that combines low prices, knowledgeable phone & web support, and the best GPS website I've found. If the Garmin you want has an "In Stock" indicator, you can trust GPS City to ship it the following weekday morning.

Once you buy a supported GPS, Santana's Set-Up instructions are easy to understand and follow. You'll be up and running within an hour. In the very worst case you can show up at our event with a new-in-the-carton GPS. Any participant with internet and a laptop will be able to walk you through registration and set-up.

Most important, since 2014 all of Santana's tours provide FREE "open source" mapping instead of the expensive Garmin maps that caused needless confusion.

If you have more questions, need clarifications or guidance choosing the right GPS unit send a message to Santana's GPS support expert. Gene "Garmin Gene" Mezereny can be reached at garmingene@santanaadventures.com

-Bill

PS: A map or cue sheet, unlike GPS, can't confirm if you're on or off course. Even if you're off course and hopelessly lost, reporting your GPS's co-ordinates to an emergency responder allows a paramedic or our SOS van to arrive without delay. This can be a lifesaver!

PPS: Couples on singles? Both should have their own GPS. Tandems? Let the captain have the first one.