

## Shop Smart

## Bargain GPS, plasma TVs are highly rated

Consumer Reports

Price wars among GPS makers are raging, so now even budget-conscious buyers can enjoy features that go beyond the usual navigation functions.

The low-priced **TomTom One 140**, \$140, for example, can provide optional traffic information, guide you to the best lane at major intersections and factor in historic traffic patterns for the time of day when it calculates routes. Real-time traffic info, usually a \$60-a-year option, is free on several models from Garmin, Magellan and Nextar – though you'll have to put up with occasional ads on your screen.

Of the roughly 90 units CR tested, **Garmin** and **TomTom** models continue to provide the best overall packages. The top-rated Garmin Nuvi 885T, \$600, is loaded with features such as Bluetooth connectivity for hands-free phone calls, a trip computer, an MP3 player and voice control of many functions, including entering destinations. The lower-priced Garmin Nuvi 765T, \$480, did almost as well and has most of the same features, except voice control.

The **TomTom Go 740 Live**, \$400, lets you check traffic and weather and use Google search to find businesses and points of interest. That service is free for three months, then \$10 a month after that. The **Magellan Roadmate 1440**, \$160, and **Magellan Road-**

**mate 1220**, \$125, are much-improved versions with crisp graphics and easy-to-use interfaces. If all you want is basic, easy-to-use guidance, consider the **Magellan Roadmate 1220** or **Garmin Nuvi 200**, \$120.

If you need more than driving help, check out the **Garmin Nuvi 1260T**, \$300, a new unit CR tested too late to make the Ratings. It offers free traffic info and optional CityXplorer bus, subway and walking routes for major cities (\$10 to \$15 per city). Other lower-priced Garmins navigate just as well on highways, so consider the 1260T only to get those features.

**Plasma TVs ratings**

Plasma TVs play second fiddle to LCD TVs in terms of sales, according to CR, but they're worth a serious look if you want a first-rate flat-panel set with a 42-inch or larger screen.

Despite advances in LCD technology, plasma TVs still do a better job displaying realistic images with depth and dimension. They also stand out for an almost unlimited viewing angle and for their ability to present fast motion with little or no visible blurring.

The three brands on the market – LG Electronics, Panasonic and Samsung – have new sets that raise the bar even higher, with many offering excellent or very good picture quality. Plasma technology has improved in other ways, re-

sulting in some new models that are thinner, lighter and more energy-efficient. As with LCD TVs, prices continue to fall even as plasma sets improve.

In CR's Ratings of 50- and 58-inch plasma TVs, the Samsung PN58B650, \$2,700, ranked number one, with the Panasonic Viera TC-P50G10, \$1,550, next. For 42- and 46-inch plasma TVs, the Panasonic Viera TC-P42S1, \$1,100, was number one, followed by the Panasonic Viera TC-P46S1, \$1,200.

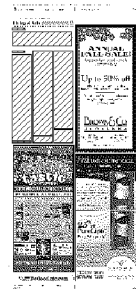
**Points to note**

**Anti-blur technology.** All of the sets in CR's Ratings have "600Hz sub-field drive," a feature designed to prevent blurring by speeding up the rate at which pixels flash on and off, much like 120Hz does on an LCD TV.

**Improved energy efficiency.** One of the knocks on plasma TVs has been their high energy use compared with LCD TVs. The gap is shrinking. CR's latest tests showed a negligible difference overall in energy used by comparably sized LCD and plasma TVs.

**Greater Internet access.** Like LCD TVs, some new plasma sets can stream online video and access Web sites such as YouTube and Flickr.

**Enhanced functionality.** More new models include USB or SD card slots, which let you view digital



photos and videos and listen to MP3 music files on your television.

---

Write to: Consumer Reports,  
200 Madison Ave., New York,  
NY 10016; on the Web at  
[www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org).