

STREET ATLAS

2006

A great travel
companion



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RVTechStop.com

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We have been using GPS and mapping software since 1993 and more than 200,000 miles. Over the years, a wide variety of programs from numerous manufacturers have lived on our computer. Very early in our GPS experience, we decided to use a computer and a mapping program rather than a stand-alone GPS device. In the past, several of the devices developed for passenger cars offered routing capabilities only on interstates or major roads, and offered only regional maps on multiple CDs. Although that could be useful in cars for regional traveling, it is not the

best choice for an RV because we can travel across the whole country in a single season. Further, we already had a computer and it seemed foolish to spend a lot more on a device to do one function that the computer could easily do.

We found the Delorme products to be the most suited to our needs. For all versions, the entire U.S. is on a single CD and it has phenomenal pinpoint street level mapping. Delorme has continually added features to each version, but their latest, *Street Atlas 2006*, is one of the best. While maintaining the good features from previous versions like trip planning and the ability to draw in routable roads, they have updated and expanded exit service information as well as other points of interest. The new tool bar is very easy to use and the address book and “avoid routing tool” are two very useful additions. The updated “streets and roads” has also improved navigation in Canada. Other new features include Mapshare, which allows online posting of maps and routes to share with friends, family, and others; Auto Zoom for upcoming turns; increased user defined settings; GPS log details and preview; and user defined keyboard shortcuts. More good news is that GPS mapping is very affordable. Our first program in 1993 was nearly \$500 and the permanently mounted antenna and receiver was over \$1000.00. *Street Atlas 2006* bundled with the new LT20 Earthmate Receiver is a mere \$99.95.

We still use the permanently mounted antenna with our desktop computer in the coach, but we now have a notebook computer as well. As any RV owner knows, getting to your destination is only the beginning. In the past, we would print maps from the desktop to take with us to navigate local sites. Now we use the notebook and the Earthmate receiver, which works very well in the car. This newest receiver is connected through a USB port so it does not need a separate power supply like the old serial port version. However, if it is used for long duration, a car adaptor power supply

will be required to power the notebook. With the voice commands, one can even use the program without a navigator. It is not as easy, but it is certainly possible.

As with any map, including the traditional paper atlas, it is impossible to have completely accurate representation of the vast highway system in the United States. Every driver knows there is constant construction everywhere. We have heard some say that the only good thing about winter driving is that the orange cones disappear. Even though the Delorme maps are excellent, one must still be alert to changes. We even found an error where an entrance ramp to west bound I-40 in Arkansas was shown as a one-way going the wrong way. We found it because the program refused to route us the way we wanted to go. By zooming in and doing a careful inspection, we found the problem. Once we were on the interstate, we changed the route start to the current GPS position to have an accurate calculation of time and distance to arrive at our next stop. Consumers also need to be aware that the program is compatible only with a Windows XP operating system.

We highly recommend *Street Atlas 2006* and we have concluded that there are advantages to having a notebook computer. We appreciate having the second computer for backup and we have found that having the mapping program available in the tow car is of great benefit. Many newer cars have built-in mapping. However, we choose our tow vehicles by its towing characteristics and load carrying capability. Many vehicles that fit this description do not have an OEM installed navigation system. Further, tow vehicles really take a beating and we prefer not to subject our regular passenger car to this abuse. Even if an OEM mapping system were available in our tow vehicle, I would probably not be inclined to order it because I would prefer to spend that money on a notebook computer and the Delorme program.

For more information, visit www.delorme.com.