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eVent technology



TGO Magazine



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Quo Pro Mapping Software Reviewed

By Dave Mycroft

Price: £99.95

Features: Comprehensive digital mapping software at affordable price, buy just the bits you need, online file sharing, autozoom scaling, no 3D yet.

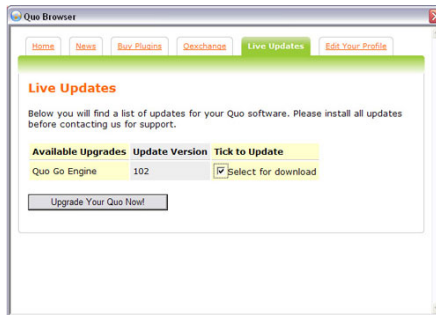
What's It For?

Planning or reviewing your routes in detail or transferring routes to and from a GPS system.

The Techy Bits

Quo Pro is a late entry into the off road digital mapping and navigation markets, but in hanging back the company has been able to look at what's missing from the competition and try to integrate it into their software.

The free trial version and free map viewer concept isn't new, but Quo takes it a step further by making the core software free, and by planning to stick to a single version number. As changes are made to the core they will just be released as updates to download the next time you start the program. Totally new features can be added as "extensions". Hence, you build up your basic package by accumulating extensions, each of which adds more features.



The review pack was one of three standard combinations, where the most appropriate extensions for a particular activity are bundled together. This pack includes full UK coverage at 1:50,000 along with the GPS Manager, Route Analyser, Advanced Print and Import/Export giving everything you need to get started. Some of these at first appear to simply be components you'd expect in a full release anyway, like the ability to draw routes, make waypoints or find out what the elevation gain is. When you start to look closely though, you see a range of advanced options as well:

Analyses		Data	Graph	Score	Route Card	Output	General Settings	Rules Settings
Total Air Distance:	32.6 km	Total Ascent Distance:	15.97 km					
Total DMT Distance:	32.95 km	Total Descent Distance:	16.98 km					
Total Time:	10:43:33	Total Level Distance:	0 km					
Max. Altitude:	2,858.8 ft	% of Ascent over DMT:	48.5 %					
Min. Altitude:	137.6 ft	% of Descent over DMT:	51.5 %					
Avg. Altitude:	1,380.5 ft	% of Level over DMT:	0 %					
Travel Start Date/Time:	24/11/2006 14:49:39	Total Ascent:	6,077.9 ft					
Travel End Date/Time:	25/11/2006 01:33:12	Total Descent:	-6,192.5 ft					

- The automatic zoom, which is built in by default, automatically changes the scale of map shown to fit the screen.
- The Route Analyser goes way beyond just working out the length and distance, giving a comprehensive table of everything from the Air Distance to the angle of slope. The angle of slope becomes important as the personal settings allows you to set your pace at different angles to fine tune your own version of Naismith's Rules.

ID	Alt	Bearing	Air Dist	Tot Air Dist	DMT Dist	Tot DMT Dist
1	255.5 ft	0°	0 km	0 km	0 km	0 km
2	382.2 ft	0°	0.05 km	0.05 km	0.05 km	0.05 km
3	354.2 ft	0°	0.05 km	0.1 km	0.05 km	0.1 km
4	390.1 ft	0°	0.05 km	0.15 km	0.05 km	0.15 km
5	406.1 ft	39°	0.05 km	0.2 km	0.05 km	0.2 km
6	469.2 ft	39°	0.05 km	0.25 km	0.05 km	0.25 km
7	524.4 ft	39°	0.05 km	0.3 km	0.05 km	0.3 km

Angle	Tot Angle	Alt Diff	Tot Alt Diff	Time	Tot Time
0°	0°	0 ft	0 ft	00:00:00	00:00:00
16.2°	16.2°	47.2 ft	47.2 ft	00:02:05	00:02:05
17.2°	33.4°	51 ft	98.6 ft	00:02:11	00:04:16
12.2°	45.6°	35.9 ft	134.5 ft	00:01:43	00:05:58
5.8°	51.6°	16 ft	150.6 ft	00:01:04	00:07:02
17.6°	69.2°	52 ft	202.8 ft	00:02:13	00:09:15
24.8°	94.1°	76.2 ft	278.9 ft	00:02:59	00:12:14

- Text and Drawing tools come with total user control of font, colour and transparency and while freehand is missing at least the ability to draw semi transparent polygons allows you to shade irregular shaped areas.
- The Route Card feature also extends well beyond normal lines, with full control over what it prints out, including photographs.
- The online connection to Oexchange also gives you the option to post route cards if you haven't got someone to leave it with.

On the GPS front, Quo Pro is compatible with Windows Mobile 5 devices, which means most PDAs and a good number of the latest smartphones. There are rumours that they're also in discussions with ViewRanger who dominate the Symbian market and don't have a desktop application. Data import/export is based around the GPStabel engine with the ability to encode and decode to over 100 different GPS formats including Garmin, Magellan and GPX.

How It Performs

Once you've got used to a system it's hard to accept change and it really has to be worth it. That's the attitude I had on going to the Press Launch, but a month down the line Quo is becoming my default mapping software after years of Memory Map. The interface is simple to use, and you grow with it as you add extensions and features. Some things will take a while to get used to, like right clicking and dragging to move a map, but overall it's simple on the surface and powerful underneath.

The Quo approach is to build projects, adding extra bits as and when you feel like it. This can range from just the map route through to a full analysis, to weblinks, blogs, photo albums and a GPS data file. Routes were easy to plan and draw, with total control over how to display waypoints and trackpoints. The advanced print option is well specified, and you have full choice on which attributes to display on the page along with variable overlap and page optimisation for multi page maps.

In testing we were able to print out several days' planned route for the TGO Challenge and choose to display important waypoints for overnight options by name but only show dots for turn waypoints. Comments could be printed, using different colours for varying importance to show where a decision had to be made on the route depending on the weather.



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VOTE

- What mapping systems do you use (in addition to printed maps)
- Mapping software (e.g. Anquet)
 - GPS
 - Both mapping software and GPS
 - Neither- just printed maps
 - Not even printed



We like the idea of extensions, and just buying the bits you need, as not everyone wants the advanced GPS management, file conversion and other features like Angler's or Birdwatcher's Diaries. We also like the price a lot. Maps cost from £0.99 (minimum of 6 per order) for a 40k x 40k 1:50,000 and the 10m resolution UK aerial map at £5.99 (inc postage) on DVD is stunning value once the 3D extension becomes available.

Initial Verdict

It takes time adjusting after years with Memory Map, but some of the advanced features are well worth the change. The pricing structure alone makes this GPS system worth a look.

- ☺ Cheapest OS Maps, expandable, advanced tools.
- ☹ No 3D yet. Late arrival on an already mature market.

Performance ★★★★★
Value ★★★★★

Quo web site

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- How To Make A Memory Map Wainwright Logbook**
Dave Mycroft shows Memory Map users how to create their own, map-linked Wainwright logbook and you can use the same principles for Munros, Nuttalls or even tea shops :-)
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