

## World's Smallest GPS Trackers & More

by Kevin D. Murray, CPP, CISM, CFE



### Smallest GPS Trackers Features

In recent years GPS trackers have become incredibly small. Once the size of bricks some can now fit on your finger.<sup>1</sup>



New features have arrived, too. Some have...

- SOS buttons
- Audio eavesdropping capability
- Integration with Google Maps
- Speed reporting
- Geo-fencing<sup>2</sup> with automatic alerts
- Disable vehicle
- Updates every five seconds
- Wireless recharging
- Worldwide coverage
- Bluetooth – for tracking the last few feet

Prices are tracking lower. As low as \$6.40 on eBay (free shipping from China!) to \$399.00 (That one is a house arrest ankle bracelet.)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aliexpress.com/i/32950082213.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gotrack.com/whats-geofence-what-they-do/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dhgate.com/product/mini-smallest-gps-tracking-chip-gps-tracking/457015714.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.tailit.com/plus/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://origingps.com/product-category/hornet/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aliexpress.com/i/32826849478.html>

### How to Define Small?

Thin and thin is one way.<sup>3 4</sup>



Component size<sup>5</sup> is another way...



Circuit board size<sup>6</sup> is also a legitimate criteria.

You get the idea. These things are now very small, easy to hide, and packed with features.

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Smallest should actually mean most desirable. The easiest to use, with the most features, for the smallest price.

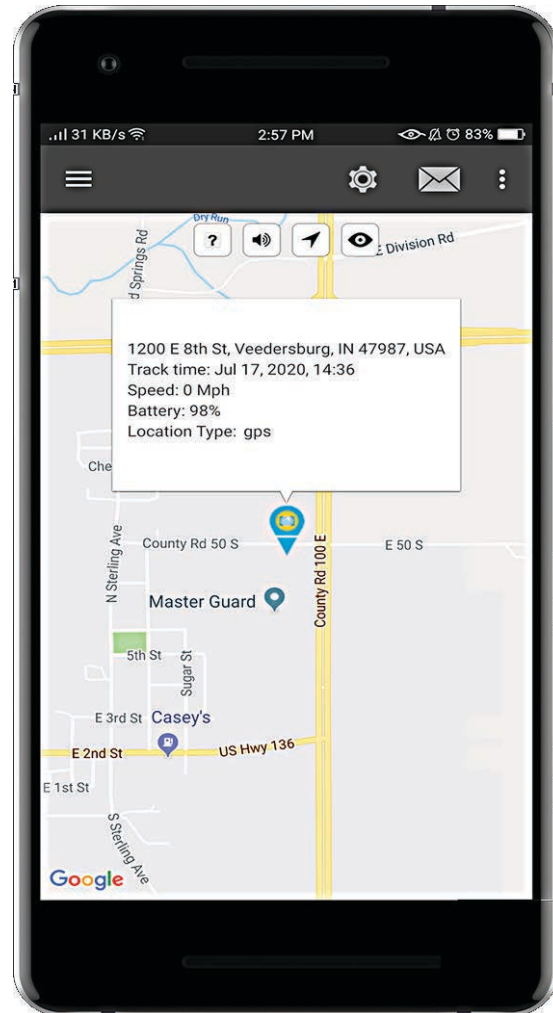
### Smallest or Cheapest ≠ Bestest

We can learn a lot from the mistakes of others. On-line purchaser reviews are helpful this way. Small and cheap GPS trackers have problems.

- Difficult to impossible programming.
- Long reporting delay times.
- No customer service.
- Often inaccurate.
- Poor construction.
- Poor battery life.

Fortunately, the market's sweet spot can be found for just a few dollars more. Amazon's best seller is Tracki, at \$25.88.<sup>7</sup> Reviewed 2,178 times, it rates an impressive 4.3 out of 5 stars.

As of today one eBay seller reports 1,467 sold.



Tracking Tracki does require a service plan. The subscription cost is about 65 cents per day, monthly; dropping to 33 cents per day, biannually.

The point is, GPS tracking is really mainstream. Almost anyone who wants to track you can afford to track you. Should you care?

The short answer is, *maybe*. Let's take a look at the most common ways GPS tracking is being used these days.

<sup>7</sup> <https://amzn.to/3f9AO4x>

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### The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

**Good** uses for GPS trackers include protecting children, older adults, and finding lost animals.

**Bad** uses debatably include stalking and spying on significant others. Of course, the debate depends on if you are the tracker or trackee.

**Ugly.** There are also big brother type tracking uses. Renting, leasing, or financing a vehicle? You can be pretty sure the dealership or rental company has installed a difficult-to-find, and deactivate, tracker.<sup>8</sup> As a driver, you may not like it, but these are legitimate and legal uses.

### Want to lower your vehicle insurance rates?

Your insurance company may ask you to install one of their "telematics devices" voluntarily.<sup>9</sup> This electro-leach, in addition to GPS tracking, taps into your vehicle's computer systems.

Lower premiums are an ugly privacy trade-off. The information your systems hold is massive.<sup>10</sup>

Even without your permission, "most modern cars have wireless systems that can transmit the telematics data to the manufacturer."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.thetruthaboutcars.com/2017/10/how-buy-here-pay-here-gps-tracking-devices-work/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://cars.usnews.com/cars-trucks/car-insurance/how-do-those-car-insurance-tracking-devices-work>

<sup>10</sup> <https://fpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/consumerguide.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.rollcall.com/2019/04/09/your-car-is-watching-you-who-owns-the-data/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://amzn.to/2X6wkpt>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.carmd.com/obd-port-location/>

### Make Orwell Fiction Again

If you have the feeling you are being tracked, trust your instincts. It's not a casual thought.

Given the GPS tracker's size and sporadic transmissions, finding one secreted on or within a vehicle will require help. People generally choose one of these three options:

1. A *self-search* is the most economical way to find an unwanted GPS tracker. Amateur installations may be easily found, but generally, self-search success rates are low.

#### Tips to increase self-search success rates.

- Avoid expensive electronic detection gadgets. Their false alerts create confusion and waste time. Spend the money on a lighted inspection mirror.<sup>12</sup> It is your best tool. Cost: ≈ \$12.00
- Visually inspect the most likely placement locations: wheel wells, undercarriage, engine compartment, trunk, under seats and the dashboard. Be sure to check the vehicle's OBD-II port<sup>13</sup> for a plug-in GPS tracker.

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TYPICAL GPS TRACKER WATERPROOF ENCLOSURE



TYPICAL OBD-II GPS TRACKER

2. Visit a car dealership. For a moderate fee a service department tech can inspect the entire vehicle. The tech may not know exactly what to look for, but they will spot what doesn't belong there, quickly. Additionally, they have wiring schematics, and special tools to remove panels and headliners.

3. If the adversary is moderately skilled, or hires an auto electronics installer to plant a GPS tracker, a more expensive option is required — a professional inspection.

Enlist the services of a Technical Surveillance Countermeasures (TSCM) firm.<sup>14</sup> They know what to look for, and where to look. TSCM techs may, or may not, have access to a car dealership or garage lift. However, most have special undercarriage cameras which do that part of the job quite well.

### **A professional TSCM inspection provides:**

- Specialized expertise and instrumentation.
- An expert witness should the case go to court.
- The most peace of mind.

A TSCM inspection is the best option for success.



<sup>14</sup> <https://counterespionage.com/>



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### Conclusions

GPS tracker attributes:

- **Small.** However, being the smallest does not mean the best.
- **Affordable.** The average price of \$20. to \$70., offers little deterrent to anyone who wants one.
- **Easily Obtainable.** On-line shopping with next day delivery.
- **Easy Operation.** Some GPS trackers only require five minutes to set-up.
- **Feature Rich.** Some extra capabilities include: audio eavesdropping, instant smartphone mapping, automatic geo-fencing alerts, and speed reports, in addition to simple GPS tracking.

**Some GPS trackers are helpful.**

**Some invade privacy.**

**All can be found.**



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Murray Associates<sup>15</sup> is an independent security consulting firm, providing eavesdropping detection and counterespionage services to business, government and the at-risk individual.

Headquartered in the New York metropolitan area, a Murray Associates team can assist you quickly, anywhere in the United States, and internationally.

<sup>15</sup> <https://counterespionage.com/about-murray-associates/electronic-eavesdropping-detection/>