

Street-smart accessories for the road

BY JUDI DASH

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Road trips get an assist with the following new items, which make life in the car and on the route more user-friendly.

All products have been tested by the writer, who has no business relationship with any manufacturers or distributors.

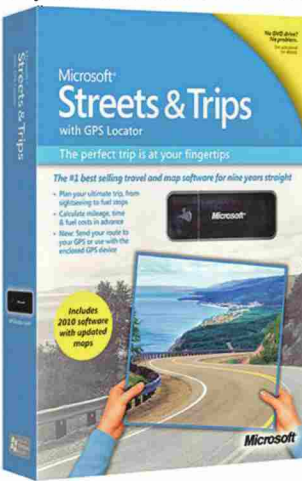


CAR COUNTER: Hook the Wheelmate Steering Wheel Desk to your car steering wheel and get an instant tray for dining, working on your laptop or writing. (No, of course not while you are driving.) The sturdy vinyl laminate tray provides a 15-by-6-inch working surface that wipes clean. Be sure to measure the steering wheel before ordering. The curved end sections of the tray that hook onto the wheel will only fit a wheel that is no thicker than 1¼ inches in diameter. You may have to turn the wheel one way or the other to provide clearance for the curved lip between the “hooks.” On my car, the tilt of the steering wheel, even when adjusted, kept the tray from lying completely horizontal, so I avoided using it for liquids. But it made a great surface for every-

thing else during a break in my road trip.

● Wheelmate Steering Wheel Desk is \$29.07 at www.cableorganizer.com; 866-222-0030.

MOBILE MAPPING: Even with a GPS device in my car and GPS functions



on my phone, I still like to have a reliable mapping program on my computer for plotting trips on a big screen with plenty of driving preferences I can print out in big type with a variety of color maps. Microsoft's new 2010 Streets & Trips software with GP Locator provides the best of both worlds: It performs great mapping, which can then be sent to your GP device, so the routes, with stops and detours, are in sync. The software includes more than 1.7 million points of interest within a radius of 50 miles of the route, rerouting from where you are if you get off course, and a slew of other typical GPS features. Comes with a basic

GPS locator, but I like also having a big, bright, full-function GPS device on my windshield.

● Microsoft 2010 Streets & Trips with GPS Locator is \$69.95 at www.microsoft.com/streets/travel; 800-642-7676.

SEATING DOUBLE: Folding chairs with shoulder straps for easy toting are nothing new. But the Portable Folding Spectator Sports Bench has two seats and, between them, a folding center panel containing

two mesh beverage holders. A removable pouch has pockets for tickets, programs, sunglasses and other items. The polyester seats, each of which can handle up to 250 pounds, are supported by a lightweight aluminum frame. Folded, the bench measures 24-by-18-by-5 inches thick. Open, it's 41-by-12-by-17 inches high. It weighs 7 pounds and comes with an adjustable shoulder strap. This is a neat item to keep in your car for picnics and instant seating anywhere.

● Portable Folding Spectator Sports Bench is \$45.94 at www.portablefoldingchairs.com; 888-436-3274.





EAR AND THERE:

How do you keep your Bluetooth headset safe and handy when you don't want it stuck in your ear? Nectar's Bluetooth Headset Holder, available in necklace and retractable pocket-clip styles, are an effective featherweight solution. Just hook the earpiece part of your headset through the slim nylon adjustable noose that dan-

gles from the necklace or retracts from the pocket clip. You won't even need to take your eyes off the road while driving. To use the headset, unhook it from the noose, or just swing it up and into your ear still hooked. The necklace is available as a neck chain or leather cord in a selection of models, including some adorned with Swarovski crystals on the front of the adjustment mechanism. The retractable clip comes in materials ranging from plastic to gun metal and sterling silver.

● **Bluetooth Headset Holders** start at \$14.99 in necklace and retractable pocket-clip styles at www.nectaraccessories.com; 800-255-5660.

● **CLUTTER BUSTER:** Finally, a well-designed, hanging front-seat organizer that easily swings behind the seat when you have a front seat passenger or want to use it for a back-

seat passenger. The Over The Seat Driver Organizer in XL size has eight roomy pockets, including a top pouch large enough for business files, five slots for maps, cell phone, snacks, cash, CDs, pens and whatever, and two mesh side pockets large enough for a water bottle or small items you want to keep in sight.



Made of heavy packcloth reinforced with fiber board, the organizer attaches to — and swings behind — the headrest poles via an adjustable clip buckle.

● **Over The Seat Driver Organizer in XL** is \$17.99 at www.organizeit.com; 800-210-7712.

