

iPad on the Road

Part 2 of 2

The ultimate test



Paul Manwaring founded Glimworm IT BV in 2001 with partners Jonathan Carter, Marten Hoekstra and Colin Williams. A former Hollywood Art Director, he shifted his focus from traditional to new media bringing unique insight into the creative process of web development and design. He holds degrees in Art and Philosophy from Penn State University and is an adjunct professor at Webster University Leiden where he has taught media studies for nearly 10 years.

Contact Paul at:
paul@glimworm.com

IN THIS SECOND PART, Paul describes how his iPad took the Tuscan heat. After two weeks in Italy, he returns to Amsterdam via Switzerland and Germany using the iPad for navigation, twittering, booking hotels and avoiding traffic.

The Argitourismo in Montespertoli was awesome! We had finally arrived 14 hours after leaving the Morvan for what was supposed to be an 8-9 hour drive and we were very, very hAppy to be there. The owners had waited for us and were so friendly it made such a great welcome. Our place was bigger than we thought and the view was gorgeous. There was a pool and tennis court overlooking the Tuscan hills. It was perfect! Except for one thing, their WiFi signal did not reach around the corner from the office to our patio. If we wanted to use the internet we had to go to the main courtyard and sit right in front of the door to their office and the download was painfully slow. That first night in Tuscany (as you can imagine), we sat on our patio with our iPad sending our e-mails and photos to friends around the world and the laptop didn't even make it out of the car.



(On our way down to Italy, near Mont Blanc)

iPad 7 - 0 Laptop (again)

Next day the weather was beautiful, the days to come would all be beautiful, sunny and hot, very hot! Most of the time the temperature during the day was around 30 and around noon it was almost too hot to stay outside (for us Northerners) so most of the time we spent hanging around the pool looking at the stunning scenery. On a clear day you could see over 300 kilometers to the beginning of the Italian Alps but you couldn't get a WiFi signal by the pool, ever.

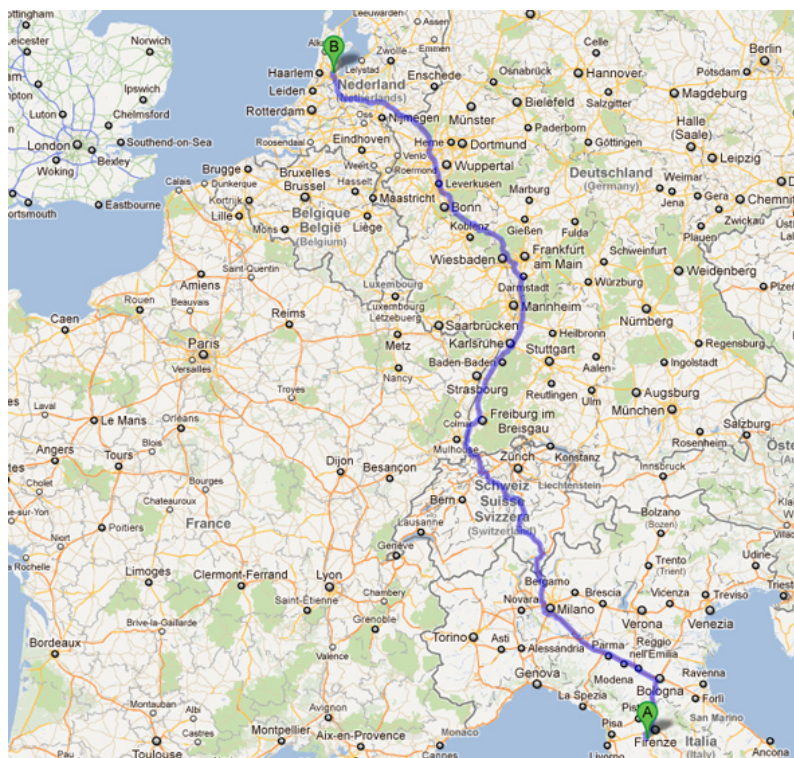
At first I thought - "I really shouldn't take my iPad to the pool, it could get broken, it's too hot, it could get wet! But after a while, I broke down as the walk to our rooms seemed such a waist of time and effort in the heat. We would be talking about this or that and my wife would say something like - "I wonder if there are any good wineries around here where we can do some tasting." After all, we were in Chianti, we couldn't just sit around the pool all day doing nothing. So after a while, and more and more "I wonder if..." or "Where should we...?" questions popped up, the iPad made it down to the pool and stayed there.



We found restaurants with the TripAdvisor App, searched for wineries on Google, learned about the various towns and sights to see on Wikipedia. We looked up wine ratings on Wine Spectator and got great recipes on Fine Cooking so when we went into town to go shopping we knew exactly what we were looking for. We even used Google Translate and an Italian-English Dictionary App to help us with the language so when we did go shopping we could at least point and say "quei" or "questo". The whole time we were driving around in Italy we used the iPad to navigate because the Tom Tom always got lost on the small rural roads. Besides, it was a pain in the ass having to type in addresses all the time and with Google Maps we just zoomed in or out knowing the whole time where we were and where we were heading. Several times I left the iPad out in the sun and, yes, it got hot; several times it got dripped on or got a little splash from the pool but it NEVER EVER failed to turn on or work.

We got a lot out of the iPad the whole time we were in Italy. It saved us tons of time and guesswork but, ultimately, it just made things easier. Some people like getting lost or guessing or leaving things up to chance. I think those people don't have kids, or have too much time on their hands. My wife is definitely not one of those people and I know that without the iPad our two weeks in Tuscany would not have been as relaxing as it was. But, alas, all good things must come to an end and eventually we found ourselves packing up the car once more and early one morning saying goodbye to the beautiful Tuscan sun.

Our rout would take us two days to travel 1400 km; the first from Montespertoli north through Milan, Lake Como into Switzerland through Luzern and maybe further. We thought what we would do was just find some place to stay overnight when we felt like stopping but try to push it a bit so we could arrive in Amsterdam early enough the next day to do some grocery shopping, make dinner and relax a bit. Then the second day we would have to either start from Switzerland or Germany (depending on how far we had made it that night), travel along the Rhein past Frankfurt through Koln and Essen and then back on to home turf through Arnhem, finally, home to Amsterdam. All in all, we were hoping to make it in less than 36 hour, with stops, and it started off fine.



/// We even used Google Translate and an Italian-English Dictionary App to help us with the language so when we did go shopping we could at least point and say "quei" or "questo". ///



It looked like we had beaten the traffic but the roads were definitely crowded, luckily we had started off early enough. My wife wasn't feeling so well because of the heat so I had to do most of the driving; it seems like the worst of it was all the toll booths you have to go through, especially between Milan and Lake Como.

At one point though, we had taken a wrong exit and had to find our way back to the highway and the iPad again was able to do what the Tom Tom can't.

iPad **8** - **0** **TomTom**
(why can't you work out toll booths and on and off ramps?)

/// The designers at Apple made some damn good choices and one of them was definitely the aluminum casing, it's lightweight, very tough and won't crack. ///

Finally, after about five hours we were getting close to the Swiss border and it was time to get some gas so we got to a gas station, got some food, gas and bought our wonderfully efficient Swiss road sticker. Somehow during this stop, the iPad fell out of the car and thump-crack! onto the hard, hot pavement. I cannot describe to you the feeling of horror that came over me. I gently picked it up expecting to see broken glass but no, the screen did not break or crack. Luckily it fell on a corner and not face first, you could see where it had hit the ground because where the soft aluminum absorbed the impact there were some scuffs and metal burs, but, (being metal of course), no cracks. Cautiously, I pushed the little black button to turn it on and amazingly it came to life, no glitches. I tried a few things and there seemed to be no damage at all. The screen resolution and color was the same, Apps worked fine and the T-mobile connection was strong and fast. You see, the hard drive - in fact everything - in an iPad is solid state so there are no moving parts inside that will get tossed about and break if it takes a fall. The designers at Apple made some damn good choices and one of them was definitely the aluminum casing; it's lightweight; very tough and, (unlike plastic) won't crack. The screen is made of corning gorilla glass and is flexible enough to also resist breaking or cracking in a fall. Now, I wouldn't try tossing mine over the side of a bridge to prove this point but, believe me, iPads are a lot tougher than they look.

iPad **9** - **0** **Cell phones**
(you would never know the sucker is so tough!) (or other plastic devices)

That afternoon we continued north, crossed the Swiss border and past the beautiful lakes and mountains of Lugano and Lucarno taking in the amazing scenery as the air grew cleaner and cooler. Eventually we knew we might end up waiting for a long while in line to go through the Gotthard Tunnel, notorious for long, painful waits. While staying at the Agriturismo in Montespertoli, we had been told by a nice English couple that if it looked bad, we should get off the main highway and take the "pass" as they called it. They made it sound a bit scary to tell you the truth and it didn't sound anything like what our good old Volkswagen Golf would enjoy doing, so when we started getting closer we were thinking - "how could we find out how long the line was and how long it would take?". At that point, I finally figured out that the key to using the Google Maps traffic display is under the little virtual "flap" at the bottom right hand corner of the display.



I switched it on and immediately I started to see green, yellow and then the red lines appear where the highways were and soon saw that the red line in front of the tunnel (indicating stand still traffic) was about 2 km long! but how long of a wait did that mean? We came up to the end of the line and traffic stopped dead.

I got out of the car to stretch and asked the nice people next to me (in an outlandishly expensive Porsche Cayane!) if they had any idea how long the wait would be- they were listening to the radio. They didn't know yet but a bit later and a couple of stops and starts further on, they said it sounded like it would be an hour and a half. In the mean time, my wife had been Tweeting (my daughter at this point was watching Monsters Inc. for what must have been the 50th time on our vacation) and it seemed like there were quite a few people Tweeting about and how long it was taking to get through the tunnel. The Twitter comments didn't seem so bad so we decided to not take the scary pass over the mountains and stay in the line for the tunnel and sure enough, 45 minutes later, we were cruising smoothly (and efficiently) through the longest damn tunnel I have ever been through.

iPad (Twitter rocks!) **10** - **0** Radio traffic reports

By the time we got past Luzern it was about 4 PM and we were thinking it might be a good idea to start looking for a place to stay for the night. My wife was driving at this point and I started looking for some reasonable (but nice) places to stay using the TripAdvisor and Booking.com Apps but Switzerland, though beautiful, is not cheap. We decided to keep on going because there were some promising and much more reasonable places popping up around Freiburg at around half the price of anything in Switzerland. The reason why we would use both the TripAdvisor and Booking.com App at the same time is a bit interesting. You see, the TripAdvisor App has a display and map that is truly awesome so you can filter very accurately what you are looking for and see only what you want on the map; but there is the added advantage of also being able to see if there are any good restaurants near by. With the Booking.com App you can see availability right away which you don't see on TripAdvisor. If you could just combine both you would have the most killer App. That's the thing about Apps that a lot of people don't understand- what makes an App really valuable is how it displays as much of the most important information possible immediately with a user Interface that allows fast and easy secondary info. A great App is all about combining current location with real time info that is not only valuable but correct and reliable. I could go on and on about Apps but that will have to be a topic for my next white paper. For now, all I have to say is that having the iPad on the road made it so easy for my wife and me to find a really nice place while traveling at 120 km per hour.

After calling a few places (no, we didn't book with Booking.com!), we made a reservation at a friendly little place in the Black Forest about 20 km north of Freiburg. We arrived with plenty of time to relax and take showers before setting off to a truly massive dinner of wild boar steaks and fresh trout served with salad, pickled vegetables and strange spaghetti like noodles and, of course, lots of beer. The food was good but the beer was better! Later on we went to a great beer garden down the road and had a great time all thanks to TripAdvisor and Booking.com and my iPad.

“ A great App is all about combining current location with real time info that is not only valuable but correct and reliable. ”



/// That night we felt tired but good and we both agreed that this had been our best, most relaxing vacation ever. ///

The next day was the last stretch - the last day of our vacation - and we got up and on the road (not too hung over from the beer so you know it was good quality stuff) early enough to make it home around 4-5 that evening AS LONG AS we could avoid traffic jams and keep moving at a good steady pace. The last leg of our trip would take us past the most heavily populated areas in Germany, namely Frankfurt, Koln, Dusseldorf and Essen.

The possibility of it making around all those cities without hitting some serious traffic was pretty small but there were lots of opportunities to take alternate routs in order to avoid the traffic too. Having the iPad and Google Maps with the traffic overlay on was a big help; there was a lot of switching from two lane traffic to one lane because of road works on the E35 and things slowed down from time to time but never so bad that we had to take a detour. Using Google Maps gave us a perfect picture of the traffic flow, I don't know how they do it but it is amazingly accurate. At one point we were going around Duisburg and saw a slow down ahead but the alternative was worse, we got through the slow down exactly where the yellow line ended on the overlay, no joke. Further on down the road between Essen and Arnhem we started to get hungry. My wife was having a craving for McDonalds French fries so on it goes in the Google Maps search and there it was, sitting just off the highway about 40 km ahead. At this point my wife said "But there haven't been any signs, what if Google Maps is wrong?". Now you must understand that when my wife gets hungry there is not a very big window of opportunity to find a place before low blood sugar makes her a bit disagreeable and on top of that, she wants what she wants so this was important but I had learned to trust Google Maps and said- "It'll be there, don't worry." And 20 or so minutes later we saw the golden arches on the horizon even though we never saw a sign. We had our lunch, my wife had her French fries and everybody was happy.

Paul's favorite Apps "on the road"

- ▶ TripAdvisor
- ▶ Google Maps
- ▶ Wine Spectator
- ▶ Fine Cooking
- ▶ Google Translate
- ▶ Booking.com
- ▶ Twitter

iPad

11

-

0

**Road Signs
(who needs them?)**

After lunch it was smooth sailing all the way home. Only a couple of hours left to go, we had to make a couple of traffic choices after Arnhem but, again, Google Maps helped us out and there were no problems whatsoever. We made it home in plenty of time to do some grocery shopping and get some takeout. That night (even after driving two days in a row) we felt tired but good and we both agreed that this had been our best, most relaxing vacation ever.



Glimworm IT BV
Eerste Weteringplantsoen 8
1017 SK, Amsterdam
Nederland

Tel: +31 (0)20 - 616 56 40
Fax: +31 (0)20 - 240 13 57
E-mail: paul@glimworm.com



Schrijf je in voor de nieuwsbrief