How To:
Garmin Nüvi Hidden Track Log

This document is meant to bring some light into the shades of logging tracks with some Garmin models. Shown are screenshots of a Nüvi 760 with firmware version 4.60. Screens from other devices may look different!

Breadcrumbs

Some models offer a fully accessible method of logging tracks. This is done by the so called 'breadcrumbs method'. The nüvi 760 for example store the latest 10,000 points.Once the file is full the oldest points will be overwritten.
The display of these 'breadcrumbs' is activated under 'Tools > Settings > Map > Trip Log'. This data is stored in '\Garmin\GPX\current.gpx'.

This data may however be inaccurate as to that there is a 'feature' that tries to snap each of theses waypoints to a road the device knows.

Raw Data

The other way of recording a track log is to log the raw data. Doing so will make the device record it's exact position to a log file every second.

Earlier firmware versions (up to version 2.30) had an option to activate this feature. Unfortunately Garmin decided to remove the menu to activate this in later versions. But the feature itself is still there.

To activate it follow the steps marked with an orange dot:
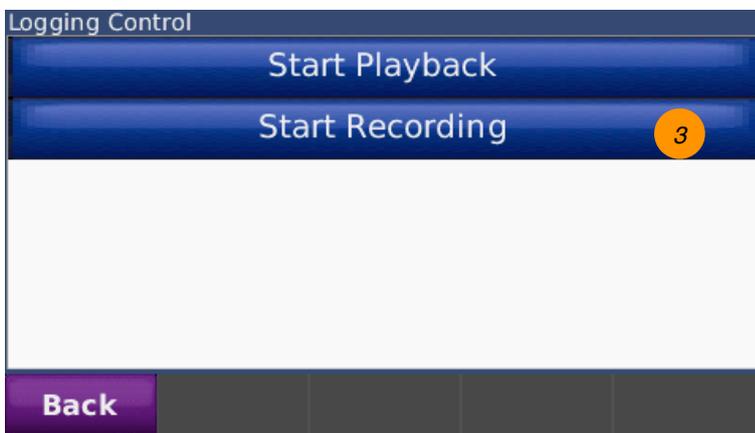
1. Press on the car symbol.

The display will now display show your current position.

2. Even though there are no buttons press the following sequence 2a-2b-2b-2a.

3. If all went well you should now be seeing an option that says 'Start Recording'.

Press that to start the recording of the raw track data

4. Back on the map screen you will now see a stop button at the top of the map display.

This shows you that the raw track log data is now being recorded.
That's it, you're done.

What's next
The log files are created in \Garmin\Logs. Inside that directory a folder is created is created each time the device is turned on or logging starts. It's name will be something like '20090402_191434'. Each of these folders contains several files (gps.bin, traffic.bin, nav.bin). The ones we are interested in is 'gps.bin'. It contains the track data.

The format of these files is a bit strange though. It may not be read by any standard application.

There is however a convenient way to convert these files into something more convenient:

wNutrak (Nutrak)
Is an app written by Andrzej Popowski (popej) that converts these bin-files into files that have the gpx-format.
http://www.anpo.republika.pl/download.html#nutrak

Files in gpx-format may then be used in various programs such as MapSource and many others. One in gpx-format they may be converted to view complete tracks in Google Earth or any other application convenient to display position data.

GPS Visualizer
A great website that uses GPSBabel to convert your data online is 'GPS Visualizer'
http://www.gpsvisualizer.com/.
GPS Visualizer can now directly import gps.bin files, display them online or convert them to various formats.

GPSBabel
One tool to look at is certainly 'GPSBabel' (http://www.gpsbabel.org/)
GPSBabel is a tool that can convert almost anything into anything.
So if you would like to see your track log data in Google you would first use Nutrak to convert the file 'gps.bin' into a gpx-file.
Using GPSBabel you could then convert this gpx-file into a kml-file which may directly by viewed in Google Earth.

GPSPassion
This is where all the information about the 'hidden track log' comes from.
If you follow this thread you might find out even more as time goes on
http://www.gpspassion.com/FORUMSEN/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=98909

Caution!! Delete old log files!!
There is one important thing you should be aware of:
The log files created by the 'Hidden Track Log' are never deleted! Event though one waypoint does not create huge amounts of data, recording a waypoint every second will eventually let your log directory grow in size. After a longer trip mine is now using 40MB.
If the track log data fills up your internal memory, you will get into trouble and might even end up not being able to use your navigation system.
This means that from time to time you will have to connect your unit to your computer, copy the log files from '\Garmin\Logs' to your hard drive and delete the contents of that folder to free up internal memory!

There are attempts to modify a firmware so that the log files are written to the card so that the internal memory may not be flooded by the log data.

Be aware however that by uploading a modified firmware to your device will violate warranty.

Conclusion

I hope to have shed some light on this topic so that newer reader who have not followed the creation of it will find an easy way to get the 'Hidden Track Log' running on their device.

Many thanks to Andrzej Popowski (popej), neadrenalin, dcnuvi and emmexx from www.gpspassion.com for sharing their knowledge.
Thanks also to Adam Schneider from GPS Visualizer for his efforts to visualize the gps.bin files online.

kurt hofmann
q3media@sunrise.ch