

Custom Idea GeoPic II GPS device

At just £190, the GeoPic II represents an affordable way to tag your images with GPS coordinates

WORDS & PICTURES Ian Farrell

IT'S BEEN POSSIBLE TO ADD GPS location information to the EXIF data recorded by a digital camera for some time now, but this has usually only been possible on top-end DSLRs using expensive add-on accessories. When the GeoPic II landed on our desk it promised to do the job for less money, and be kinder on battery life than other units, thanks to an innovative way of working.

On first inspection there's not much to the GeoPic II. It's a black box that sits in the hotshoe of any Nikon or Fujifilm DSLR and plugs into the 10-pin remote release socket. GeoPic II units for other camera brands are not currently available. Once activated it establishes a photographer's position anywhere on the planet by talking to GPS (Global Positioning System) satellites and inserts this information into the Location field in an image's EXIF data.

That's it, really. What you do with this data is up to you. We recommend entering it into Google Earth (free download from www.google.com/googleeearth), which is both useful and incredibly cool. Either way the GeoPic II could be very handy to those on a recce for shooting locations, or anyone involved in surveillance or reportage work. Imagine being able to accurately recall an image's location years after it was taken, when memories are less reliable.

The GeoPic II is novel in its approach to battery conservation. To work properly with a GPS unit, DSLRs must be in their metering state, ie. the state they are in when you half-press the shutter release. This takes up a lot more battery power than a camera in sleep mode. Usually a GPS unit forces a camera to stay in its metering state all the time, and this insomnia drains batteries fairly quickly. The GeoPic II can work in this mode, and when it does it streams GPS data to the



camera continuously. More sensible though is the low-power mode which saves juice by only transmitting GPS data when the camera's shutter button is half pressed. The instructions warn of a 'slight delay' which may be experienced while this happens and a picture should only be taken after a green light and audible beep indicate a good satellite lock has been achieved. In reality, though, we didn't notice a delay at all, so it was low-power mode all the way.

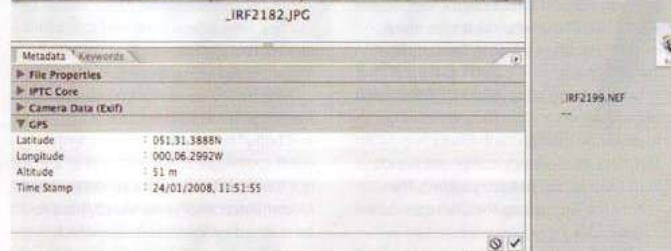
A further method of operation, dubbed Freeze mode, is available which actually only powers up the GPS device when a button on its top surface is pressed. This does lead to a delay while the location is found and stored (or 'frozen') in the device's memory. From then on the frozen location is transmitted to the camera for each shot.

Various user options can be set via the GeoPic II can work in this mode, and when it does it streams GPS data to the

The menu is, in fact, a series of somewhat cryptic light flashes from the coloured LED indicator. Used in combination with the chart in the (very well-written) instruction manual it's possible to fine-tune options like how long the unit remains active before sleeping, whether it beeps or not, and how it feeds GPS information to the camera.

In short, this is a great accessory for those shooting travel, reportage, press work or surveillance on Nikon or Fujifilm. Once the instructions have been read cover to cover and the unit has been set up (which can be a bit fiddly), it works without fuss and does its job very well. If you shoot thousands of pictures a year, the location information the GeoPic II provides could be a real bonus in your digital workflow. Recommended. ■

Contacts
Custom Idea
www.customidea.com



↑ GPS data are stored in an image's EXIF data, which can be accessed using Adobe Bridge.

↑ Want to know where this old cattle trough and drinking fountain is located? Tap 51.52315°N, 0.1049883°W into Google Earth to find out.

SUMMARY

A useful gadget for those wanting to geotag their images. It's small, easy(ish) to use and its approach to power conservation means it won't sap your battery too quickly.

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER RATING

FEATURES	★★★★
HANDLING	★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★