

TOP 25 CAR APPS

From speedometers to parking assistants, **Chris Harris** lists some favourite car-related apps.

Smartphones and tablet devices are rapidly transforming our lives - be it to make life easier, or for fun. With more than 500,000 applications available for the Apple iPhone alone, you can find a new cafe nearby and read reviews of it before even leaving home, monitor your heart rate or sleeping patterns and even scan a product barcode to check whether it's cheaper down the road.

It's important to emphasise that safety is paramount when it comes to using phones in cars.

It is illegal in Australia to talk on the phone or text while driving, so we need to keep both hands on the wheel and eyes on the road.

We've covered a broad range of clever apps that can help you avoid traffic jams and speed cameras, monitor your fuel use, listen to music from Mozambique, alert you to pesky parking inspectors, diagnose your car and even monitor your fatigue and recommend breaks.

VLINGO
ANDROID/iPHONE, FREE
Similar to the iPhone 4S's "Siri" voice-powered assistant, Vlingo does several things to minimise driver distraction. You can dictate text messages with good accuracy, call a contact from your phone book, integrate with Facebook and Twitter accounts, perform web searches and find businesses and locations. It's quick, intuitive and easy to use with a large interface and even comes with a profanity filter function.



TEXT'NDRIVE
ANDROID/iPHONE, FREE/\$5.49
Aims to keep your eyes on the road and hands on the wheel by reading emails out loud and allowing you to dictate new or reply emails with speech-to-text technology - something Vlingo can't do. The voice recognition accuracy is OK but the app doesn't work well with HTML emails (the fancy graphic types), reading the jargon code that constructs them, character by character. You also need to upgrade to the Pro version (\$5.49) to access the app's full functionality such as replying to messages by voice, unlimited voice-to-text conversations and more voice commands.



TRAPSTER
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
This clever map-based app alerts you to speed and red-light cameras, accidents and provides live traffic updates. Available in six languages and nine voice themes including dinky-di Aussie, stiff Brit, hillbilly, sultry woman and Mr Grumpy. Join the 15 million-plus worldwide users and add to the 5.4 million reported "traps". Also displays the speed limit of the road you're on and your speed.



LIVE TRAFFIC NSW
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
The official RTA NSW app provides up-to-the-minute news of traffic activity and conditions. Informative but text-heavy interface not ideal while driving. The app's simpler map interface is safer. Access to 66 traffic cameras mainly across metro Sydney updated every minute. Plenty of additional features and customisation including travel times and saving your favourite regions and cameras for quick access.



SNARL TRAFFIC
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
Similar to Live Traffic NSW but the default view is a map of your location. Incidents reported on radio can show up late with this app. Its strength, however, is its ability to quickly access live images of the city's traffic-monitoring cameras.



DASHBOARD
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
Simple widget shows your speed - whether you're going by car, bike, train, plane or boat. After a few moments to receive a full signal, it also displays altitude and direction of travel. It's particularly handy to measure against your vehicle's indicated speed.



GAS CUBBY
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
An excellent app to track vehicle running costs - namely fuel use and maintenance. Easy user set-up for multiple vehicles, quick data entry when refuelling and it's loaded with data and graphs including average kilometres and fuel costs per day. A must-have app for anyone who monitors long-term fuel and servicing costs, or book-balancing self-employed types. Tracks distances travelled and prompts for servicing, charts fuel and service costs, stores vehicle data and compiles Excel compatible email reports.



FILL MY TANK
iPHONE, FREE
Finds the lowest fuel prices nearest to you thanks to crowd-sourcing, listing more than 4000 petrol stations within Australia. You can narrow your search by fuel type and range radius, and view results via map or a list. Some fixes are needed, however. Some prices can be outdated, ethanol-blended E85 fuel and electric-vehicle charging points are not included.



XLR8
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, \$0.99, optional extension pack \$5.49
Want your old Festiva to sound like a Ferrari? The name might sound like a silly personalised number plate, but this clever app broadcasts engine and exhaust sounds of cars such as the Chevrolet Camaro, Ford GT40 or Ferrari 458 Italia through your car's audio system. It even responds to acceleration, braking and cornering forces, so it revs harder as you speed up and drops back a gear as you slow down.



MASERATI
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
If you love the sound of an Italian V8 engine then the Maserati app is for you. It mightn't be as clever as the XLR8 app, but it allows you to listen to 4.7 litres of exhaust-note heaven whenever you feel the urge. You can also set your ringtone to the sonorous sounds of a GranTurismo MC Stradale at full flight or watch videos and download wallpapers.



BMW ULTIMATE DRIVE
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
A bit like cycling and running app Strava, except it's for driving enthusiasts and not so much about bragging rights. You don't need to drive a BMW either. Instead, it helps you discover entertaining roads, which are added and rated by other users. Also comes with the latest news from the Bavarian brand to whet the appetite of enthusiasts.



NAVFREE
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
This "crowd-powered" navigation app becomes more comprehensive as its user community grows. Navfree matches the functionality of most portable satnav units with turn-by-turn directions and voice guidance, two- and three-dimensional views, intuitive menus with large buttons, day and night illumination, automatic re-routing and zooming at intersections. It also comes with a handy pedestrian navigation function and the use of Google to search locations directly. Conveniently stores maps directly on your device, so there's no need for a constant data connection when in use.



GOOGLE PLACES
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
A handy map-based app that finds restaurants, shops, ATMs, petrol stations and hotels (to name a few) near you, including reader reviews. Add your own categories or sign up and submit your own reviews, similar to the Urbanspoon app.



TUNEIN RADIO
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
Listen to more than 50,000 radio stations from around the world live from wherever you are. It's a surreal experience to hear crystal-clear music or talkback radio from Senegal, Serbia or Sri Lanka through your car's audio system, once your device is plugged in or streaming via Bluetooth. Browse by location, music genre or language and add to your station presets.



CAR AUDIO DECK
iPHONE, \$0.99
As the name says, turns your iPhone into a car audio deck with a crisp LCD display, classic deck-style buttons and a shiny silver volume dial. It doesn't replace your phone's default music player for functionality, but the beauty of this app is its simplicity for minimal distraction.



AU DRIVER KNOWLEDGE TEST
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE/\$2.99
One of the better learner-driver licence-test apps available, presenting more than 100 multiple-choice questions to help beginners pass their learners' test. The app is divided into three sections. "Mock" requires you to answer a minimum number of questions correctly and provides a summary and review at the end of the test. "Practice" helps you work on specific areas. And "Progress Monitor" saves your results to highlight areas of strength and weakness. Requires no internet connection once installed.



AUSSIE DRIVING LOG
iPHONE, \$0.99
Helps users keep track of kilometres travelled for business purposes or for complying with the strict reporting requirements for salary-sacrificed cars, with quick and easy data entry. Once you've added your trip you can view reports from your phone and email them to your accountant. Complies with Australian Tax Office requirements.



TIMESHEET AND MOTOR VEHICLE LOG BOOK
iPHONE, \$0.99
If you're a consultant or contractor, this aptly titled app helps you to record the time and mileage spent on the road. Collects relevant data required by the tax office to make it easier to claim expenses. Data can be imported from popular bookkeeping software and exported to a spreadsheet.



PARKPATROL: PARKING OFFICER ALERTS
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE/\$1.99
There are plenty of parking apps to give you reminder alerts of when and where you parked - most of which are just a dressed-up alarm, timer and GPS checkpoint tool. This parking app's piece de resistance, however, is instant notification of pesky parking officers reported near your checked-in car. Upgrade adds a draggable parking pin to adjust your parking position.



ANTI SLEEP PILOT
iPHONE, \$1.99
Helps to keep you alert when behind the wheel. It does this by calculating your fatigue level using reaction times from basic tests that also help to maintain your alertness. These pop up intermittently and include pressing a big circular button as soon as it is safely possible to do so. It requires the building of a driver profile and you need to indicate your current fatigue level prior to setting off (either via the scroll menu or by completing a questionnaire) to enable the app to calculate when to recommend a break. Perfect for long hauls, night-shift workers and driving at night or alone.



INGOGO
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
There are plenty of taxi apps specific to cities or businesses that enable



users to locate and book cabs and help them jump the queue on a Saturday night. Ingogo, however, claims to be the only app that puts you in direct contact with the nearest authorised cabbies, who you can then see approaching live on a GPS map. You can even chat directly with the driver via a messaging system.

CAR TOOLS
iPHONE, FREE
This is an app that mimics a VBOX GPS-based data logger to measure speed and position of a moving vehicle - except that it is free. In addition to measuring current speed (in digital or analogue formats), it records G-forces (similar to HSV's latest data logger) and comes with a powerful little chronometer to record your performance times across varying distances (such as 0 metres-400 metres and 0 metres-1000 metres) and 0-100km/h times.



DYNOLICIOUS
iPHONE, \$13.99
Dynoxious is more advanced than the Car Tools app with greater usability for engine tuners and legal, off-street drag racers. Its features include the ability to measure engine power output like a dynamometer - hence the app's name - once you've entered the vehicle's weight. You can also record vehicle modifications and evaluate the resulting gains (or losses) in power and performance.



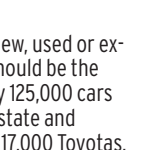
GOPOINT
ANDROID/iPAD/iPHONE, FREE
Use your iPhone/iPad to interpret and remove the "check engine" dash warnings by plugging into your car's on-board diagnostics port, or OBD-II port, which is usually under the dash. Requires a GoPoint cable or Bluetooth receiver, which cost about \$60 and \$70 respectively from the developer's website (or cheaper elsewhere). Also includes data of average fuel use and engine parameters. Your local mechanic will do the same thing using far more expensive scanning tools. Perfect for enthusiasts and DIY types, it can save you money and a trip to the mechanic for something as simple as a loose fuel cap.



DASHCOMMAND
iPAD/iPHONE/PC, \$51.99
As its loftier price suggests, this on-board diagnostics scan tool is GoPoint on steroids and aimed at experts, professionals and racing types. In addition to GoPoint's features, DashCommand offers a plethora of gauges and information - be it for performance, fuel economy or engine gauges - and comes with a sophisticated trip computer with more than 40 statistics. Also uses GPS to measure vehicle speed and acceleration.



DRIVE A DEAL
IF YOU'RE searching for a new, used or ex-demo car, your first stop should be the Drive app. Drive lists nearly 125,000 cars covering every Australian state and territory, including almost 17,000 Toyotas, more than 11,000 Fords and even rarities from the likes of Bolwell, Morgan, Studebaker, TVR and Wolseley. It's available for both iPhone and Android models and is free to download from the iTunes store and Google Play respectively.



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