

NAVIGATING *THE TIKI WAY*



I tried TIKI while cruising the West Country this summer. A Contessa 26 doesn't provide much space for electronics and due to a mixture of inertia and power considerations, I'd been reluctant to ditch the paper charts and GPS in favour of a chartplotter or laptop.

TIKI didn't completely convert me, but it showed the advantages of electronic navigation for tricky routes – half a dozen clicks and I had set a route to guide me around shoals whose positions would have taken ages to read off the chart. Even integrating the system with paper proved straightforward – TIKI provides latitude and longitude for all the waypoints or can use EasyGPS, a utility which Jenssen provides with TIKI to upload the waypoints to your GPS electronically.

Once I got used to the pop-up menus, TIKI proved

intuitive to use at a basic level and much less cluttered than equivalent Windows-format programs. It uses Maptech, NDI or SoftChart charts, offsetting many of the disadvantages of raster cartography through ready switching between small- and large-scale coverage.

Two versions of TIKI are available: the full Pro version (€99.50) and a Basic version (€49.95), which drops some of the instrument support and routing facilities. A planning version, designed without instrument support for home use costs €26.90. Though designed for PC, TIKI Navigator Pro ran successfully on a Mac PowerBook G4 running VirtualPC 7.

MapTech charts for the UK cost £86.05 ex VAT per area. www.tiki-navigator.com for information and to buy licences or download a demo.

One of the first things you notice on starting TIKI Navigator is how little it owes to the graphics-heavy operating system PC users are used to. Goodbye menu bar, hello bright colours and large text. At first glance, it looks a little clunky compared with the slick presentation of office applications, but out at sea Norwegian author Fred Jenssen's thinking makes sense.

Barring exceptions such as waypoint names, TIKI is entirely mouse-driven, which means the keyboard of an onboard PC can be stowed and the system driven instead with a trackball. Several areas of the screen are active – hover the mouse pointer over the top-left corner and a neat menu appears that allows you to change the chart, zoom level or day/night palette, or set up full-screen or split-screen

functions with a single click. Go right and the main menu pops up, providing access to your waypoint and route menus, system settings and options to interface with your instruments and autopilot.

At the bottom of the screen, a bar appears with a graphical representation of keyboard function keys, allowing you to set shortcuts for your favourite actions, as well as a big MOB button, which immediately starts monitoring course and distance back to the position where it was activated.

But my favourite feature is the basic system of chart control – a right click brings up a simple, nine-button box that allows you to switch between chart scales, zoom in on the same chart or 'find ship'. Move away from the menu and it disappears to leave a clear screen. Neat.

