

OUR CHEAP (BUT BRILLIANT!) TABLET CHARTPLOTTER



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<http://bit.ly/TREASURE> 

Our Cheap (But Brilliant!) Tablet Chartplotter

By the time you finish reading this PDF, you will have the details of our exact tablet chartplotter setup. If you would like to follow our lead on this and take advantage of the many hours of research we put into choosing this solution, here it is - in a concise and convenient format!



Introduction

Marine chartplotters are designed for use at sea and they do have some advantages over the solution we chose. However, going down the tablet route offers the following benefits:

1) A tablet is significantly cheaper than a marine chartplotter.

2) A tablet chartplotter is portable. This has numerous advantages:

- You can use it in different parts of the boat. (Use it at the helm, take it with you inside the boat while underway, or for passage planning, or to have an anchor alarm running on it which can wake you up if your anchor drags while you're asleep.)

- You can take it with you in your dinghy and use it to navigate around an anchorage or the local area.

- You can take it ashore and do your passage planning in a coffee shop, for example.

- If you are caught in an electrical storm, you can put your tablet inside the oven (or a microwave, or a biscuit tin, or whatever other metal box you have on board) and this will act as a Faraday Cage. Even if your boat gets struck by lightning, your tablet chartplotter should escape completely unscathed.

- When you eventually sell your boat, you can take the tablet with you, without feeling like you have deprived the next owner of a part of the boat itself!

3) It can be used for other things. We personally try to leave this tablet for navigation only, as this keeps the memory clear and keeps the tablet working at its optimal performance. However, if you need to go online to look something up, or if you want to store some important documents like an Engine Workshop Manual PDF, our [Emergency Welding for Sailors PDF](#), or some other document you would like to have at hand, then the option is open to you.

4) The hardware is based on the latest technology. Marine plotters lag behind consumer electronics and you get a lot more 'bang for your buck' by buying a tablet, as the manufacturer is competing with all other manufacturers for a mass-market product, rather than with a much smaller number of competitors in the niche - and seemingly perennially overpriced - marine market.

That's why we went for a tablet instead of a marine chartplotter.


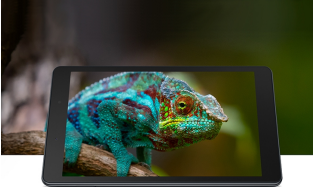






Part 1: Which tablet we chose - and why!

After deciding to go down the tablet route, there are two directions you can go down: iPad, or non-iPad. We love iPads. We have a couple and they are very reliable - and they really do last for years. However, we chose an android tablet for this application, primarily to save money. When you can have an equivalent Android system for a fraction of the price of an iPad, we personally choose to save those funds and invest them instead, so that they go to work for us and help fund our ongoing cruising adventures!

You can also add micro SD memory to an Android tablet, and this can make a huge difference in how much money you spend on a system. A 512 GB SD micro-card is very inexpensive when you go to price up an iPad with 512 GB of memory!...

I (You'll have to excuse me for mixing the terms 'we' and 'I': everything that Rossella and I do in life, we do together as a team, hence the 'we'. However, there are certain things which Rossella leaves to me, and vice versa, hence the switching between the two...) spent many hours trawling the internet comparing different options and reading lots of user manuals etc. In the end, this is the tablet which I chose which best met all of our requirements:

<p>SAMSUNG</p> <p>Galaxy Tab A</p> <p>Big screen feel. Featherlight form.</p> 	 <p>Minimum bezel. Maximum view.</p> <p>The Galaxy Tab A 8.0" is designed with a minimized bezel, giving you more room to view your favorite content in a slim, comfortable form. The premium metallic finish and lightweight design make it easy to use around the house or on the go.</p>
 <p>Entertainment-ready</p> <p>An 8.0" display immerses you in content, and dual speakers deliver spacious surround sound.</p>	 <p>Binge-ready battery</p> <p>Browse, watch or shop up to 13 hours* on a full charge. Even after playing your favorite games during the day, there's still enough power to catch up on your must-see shows later.</p>
 <p>Room for everything</p> <p>Keep your favorite songs, photos, videos and games, thanks to 32GB of built-in memory. If you do ever need more, you can expand your storage space up to 512GB with a microSD card.**</p>	 <p>Capture and connect.</p> <p>Create and capture crisp photos with autofocus on the 8MP rear camera, and take selfies or video chat on the front-facing camera.</p>

It is a Samsung Galaxy Tab A (8.0 2019). This has an 8" screen, which I believe is the perfect size: it is convenient to use in many different situations, and it is big enough for you to see a decent chart area, yet it is small enough to be easily-handled and portable. As an added bonus it also fits perfectly nestled in the 'roll bar' above our binnacle-mounted compass on Britaly, and no doubt would on many other boats too.

[Bear in mind that anything with a magnetic field can interfere with your compass readings, and the closer and object is to your compass the more likely this is to be a problem . Look up the term "Compass Deviation" if you don't already know what this is...]

Here are some of the reasons I chose this tablet:

- Its very reasonable price. We paid £139.99 (170 USD) for our "Samsung Galaxy Tab A 8.0 2019", including delivery. [I erroneously thought I bought this from Argos, but when I searched in my email for the receipt I discovered/remembered that I found a more convenient deal from John Lewis at the last moment...] Some time has passed since I bought this, so the price has come down even further. I looked today you can get a new one of these tablets on Amazon.com for 139.99 USD. Bargain!
- It has excellent battery life. Samsung quote 13 hours, but I believe this is calculated with constant video playback. I have found it lasts 20 hours + whilst being used for navigation. (In flight mode - no phone signal is needed anyway.)
- It has a Quad-Core, 2.0 GHz Processor.
- It has 32 GB internal memory **PLUS** you can add up to 512 GB with a micro-SD card.
- It has an internal GPS chip (essential for this use of course!), but the chip uses GPS **plus** GLONASS **plus** BDS satellites. It's nice to have so much redundancy, and with 3 satellite constellations to get updates from, wherever you are in the world you can expect to get good satellite coverage.
- It can do many other things. If you drop your mobile phone overboard, you might be glad to have a tablet which can replace it until you can get a new one. You have a camera available at all times for that breaching whale or pod of dolphins you unexpectedly see when you're chilling in the cockpit. If you have a baby on the boat, you can use the tablet to display the video from a WIFI camera, and I'm sure you can think of 100 different uses for a tablet on board a boat...

Once you have bought your tablet it's time to reduce the reflections from the screen by adding an anti-glare screen protector. These are very economical to buy, easy to apply, and get rid of the shiny screen so that you can read the display in sunny conditions. We bought ours on ebay for \$6.47, including shipping from Germany to the UK.

Order summary



ebay MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

2x Samsung Galaxy Tab A 8.0 (2019) Screen Protector Protection Anti Glar...

Total: £5.99

Order number: 27-03865-74877

Item number: 264454090542

Order details



Estimated delivery:

Wed, 18 Sep - Wed, 25 Sep



Your order will be dispatched to:

c/o Gillingham Marina Chandlery ,
173 Pier Road
Gillingham, Kent ME7 1UB
United Kingdom

I also highly recommend you get a good shockproof and waterproof case. I was in a rush to set off on my solo sail to Belgium when I bought our case, so I grabbed a shockproof case which would be delivered quickly, and for waterproofing I simply wrapped the tablet and case combo with some cling film food wrap...

Very posh(!)

Here is the case we got, but there may well be better options out there. I didn't have time to source a waterproof and shockproof version, but this cheap case probably saved the tablet, as I did drop it a couple of times during the passage (Sssshhhh, don't tell Rossella this: I'm always dropping things!..)

An alternative to finding a waterproof and shockproof case is to add a (Proper, commercially-made) flexible waterproof case on top of a standard shockproof case like this one.

Order summary



For Samsung **Galaxy** Tab A 8.0 2019 SM-T290/T295
Shockproof Rugged Stand C...

SKU: Color: Black
Total: £8.54
Order number: 02-03867-66934
Item number: 283606208439

ebay MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

Order details



Estimated delivery:
Thu, 19 Sep - Fri, 20 Sep



Your order will be dispatched to:
c/o Gillingham Marina Chandlery ,
173 Pier Road
Gillingham, Kent ME7 1UB
United Kingdom

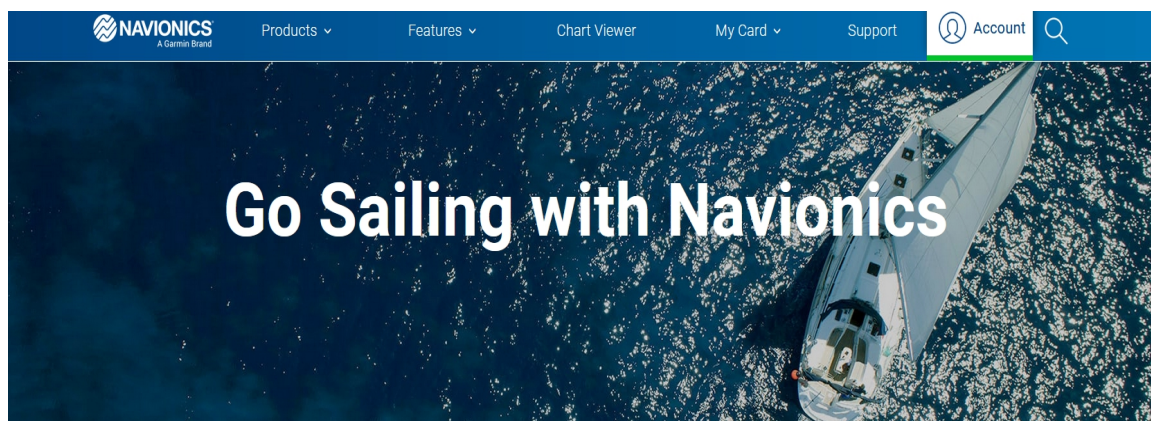
You may then decide to add some 'quick release mounting stations' for your tablet. There are a myriad of options for this: from magnets (Do not use anywhere near your compass!) to 'clamps', to velcro, to strategically-placed bungee cord. Bespoke solution can meet your various needs around the boat and make it very easy to move your plotter around.

If you have chosen to go down this route with us then congratulations: you now have a very capable tablet chartplotter, which can also do many other things if you need it to!



Part 2: Software

Now it's time to turn your tablet into a plotter. There are lots of different options here, but I will tell you about the option we went for.



If Sailing Is Your Passion

Sailing is all about freedom and love for the sea and nature. But it's also about being alert to depths and changes and interpreting winds. Electronic charts can be of great help on the water, providing information and tools that will greatly improve your sailing life.

Your passion counts for us. Create an account, and receive news on the latest features to take your time on the water to the next level. Get tips from our pros in our monthly webinar series.

We chose Navionics Software. We have used this extensively in the past and we find it very easy to use and we have found the charts to be excellent.

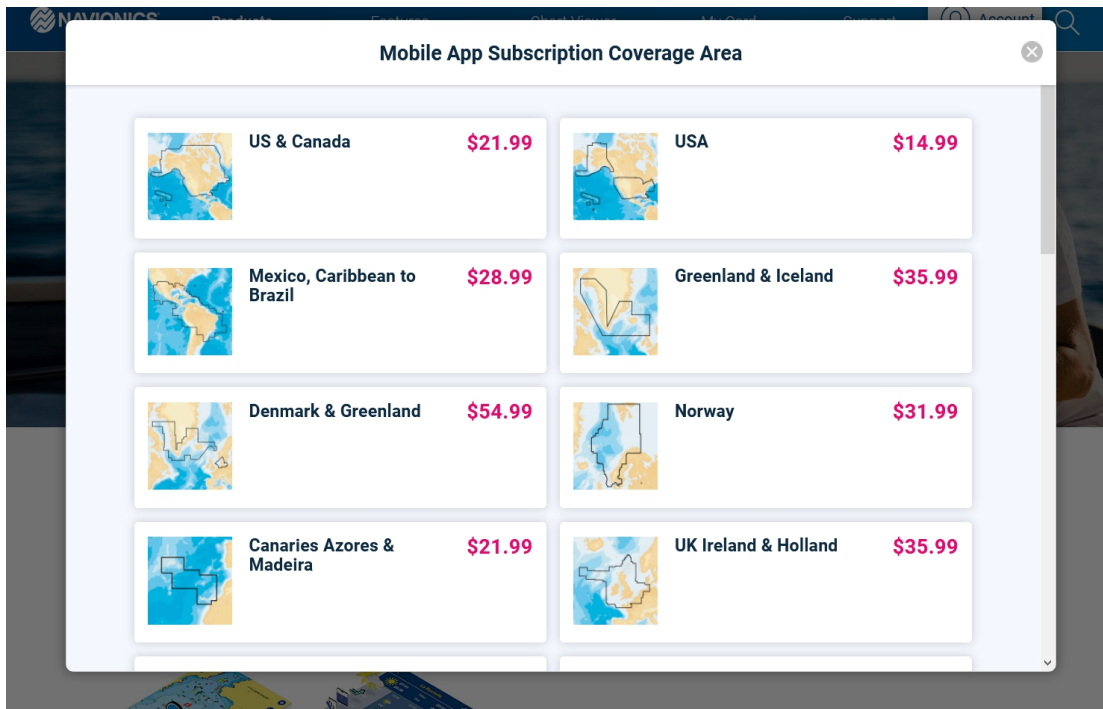
Have a look at the charts yourself - here is the desktop version of their software, which is free for anyone to use (this is very handy for passage planning or scoping out potential destinations) pick any area you like and have a play: <https://webapp.navionics.com>

I have recently found the tidal information to be very useful and intuitive.

Installing Navionics is really simple. You go to the Google Play Store, download the App (free) and I believe you get a 14-day trial so you can see if it floats your boat. You then purchase a subscription for the chart areas you need.

(The subscription can be used across different devices, so you can use the same login to access Navionics with your smartphone too, for example).

You download your area of interest to your tablet so that you can then access all of your charts whilst you are offline, and you are good to go!



N.B. If you let your subscription expire you can still use the app and you still get to keep the charts on your device - they just don't get updated by Navionics any more. Out of date charts can still be very useful, as long as you are aware of the potential dangers of something changing and not being reflected on your outdated chart. (The annual subscription is good value though, especially when you consider how much paper charts cost).

You can enter your boat information so that it can intelligently calculate routes, ETA's, fuel consumption, etc. and entering your boat details so that the software can do this only takes you a minute.

For a fairly comprehensive video of what you can do with Navionics, watch [this video](#). The software can do a lot more than this, but this should give you an idea of how useful this software is, and how easy it is to use on a tablet. This is not the kind of software you need to sit down and read a manual for - you can just start using it and pick it up as you go along, it is very intuitive.

We really do love Navionics and we hope that the business model they have had since we started using them years ago continues. (They were bought by Garmin a while back, but so far so good in terms of what we get as end users...)



Conclusion

There you are, that is our solution to the electronic chart question on board *Britaly*. You can now get yourself set up effortlessly with a very affordable, yet capable, tablet chartplotter, and we hope that you get many years of service from it if you choose to go down the same route that we did.

We are extremely happy that the time I put in to researching what to buy paid off, and we are happy to think that we may have been able to save you lots of time, effort and energy if you choose to go down the same route as us.

We hope you found this useful. :-)

Fair winds!



Chris, Rossella & Emma :-)