

# Working with Garmin gpx files

*By Jeff Causey*

As some folks know, a "skill" I've managed to pickup over the past couple years is the creation of routes for the GPS unit I use in my MINI. This is useful since many of our runs and rallies do not consist of the shortest route from A to B and being able to preprogram the route helps (mostly) avoid missed turns. One of my goals when I started doing them was to be able to share the routes with others in the club so they too could load them on their MINIs. It always helps to have more than one person know where they are going. So I frequently put together route files and post them on the THMMC site.

However, on occasion I find fellow motorers who need some help on the process to get the file from the Internet and onto their GPS. Especially since some care has to be taken in how you save the file. This guide will hopefully help those trying to use my routes (or anyone else's routes).

## Some Basics

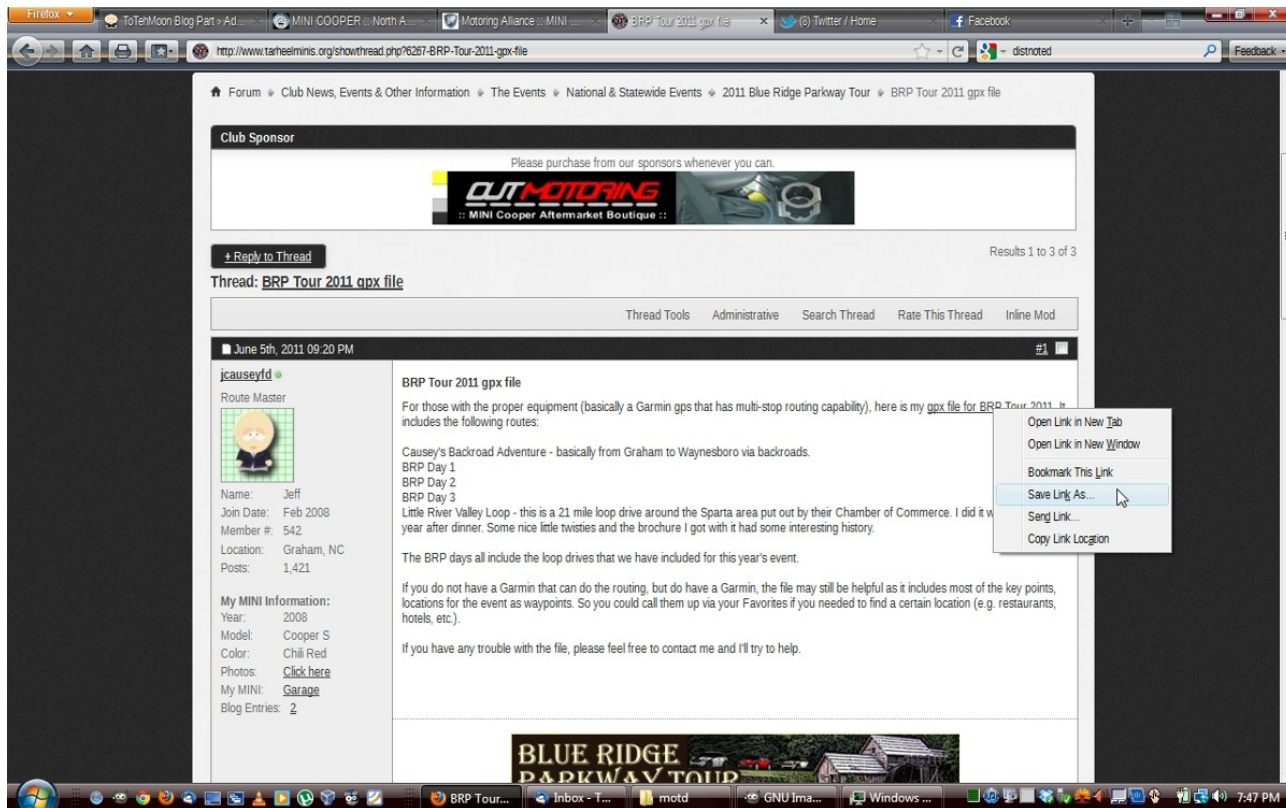
Before getting into the whole process, let's talk a little bit about what we are dealing with and what one needs to use the files. First up – hardware. To really make use of the route files, you will need a GPS that can load it. The routes I put together are for Garmin GPS units (alas, one day I may be able to invest in a good TomTom (which an Ease is not what I would consider a "good" TomTom) to figure out how to do a conversion). Specifically, a Garmin that can do "multi stop routing" is what is needed. You can find the models that support this on the Garmin web site using their product search function. If you already have a Garmin that does not have this feature, the files may still be useful to you as they will load as a bunch of Favorites and you can call them up as your destination (or manually create the route, which would not be too terribly difficult with my naming schemes).

The other thing I will note is that the files produced are .gpx files. If you open one, you will discover that it is really just a text file containing an XML schema. So it is not something magical. The biggest problem I see with this though is it makes working with the files a bit of a challenge. Browsers, because they see it as nothing more than a text file, like to just open them in a new window/tab if you click on the link to them. And depending on how your operating system works, it may want to automatically append a .txt file extension.

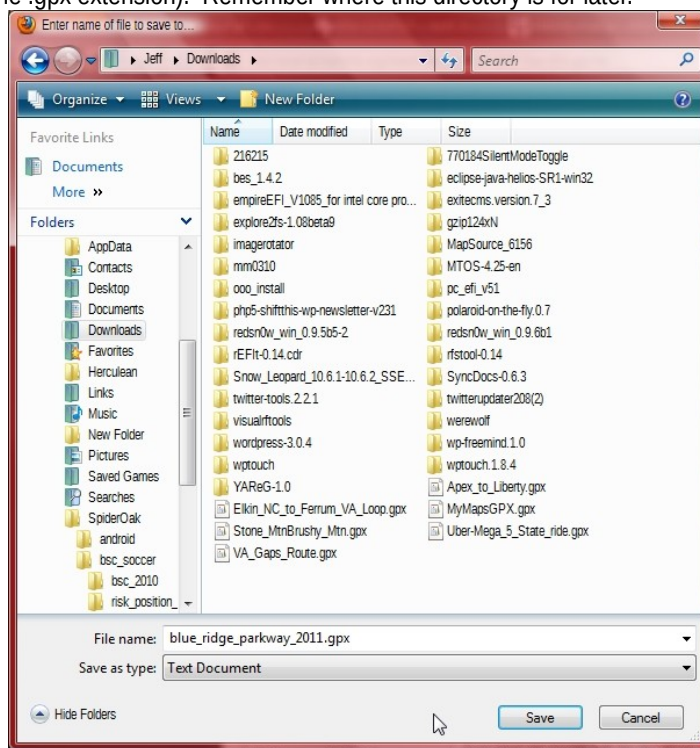
Finally, the screenshots below were all done on Windows Vista using Firefox 5.0 or on my Garmin, which is a 755 unit (a bit dated, but reliable). If you are using a different OS, browser, or Garmin model, there will obviously be differences. Hopefully you can figure out what you need to do using this.

## Saving the File

The first step is to find the file and save it. Below is a screenshot of the post I made for the Blue Ridge Parkway Tour gpx file. As you can see, I have right-clicked on the link to the file and I'm ready to do a "Save Link As..."

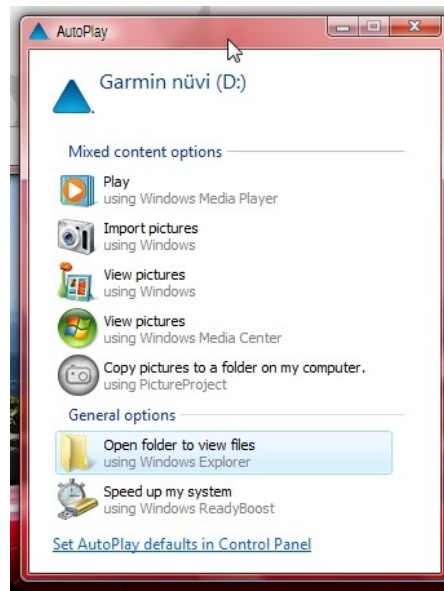


Upon doing that, I decide where to save it. You might notice my browser thinks it is a Text Document (which is ok), but it is saving the .gpx extension (and only the .gpx extension). Remember where this directory is for later.

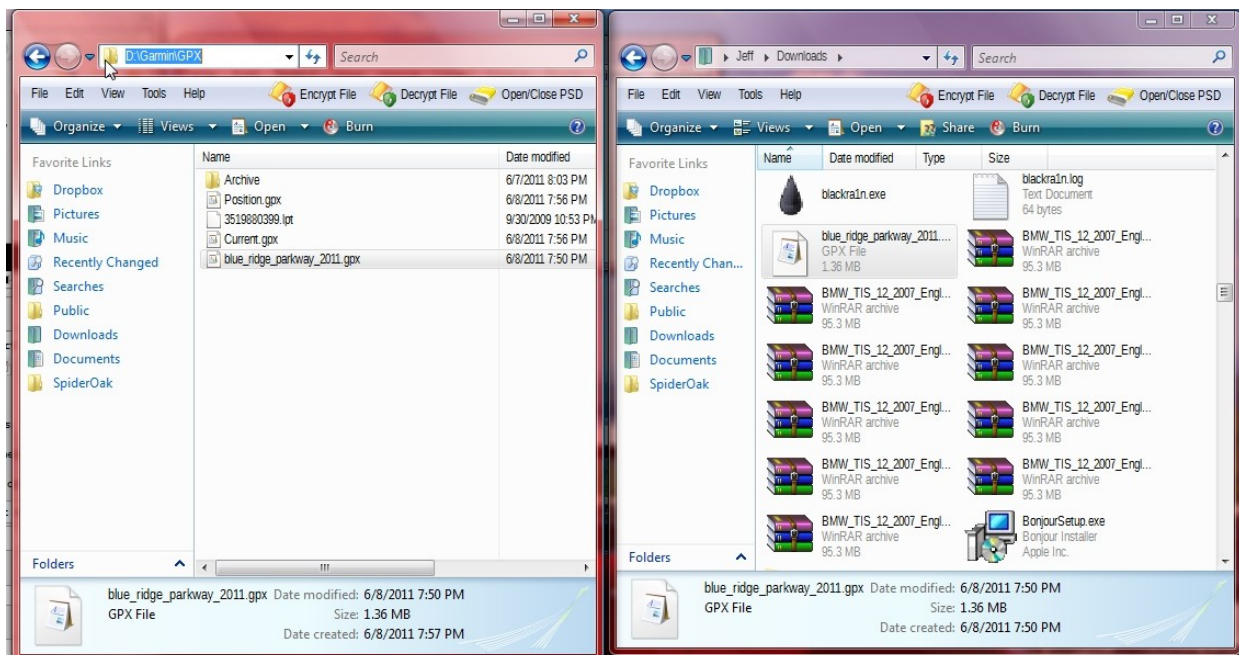


## Getting the File Onto the Garmin

Now that we have saved the file to our computer, the next step is to copy it over to the Garmin. To start this process, plug the Garmin into your computer using the USB cable. This should cause the Garmin to power on as a USB device and on most computers, after a few seconds of waiting, will result in something similar to the Autoplay dialog box opening as shown below:



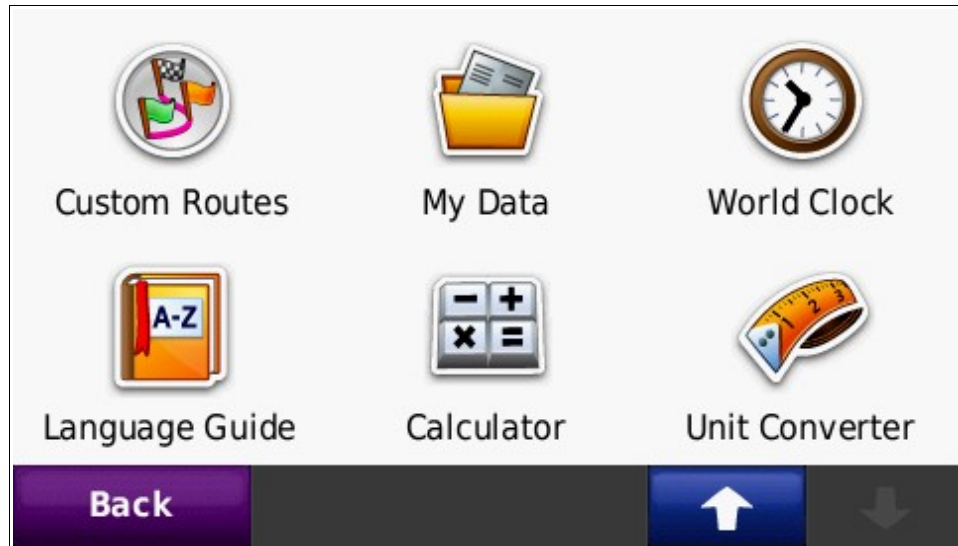
When that opens, select the option to open the folder to view files. Once that is open, you need to navigate to the Garmin/GPX folder. That is the location where you need to copy the file to. For this guide, as shown below, I've opened a second window where I saved the file initially, and I then copy and paste it into the folder on the Garmin:



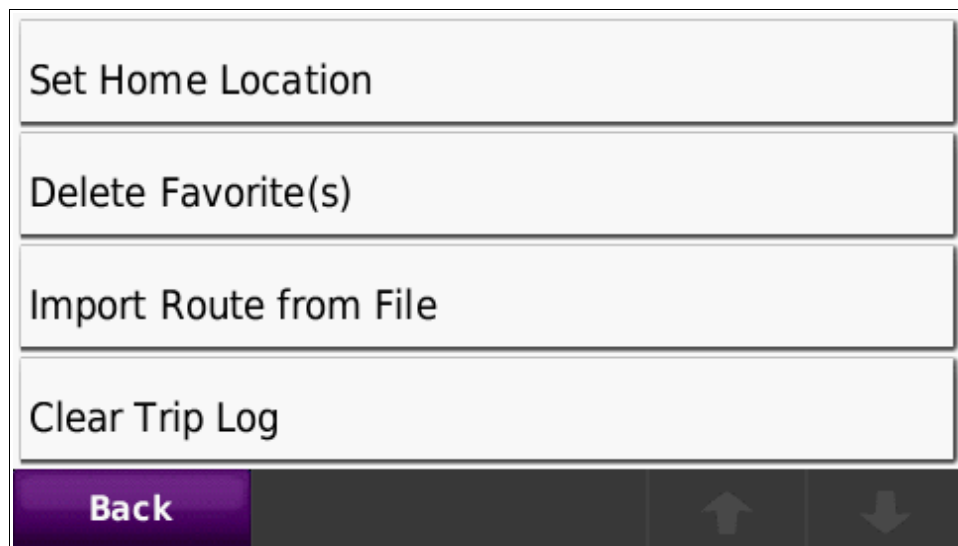
Once copied over, you can close your windows and disconnect the Garmin from the computer as that ends the part of the process that involves the computer.

## Importing the Route on the Garmin

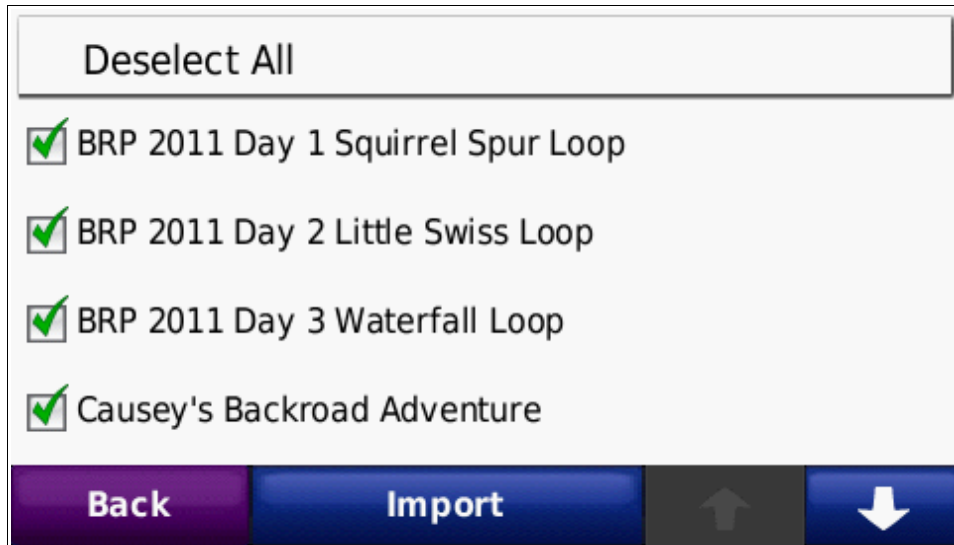
The rest of our steps occur on the Garmin. The first step is to navigate to the tools area of the Garmin and scroll down to find “My Data”:



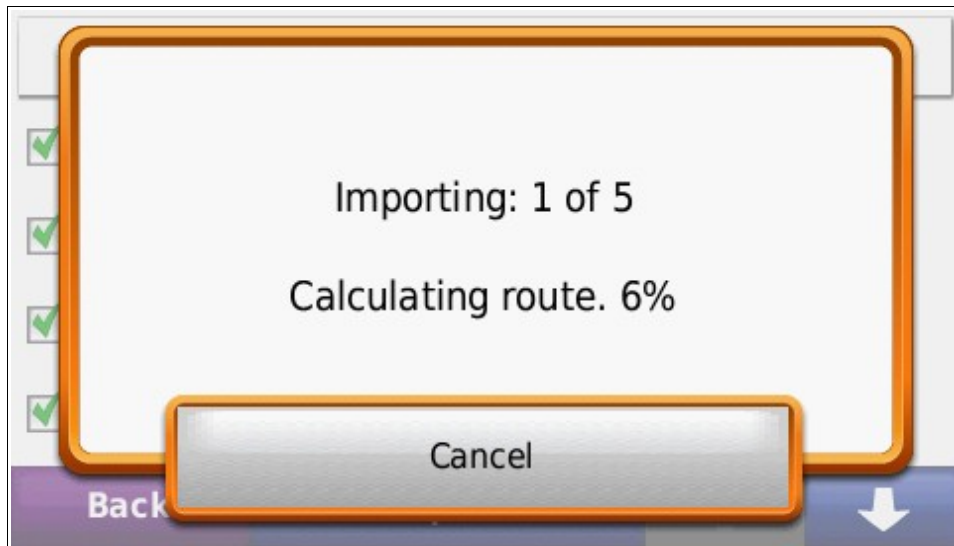
Select that to bring up the next screen:



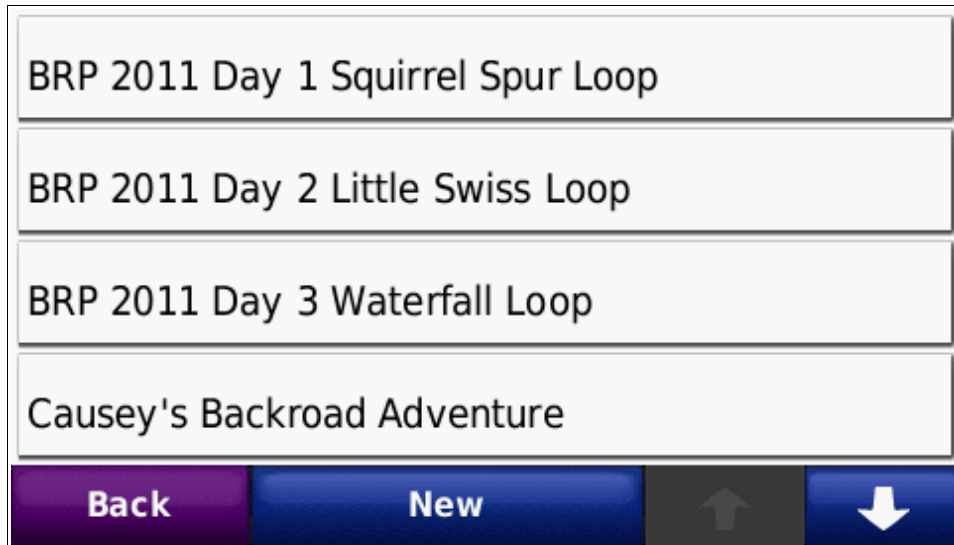
On that screen you select "Import Route from File". If everything has worked as planned, you should be presented with a list of the routes that are in the file. May be one route, may be several. In our example here, you can see there are several routes included. I've gone ahead and selected all of them to be imported:



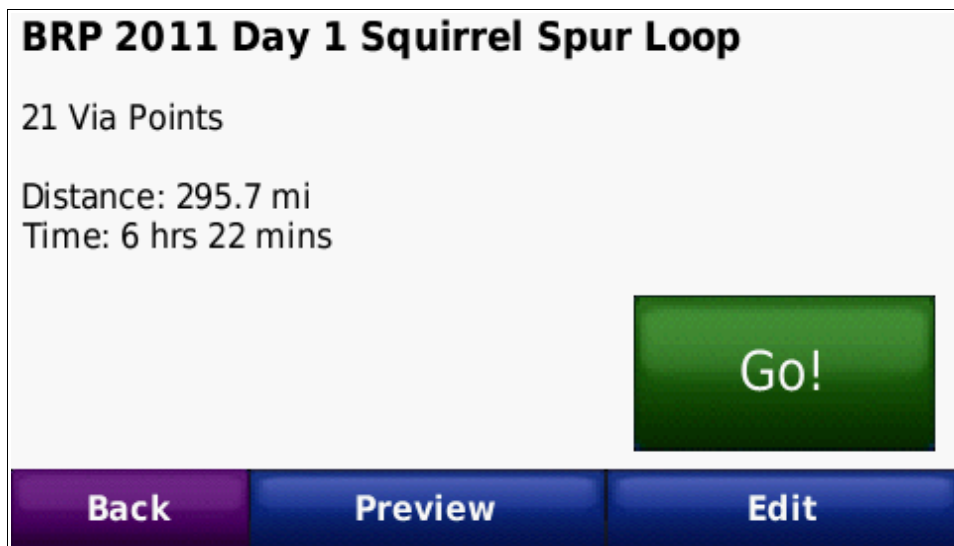
Then hit the "Import" button and watch the magic progress:



Until the unit reports the import was successful. If you then back out from there, you'll eventually get back to the screen where the "My Data" icon was. You should have another icon there (technically it was there all along, I'm just now mentioning it) for "Custom Routes". If you click on that, you will discover the list of routes:



Select one of the routes to go to the next screen that gives you some basic info about the route and options to "Go", "Edit" or "Preview" (and I suppose "Back" is an option as well):



For now I'll just Preview the route and I see that it is in there (and for now, without zooming in to check things out, I'll assume it is accurate):



And that is it – you are ready to motor following a pre-programmed route

Hope this helps anyone have trouble. If you still experience problems though, please feel free to contact me. And if you want to donate a good TomTom that supports their version of routes to me for testing...

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