

GARMIN D2 BRAVO STEPS UP GARMIN'S WATCH GAME

News / Business aviation



Less than two years after releasing its first pilot watch, the D2, **Garmin** has stepped up its commitment to the pilot community with the more capable **D2 Bravo**.

The original D2 retails for \$449 and has a 70 x 70-pixel monochrome, negative-mode LCD and 20 megabytes of memory. The \$699 D2 Bravo is a much better looking wristwatch, with a transfective “memory-in-pixel” color display surrounded by an attractive metal bezel and fronted with a sapphire lens. The handsome thick brown leather band and elegant mechanical design features make the D2 Bravo look like a substantial and powerful device. The Bravo has a thinner profile than the D2, although it does have a slightly larger diameter, and the display offers much higher resolution at 218 x 218 pixels. Both weigh almost the same, 2.98 ounces for the Bravo versus 2.9 ounces for the D2. Battery life of the Bravo is six weeks in watch mode compared with five weeks for the D2. Using the GPS/Glonass sensor built in to the watches shortens battery life, with the Bravo at 50 hours in UltraTrac mode and 20 hours in GPS flight mode. The D2 runs up to 50 hours in GPS mode. Memory on the Bravo is 32 megabytes, although only 23 of those are available.

While the D2 Bravo can't upload flight plans from the Garmin Pilot app to the watch, as the original

D2 could, it has plenty of useful aviation functions (as well as a full slate of sports functions, including swimming). The Bravo has a worldwide database, a barometric altimeter with altimeter setting, three-axis compass with HSI, Metar display, dedicated direct-to and nearest buttons and Zulu time display.

I've been wearing the D2 Bravo for almost two months and enjoying both the smartwatch features and aviation functions. Like most smartwatches, the Bravo connects to iPhone or Android devices via Bluetooth and receives notifications directly from the device. The notification screen shows a summary of recent items, and it's easy to select any item and read the entire notification.

The altimeter has an alert setting, which warns with a beep and wrist buzz when nearing and leaving the set altitude. I like to use the altimeter alert to make sure the cabin stops climbing after reaching maximum differential in a pressurized airplane. The Metar function is handy for a quick look at weather conditions, and it's useful to be able to check the weather at airports all over the world. Of course, this depends on the smartphone being able to pull the data from the Internet or cellular network via Bluetooth.

The Bravo's navigation data fields are customizable, and a variety of watch faces are available. I prefer to keep Zulu time on the watch face, and I also switched on the automatic time zone adjustment, so the watch updates the time when it gets a clean GPS signal. The timer function ends with a beep and wrist buzz, and although this could be useful for timing an IFR approach, I'm not sure this makes sense because setting a time and launching the timer takes quite a few button pushes. This may be better for timing fuel tank usage.

I didn't miss the original D2's flight plan capability; most of the time I used the direct-to function, and this works great on the Bravo. The GPS/Glonass antenna is quite sensitive and easily receives signal when I wear the Bravo on the wrist closest to an airline window or in the cockpit of a business jet. I did experience one problem where the watch just locked up and displayed only "Garmin" on the screen, and I had to do a forced reset. After that it worked fine.

The Garmin D2 Bravo is a sophisticated and good-looking horological machine, with a full slate of aviation and sports features, and Garmin has definitely moved into a higher level of the watch world with this one.

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