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## Idea of the Week

*Smart cars for tourists are talk of the town*

As summer gets under way, tourist businesses in Britain's big cities may wish to look at a company in San Francisco that provides visitors to the city with computer-guided talking cars, writes Julie Earle-Levine.

Tourists can drive the vehicles, called Go Cars, without the need for a guide because they use the Global Positioning System (GPS) to give directions and a commentary on the city's attractions.

Whenever a Go Car passes a landmark, the onboard computer calls out information such as: "Check out the view on the left".



The three-wheel, two-seater cars can be rented by the hour. They cost \$40 (£22) for the first hour, \$30 for the second, then \$20 for the third, fourth and fifth hours. Tours last an average of two hours.

The Go Car Rentals company was started by an Englishman, Nathan Withrington, with his friend Alasdair Clements.

Withrington came up with the idea and bought the \$6,000 Trigger cars from Holland. Then he hired a programmer to experiment with the technology.

The company started in April with eight cars, which have 50cc engines that can give a top speed of 30mph. The Go Car has the additional advantage of being able to visit neighbourhoods where tour buses are banned.

They have proved so popular in San Francisco that the company is already looking to expand. Withrington said: "We want to take the technology to the biggest tourism markets, and London would be great."

If you agree, it might be time to check out the idea yourself.