

Geocaching – The new orienteering

Imagine sitting on a bench, overlooking a valley. On the other side of the valley, mountains, rugged, sit watching you, watch them. The song bird's call as the sun begins to set. It is peaceful here, and after a ten mile bike ride up hill, a wonderful break before the downhill run back to the village. Just as you are starting to leave, a family approaches with a GPS in hand. They stop to admire the view, then they spread out, looking for something, perhaps they had lost something on their last jaunt. I casually ask them if I can assist, and the gentleman, who I now know as Poppa90, says, "Should not tell you as you are a muggle, but you look like an honest enough fellow. We are looking for a geocache." His son looks underneath the bench, and says, "I've got it!" With a big smile on his face he pulls out a magnetic key holder. They open it and inside is a simple roll of paper that they sign their names on. Poppa asks, "Want to sign it." And the obsession began.

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On May 2, 2000 a major upgrade was done. The government had planned to remove selective availability - but had until 2006 to do so. Now, said the White House, anyone could "precisely pinpoint their location or the location of items (such as game) left behind for later recovery." How right they were. On May 3, 2000 a gentleman by the name of Dave Ulmer decided to test the accuracy of the sat system, by placing a five gallon bucket he painted black in the woods outside Portland, OR filled with trinkets. Those coordinates are N 45 17.460 W 122 24.800. Within three days, four GPS users hunted and found the hide, and wrote about it online. By September 7, 2000 there were 72 caches hidden around the world. On November 15, 2007 – there were over 482,000 caches hidden around the world.

Geocaching is simply a treasure hunt utilizing GPS coordinates to find the hidden caches.

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But what tools does a Troop need to locate these hides?

GPS – I found my first 25 without one, and I found them on High Mountain trails, so this is not one hundred percent required. If you have no GPS, move to items below.

Map, Compass and Google Earth – This is how I found my first 25 geocache's with my family. Laid out a map, used a conversion website to convert GPS to Lat and Long, and then used my compass and map grids to get the basic area. I went online and read the hints to help define the search, I also used Google Earth to pinpoint the location!

www.geocaching.com – Must have access to this site in order to begin geocaching!

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What are the rules:

- Have fun and explore – take in the sights the sounds. Read the placards, walk the trails, watch nature
- Take something, leave something – if you remove something from the cache, make sure and replace the item with something that is equal to its worth
- Place container back in same spot and as well hidden as found – hide the cache as well as it was hidden before you found it.
- Respect your surroundings, leave no trace – watch your step, pick up trash and carry it out with you. Leave it better than you found it.
- Allow no muggles to see you, they have a tendency to take the cache – muggles do not understand the game, so they take the cache, then that leaves others no cache to find.

- You are here for the fun of the hunt, if you can not find, still enjoy the hunt – remember why you are doing this, maybe it is about history, or nature, or exercise. Get caught up in where it takes you, not in finding the cache. That is secondary to the experience.

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What exactly am I looking for?

Truly the question is, what exactly am I not looking for? There are six primary cache finds:

Traditional Cache: This is the original cache type consisting, at a bare minimum, a container and a log book. Normally you'll find a tupperware container, ammo box, or bucket filled with goodies, or smaller container ("micro cache") too small to contain items except for a log book. The coordinates listed on the traditional cache page is the exact location for the cache.

Multi-cache: A multi-cache ("multiple") involves two or more locations, the final location being a physical container. There are many variations, but most multi-caches have a hint to find the second cache, and the second cache has hints to the third, and so on. An offset cache (where you go to a location and get hints to the actual cache) is considered a multi-cache.

Unknown Cache: The "catch-all" of cache types, this form of cache can involve complicated puzzles you will first need to solve to determine the coordinates. The only commonality of this cache type is that the coordinates listed are not of the actual cache location but a general reference point, such as a nearby parking location. Due to the increasing creativity of geocaching this becomes the staging ground for new and unique challenges.

Earth Cache: An Earthcache is a special place that people can visit to learn about a unique geoscience feature or aspect of our Earth. Earthcaches include a set of educational notes and the details about where to find the location (latitude and longitude). Visitors to Earthcaches can see how our planet has been shaped by geological processes, how we manage the resources and how scientists gather evidence to learn about the Earth. For more information about Earthcaches, visit <http://www.earthcache.org/>.

Cache In – Trash Out: [Cache In Trash Out](#) is an activity intimately tied to geocaching. While out there on a cache hunt, we collect litter along the trails and properly dispose of it. Cache In Trash Out Events are much larger clean-up events that involve and benefit the larger community.

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Where are they located?

Everywhere. In urban settings, in parks, next to historical markers, on mountains, by streams and lakes, along rail to trails, in tunnels. I can almost guarantee that within one mile of any location you are standing, there are at least two caches. The only places you may not place geocaches is within National Parks (You can create waypoints in the park).

Imagine going on a six mile hike and finding a geocache tucked up under a log! That is a great camping trip with a purpose!

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How do we start?

See slides.

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We found it! Now What?

Great work. Now take your pen and sign that log! And put in the date as well.

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Travel bugs are tokens that can be purchased online. They have tracking numbers on them that allow you to follow its progress. Many times Travel Bugs have specific goals in mind, go to Japan, cross from the west coast to the east coast, visit the highest mountains in the world, etc.

Travel bugs are a very inexpensive way for a troop to follow the patterns of movement with an object or to use as history lessons, or to simply have a good time and watch an item travel the continents.

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Travel Coins are the same as travel bugs, but are beautifully designed and very costly! You can also have wooden nickels made and other trinkets.

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Geocaching and Scouting

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Geocaching at Philmont! - movie

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Geocachers Creed