

Understanding Geocaching

Geo: World

Cache: a safekeeping or storage place

The History of Geocaching

GPS systems were first introduced to the market on 2nd May 2000. A day later, David Ulmer, computer consultant and enthusiast, wanted to test how accurate a GPS unit was so he hid a box containing items of little value, a notebook and pen, posted its co-ordinates on a forum and invited GPS users to find the box – noting in the book their details once found. The only rule in the game was ‘open the box, take some stuff, leave some stuff’. Now known as geocaching, it was originally referred to as a GPS Stash Hunt.

How do I take part?

Caches are hidden all around the world. You can follow someone’s plotted co-ordinates or, for the advanced geocacher, set up your own geocache hunt.

The caches are small plastic boxes containing everything from simple little trinkets e.g. toys, books, money or jewellery to personalised geocoins, a log book and pen – you never know what you will find inside a cache! Bear in mind that people of all ages take part in geocaching – never leave an item that isn’t suitable for a certain age group; food items are not advisable either – animals can find this quicker than humans can.



Geocoins: Created by geocachers, this trackable tag is left in a cache, then swapped, collected and transferred to different cache by another geocacher; they can travel the world and can also be tracked online.

Log on now to www.geocaching.com and register for a free account – you can gain access to the forums, learn more about the sport and locate caches in your area.

Think about...

- The difficulty and terrain, which are logged in a set of figures e.g. 1/1 for an easy hunt, 5/5 for a rather difficult hunt – remember, left number = difficulty / right number = terrain.

- Geocaches are hidden, not buried in locations across the world, both in rural or urban areas
- Always take a compass, map and spare batteries with you in the unlikely event that your GPS fails – always think 'just in case'.
- Sometimes the cache's co-ordinates can be deceptive – it may show the trail as straight on in the direction the navigation points, yet always think about streams and other obstacles that may get in your way.

Finding your first geocache

- Sign the log book with your name, the date and a short note about your experience.
- If you trade items, ensure it is of either equal or greater value.
- If you don't trade an item, write TNLN (took nothing, left nothing) or TNSL (took nothing, signed logbook) in the log book.

Did you know? In 2001, Twentieth Century Fox hid 14 caches in conjunction with the Planet of the Apes film. Each box represented a fictional story of an alternate primate evolution, and included a prop from the film. Only a few APE caches still exist... somewhere