

Geocaching 101

Also, see [Geocaching 102](#) - [Geocaching Glossary](#) - [GPS Guide](#)

Simply put, geocaching is an outdoor adventure game where the participant uses a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver to find a "geocache" or "cache". A typical cache is a small, waterproof container containing a logbook and various inexpensive prizes. Geocaching is a unique take on an earlier game called Letterboxing. All you need to participate is a GPS receiver and the Internet. Participants are called geocachers.

Geocaching is growing rapidly in popularity all over the world. As of July 18, 2005 there were 183,908 active caches in 215 countries posted on geocaching.com, the first website to list geocaches. Geocaching.com was founded and currently maintained by Jeremy Irish. There are other competing listing sites however, including Navicache.com, gpsgames.org, terracaching.com, movingcache.com and others, each catering to a different caching niche.

There are several different types of caches. For a traditional geocache a geocacher will place a waterproof container containing a log book (with pen or pencil) and treasures, then note the cache coordinates. These coordinates, along with other details of the location, are posted online. Fellow geocachers may obtain the coordinates from the Internet and using a handheld GPS receiver, seek out the cache. The geocacher discovering a cache is encouraged to take something out of the cache and leave something of equal or higher value in its place and sign the log. ...That way there will always be treasure for the next geocacher to find.

Additionally, each cache should include a sheet of paper explaining the basic rules of geocaching and the purpose or theme of the cache. (You can find and print this out on geocaching.com.) This is not only helpful for those finding the cache, but is a must in case a 'geomuggle' stumbles upon it. (The term 'geomuggle' comes from the word "muggle" in the Harry Potter book series and refers to anyone not familiar with geocaching. Some caches can be taken or moved by geomuggles). Proper identification can help deter these muggles from moving it.

Cache treasures aren't usually high in value, but often make interesting souvenirs. Examples of items for trade in a typical cache are: two dollar bills or other unusual coins or currency, small children's toys, trading cards, buttons, candy, CDs, books, hitchhikers or travel bugs (moving objects with a unique id number whose travels from cache to cache may be logged online), pictures, coupons, etc. The treasures hidden in a cache vary greatly which adds to the thrill of finding a new cache.



There are several variations of the "traditional" geocache. Some examples are:

- [Micro-cache](#) - very small container usually holding just a log book (ex. 35mm film canister, magnetic key holder).
- [Small cache](#) - bigger than a micro, but not a full size traditional cache.
- [Regular cache](#) - the common size is usually a medium-sized tupperware or military ammo can
- [Large cache](#) - a really big cache that is a five gallon bucket or larger. This size of cache is a rare treat.



Other types of geocaches include:

- Moving/Traveling Caches - a cache that travels from place to place. Before Groundspeak started selling and tracking travel bugs, several caches were listed that finders could pick up and move to a different location. Some of these caches are still active, but new moving caches are no longer listed on geocaching.com. Other sites, such as GPSgames.org, welcome moving caches. GPSgames.org even hosts a specialized geocaching GeoPoker game that features a moving cache. When finding this cache, the geocacher logs the find, trades items, then re-hides the cache in a different place - logging the new coordinates for the next geocacher to find.
- Letterbox Hybrid - a letterbox is another form of treasure hunting using clues instead of coordinates. In some cases, however, a letterbox has coordinates, and the owner has made it a letterbox and a geocache. To read more about letterboxing, visit the [Letterboxing North America](#) web site.
- Multi-cache - this involves two or more locations. It requires a visit to one or more intermediate points to determine the coordinates for the actual cache. Multi-caches often merge with puzzle caches requiring problem solving at each location to reach the grand prize.
- Mystery/puzzle cache - similar to a multi-cache, the first coordinates listed are not the coordinates for the cache treasure, but cachers first must solve a puzzle to find the actual coordinates.
- Event cache - this does not involve a treasure box at the end, but instead the set of coordinates posted indicates a meeting place. The coordinates along with a date and time to meet are posted as the cache. People can indicate on the website if they plan to attend and log a 'find' if they actually do. Event caches are great ways to meet people, trade hitchhikers and swap caching stories.
- Cache in Trash Out - this is a specific variation on the event cache, where geocachers get together at a particular location and clean up the trash on the trails on their way out.
- Webcam - these coordinates usually point to a location with a public web cam. You need to have someone watching the camera on a computer to "capture" your image unless the cache you visit is one of the few with an archive of images for you to retrieve.
- Virtual - this points to a location to visit simply for what is already there. To prove you visited the site, you are generally required to either email the cache owner with requested information such as a date or a name on a plaque, or by posting a picture of yourself standing at the site with GPS receiver in hand.
- Locationless or Reverse Cache - this is the opposite of a traditional cache as the game is to find a specific type of object - like a one-room schoolhouse - then log its coordinates and post a picture of you holding your GPS in front of the cache site.
- Earthcache - this is a special type of virtual cache sponsored and approved by the Geological Society of America and listed on geocaching.com. It is 'an educational virtual geocache through which visitors learn about the fascinating planet on which we live -- its landscapes, its geology or the minerals and fossils that are found there.'

Geocaches are rated by their difficulty to find and terrain. Some geocaches are easy enough to be called drive-bys, but others are very difficult to get to like those under water, 50 feet up a tree, on cliffs or high mountain peaks, or even on the Antarctic continent.

Geocaching is ultimately a competition against yourself. For many cachers the hunt is its own reward; however friendly rivalries can arise encouraging cachers to find more caches (or travel bugs) than other cachers. There can even be a certain thrill in being the first to find a newly posted cache. There are several geocaching competitions sponsored each year with various prizes awarded to the winners.

Geocoin collecting is one of the biggest trends in geocaching these days. It started a few years ago when one of the pioneers of geocaching, 'Moun10Bike' minted a personal coin and placed them in geocaches. Since then, geocoins have exploded into the geocaching world. States, local geocaching clubs, individual countries, etc., all mint their own coins for sale, trade and placing in geocaches. Geocaching.com has created many new icons which display on a geocacher's profile when they have found or own a certain geocoin. Geocoins may be individually numbered and can be trackable like travel bugs if they have a unique code on them -- They are made of many different kinds of metals in differing styles. There are also ink-stamped wooden nickle coins and handmade clay stamped coins. Anyone taking up geocaching will no doubt hear a lot of buzz about geocoins - it's good to know a little about this or you may feel really confused.



Geocaching offers so much more than the thrill of the search for hidden treasure with high-tech gadgets. Each adventure carries along with it so many possibilities such as: developing new friendships, spending more time together as families, discovering new places you may have never found on your own, conquering physical limitations and the challenge to achieve, get active and explore more of the world. We hope everyone can find a love for geocaching like we have -- and realize that this is not only a relatively inexpensive sport, but one that keeps evolving and is new and exciting every time.

Whatever your motivation, now that you have the basic idea LET'S GO GEOCACHING!

If you need more instruction, let's go on to [Geocaching 102](#) to learn the basics about looking up, finding and hiding a cache.

You can also take a look at our list of common Geocaching terms and their meanings by clicking [here](#).

If you're just anxious to get going and need a GPSr to get started, move on to our [GPS Guide](#) to find out what GPSr is right for you.

Website:

http://www.hobbycache.com/page_2.html

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