Geocaching Fact Sheet

In the Beginning

Geocaching is a term – coined in 2000 – that describes the enthusiast hobby of locating a treasure somewhere in the world with the help of a GPS-enabled device and GPS coordinates that are listed online.

Geocaching combines location-based gaming, social networking, treasure hunting, GPS navigation, and outdoor recreation. The hobby was started in 2000 by a GPS enthusiast, Dave Ulmer, seeking to test the accuracy of the improved GPS signal available to civilians. Ulmer shared the coordinates of his first hidden geocache online. Mike Teague found this geocache and shared his experience online. The online chats spread, and soon, 75 other caches were hidden around the world. One was found in July by Jeremy Irish, who shortly thereafter, founded Geocaching. com as the first portal for the hobby.

Dozens of press articles and millions of online conversations later, Geocaching.com is the world's largest location-based gaming portal.

Geocaching around the World

Today, more than 1.4 million geocaches have been hidden, and found by more than 4 million people worldwide. More specifically, the United States and Germany lead the world in this activity, with the Czech Republic, Canada and the United Kingdom following.

Geocaching continues to grow in popularity across the United States from California and Texas to New York and Florida. Some of the cities with the highest geocaching activity (based on visits to the Geocaching.com website) include Seattle, New York, Los Angeles and Phoenix.

The Rules of Geocaching

1. If you take something from the cache, leave something of equal or greater value.
2. Write about your find in the cache logbook.
3. Log your experience at www.geocaching.com.

The Contents of a Geocache

A geocache always contains a logbook or logsheet for finders to sign.

Larger geocaches may also contain items for trade. These are generally small trinkets. If someone takes an item, he should leave something of equal or greater value in its place for the next geocacher to find.

A geocache may also contain Trackable items. Trackables are geocaching "game pieces" bearing a tracking number - a unique series of letters and numbers – that allows geocachers to follow the items' real-world travels on Geocaching.com. Some of the most popular trackable items are "Geocoins" and "Travel Bugs®."

Geocache Types
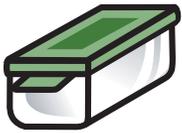
Traditional Cache
This is the original cache type consisting, at a minimum, a container and a logbook. Normally you'll find a tupperware container or ammo box filled with goodies, or a smaller container ("micro cache") that contains only a logsheet. The coordinates listed on the traditional cache page are 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 at the first location that helps one reach the second location, where there is a hint to the third, and so on.

Mystery or Puzzle Caches
The "catch-all" of cache types, this form of cache can involve complicated puzzles geocachers will first need to solve to determine the coordinates. Due to the increasing creativity of geocaching, this becomes the staging ground for new and unique challenges.

Event Cache
Occasionally, local geocachers and geocaching organizations designate a time and location to meet and discuss geocaching. After the event, the caches are archived.

Mega-Event Cache
A Mega-Event cache must be attended by more than 500 people. Typically, Mega-Events are annual events and attract geocachers from all over the world.

Cache In Trash Out Event
While on a cache hunt, geocachers 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.

GPS Adventures Maze Exhibit
A GPS Adventures Exhibit Cache represents attendance at the GPS Adventures Maze Exhibit or a regional variation of this Exhibit. GPS Adventures Mazes are designed to teach people of all ages about GPS technology and geocaching through interactive science experiences.

Project A.P.E. Cache
In 2001, fourteen geocaches were placed in conjunction with 20th Century Fox to support the movie Planet of the Apes. Each cache represented a fictional story in which scientists revealed an Alternative Primate Evolution. These caches were made using specially marked ammo containers. Each cache had an original prop from the movie. Only a few Project A.P.E. caches exist today.

Letterbox Hybrid
A letterbox is another form of treasure hunting using clues instead of coordinates.