What is geocaching?

Geocaching is a treasure hunting game in which players utilize the Global Position System (GPS). The treasures, or geocaches, are referenced by GPS coordinates that the player can navigate to using a GPS device. The geocaches are usually located on land which is accessible to the public and consist of a hidden container. The geocache container may hold a log book for recording visits or it may hold items the player may take, such as a geocoin. If a player takes an item from a geocache, they are encouraged to leave something behind for the next player. Geocachers may also utilize a popular web site, Geocaching.com, to search for geocaches in their area, share their experiences, or organize favorites.

What are geocoins and Travel Bugs?

Geocoins and Groundspeak Travel Bugs are items found in geocaches that are trackable by the player. Each contains a unique tracking identification that allows their travels to be followed from geocache to geocache. The coins may be associated with a company, organization, group of friends, or individuals, among others. A Travel Bug (pictured at right attached to Groundspeak’s Signal the Frog) is a trackable tag that players attach to an item. The item becomes a hitchhiker that is carried from geocache to geocache and its progress followed online. Geocoins and Travel Bugs often have goals associated with them, such as traveling to a particular country or visiting a certain number of states. Each has its own diary that follows its travels and may contain stories shared by the player carrying the item.

What is paperless geocaching?

Paperless geocaching is the use of a GPS device, instead of paper, to carry geocache information. Information about a cache, such as its name, coordinates, the type of cache, difficulty and terrain, date placed, and description may be downloaded directly onto a GPS device, relieving the user from having to enter the information manually. In order to use paperless geocaching, it must be supported by the user’s GPS device. GPS devices that support paperless geocaching are offered by providers, such as Garmin, Magellan, DeLorme, and Lowrance. In addition, a geocaching application is available for the Apple iPhone and iTouch devices.

What type of GPS device do I need for geocaching?

Any GPS-enabled device, including a mobile phone, which allows the user to enter and navigate to coordinates, may be used for geocaching. More advanced units can provide the user a touch or color screen, compass navigation, altimeter, or paperless geocaching. Some units contain more memory making them capable of storing and displaying topographic, street-level, or marine maps that are more detailed than the built-in basemap. The device used for geocaching does not have to be expensive or elaborate, but it should be easy to use, reliable, and durable.

For more information about geocaching or geospatial technologies, visit www.alabamagps.com.

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