GEOCACHING - Let's Go Geocaching!

ASK

Do you like scavenger hunts and adventure? Do you want to explore new places in your community but also all around the world? In this section, you will learn about a geocaching web site and then find a geocache near you using a GPS receiver.

INVESTIGATE

Geocaches are listed at **www.geocaching.com** and basic membership is free. Check to see how many active geocaches are listed in locations around the world.
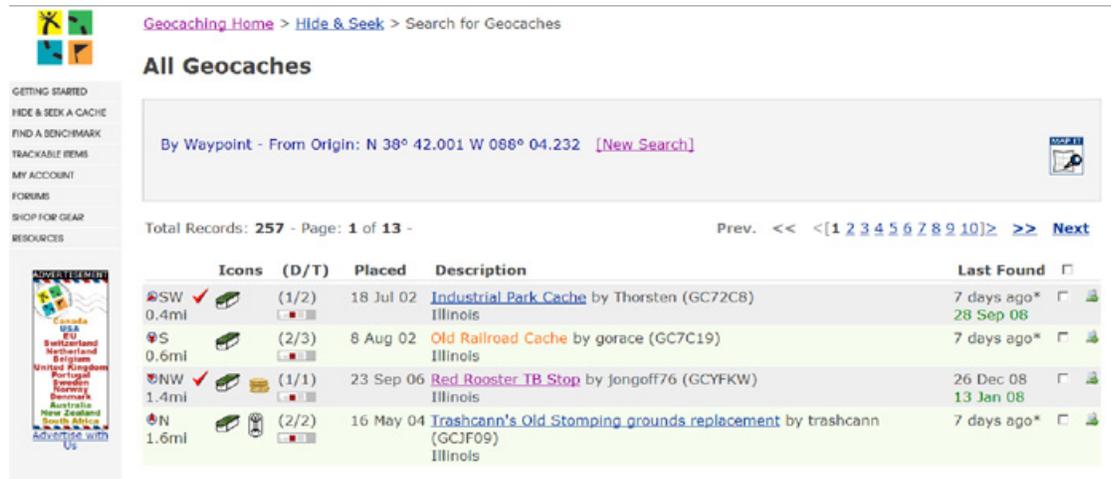
CREATE

Getting Started

- Computer with Internet connection

- Account at http://www.geocaching.com

- GPS receiver

- Transportation and safety precautions

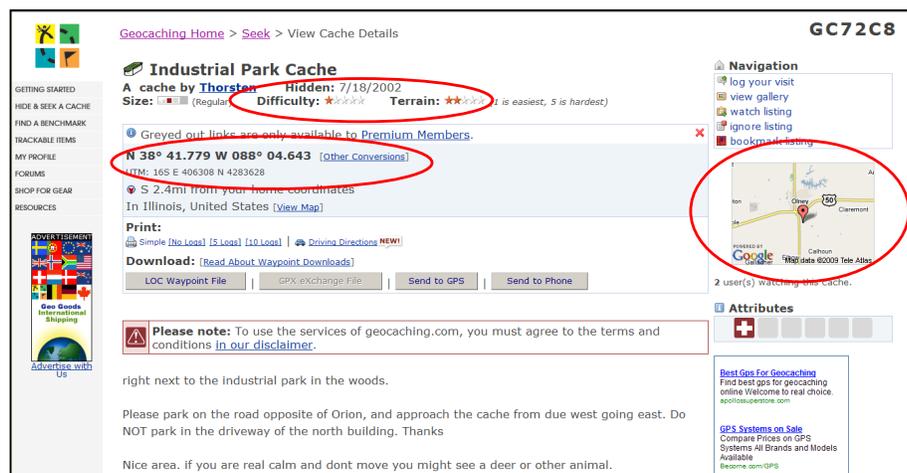1. Go to: **www.geocaching.com**. Log in or create an account if you do not already have one.

2. Under "Search for Geocaches" enter your zip code and click "Go." A page will appear showing caches in your area.

3. There is a lot of information on the page.

a. You can see how far away the caches are, and in what direction (on the left).

b. Icons identify what type of geocache: mystery, traditional, multi-cache, or other. You will learn about these as you gain experience geocaching.

c. Some caches contain trackable items like geocoins or travel bugs (TB) indicated by icons. If you are lucky enough to find one, record the number written on it and move it to another cache. Register your trackable find online. Click on "trackable items" on the upper left for a link.

d. (D/T) column gives information about the level of difficulty (D) and the terrain (T).   Each aspect is rated from 1 to 5 where 1 is easiest and 5 the hardest (or strenuous).

e. The (D/T) column also gives information about the physical size of the cache. Caches can be small or large as shown by the red dots on the size bar graph.
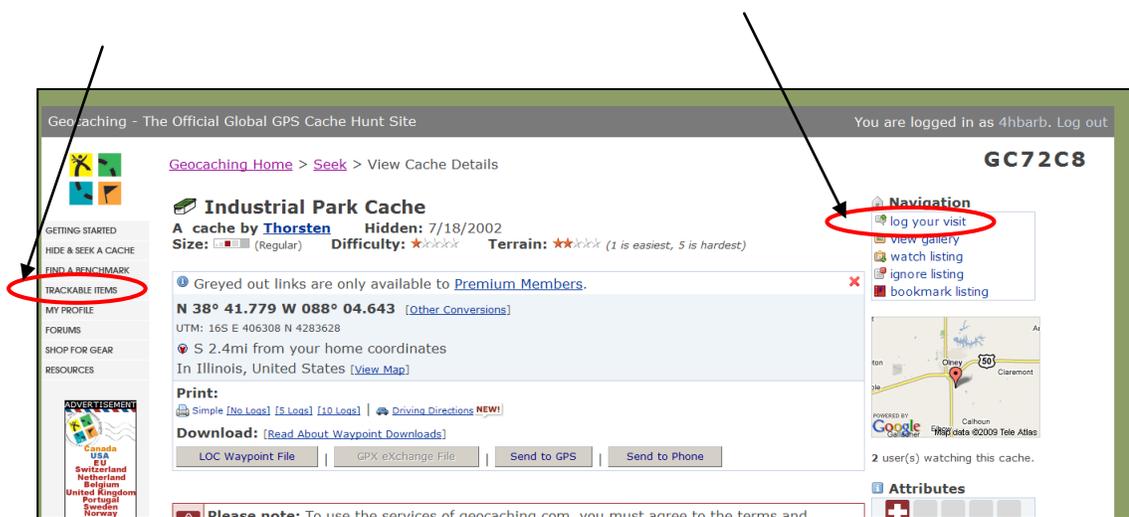

4. Choose any geocache on the list and click on it. Note the caches unique GC number at the upper right. This page gives a lot of specific information. Locate each of the items listed (see the following graphic):

a. Latitude and longitude coordinates.

b. A small Yahoo map – click to enlarge.

c. Size of the cache –small to large

d. Difficulty and terrain ratings in numbers from 1-5 so you know how accessible it will be.

e. Attributes of the location (parking, poison ivy, etc.) are listed at the right of the screen under the Yahoo map.

f. Hints written in code may help you find the cache.

g. Logs of people who have recently found the cache are shown– sometimes you can find hints in logs and posted photos.

5. Enter the coordinates of your chosen geocache into the GPS receiver.

   a. You can manually enter the coordinates into your GPS receiver by using the keyboard on the receiver or check with your GPS user's manual.

   b. If your GPS receiver is geocaching enabled, you can enter the coordinates into your receiver directly from the geocaching website. Notice the last column of the list of caches (see Screen 1). Insert icon

      i. Click the Send of GPS icon.

      ii. Follow all directions prompted by the website (you may have to install Garmin software).

      iii. When the "send to GPS" window opens, click "Find Devices" and locate your GPS receiver.

      iv. Click "Write."

      v. You will receive a message when the "Geocache {name}.gpx is saved successfully.

6. GO!

   a. On your GPS receiver, navigate to the list of Waypoints and select the geocache you plan to find. Follow the onscreen directions.

   b. You must be moving for the receiver to work.

   c. Be aware of signal interference from buildings, overhead electric lines, leafy tree cover, and /or bodies of water.

   d. The unit will take you within 10 to 30 ft. of the cache, if the coordinates are accurate.

   e. When you arrive at the cache site, to find the geocache look up, down, and all around for something unusual or out of place.

7. When you find your geocache, sign the logbook and return the geocache to its original location.

8. Afterwards, be sure to log your successful find online. Your account automatically keeps track of your finds.

9. If you pick up a trackable item, make note of the number on it and log it under trackable items AND put it in your narrative log. Each geocoin or travel bug has a tracking number on it; without that, you cannot register your trackable find. After you place a geocoin or travel bug in a cache, later as you are writing your online log entry, it will give you the option to click on a trackable item to automatically update its current location so that someone can find it.

DON'T FORGET TO LOG YOUR VISIT AND TO LOG TRACKABLE ITEMS YOU FOUND.

DISCUSS

- Was your geocaching experience successful? Explain.

- How did you choose what geocache to find?

- How did you travel to your destination?

REFLECT

- What will you do differently next time?

- Have you considered placing a geocache?

- Would this kind of activity be a good activity for a group of friends, and if so, how would you go about organizing it?

RELATED WEB LINKS

www.geocaching.com/about/cache_types.aspx -- Describes cache types

www.geocaching.com/track/ -- Enables you to log your travel bug and geocoin finds, and to track them!