

Geocaching 101

Brought to you by members of the
Wisconsin Geocaching Association

June 2020

Disclaimers

- We are sharing our combined experience recognizing that geocaching has and continues to evolve.
- Our comments are ours alone and may not necessarily reflect any official stance of the Wisconsin Geocaching Association.
- We are volunteering our time.

Agenda

01

Basics

What are all these terms!?

02

Getting Started

Create an account and find
your first cache!

03

Best Practices

Do's and Don'ts.

04

Advanced Topics

Trackables, Pathtags,
alternative apps, and more.



01

Basics

What are all these terms?!

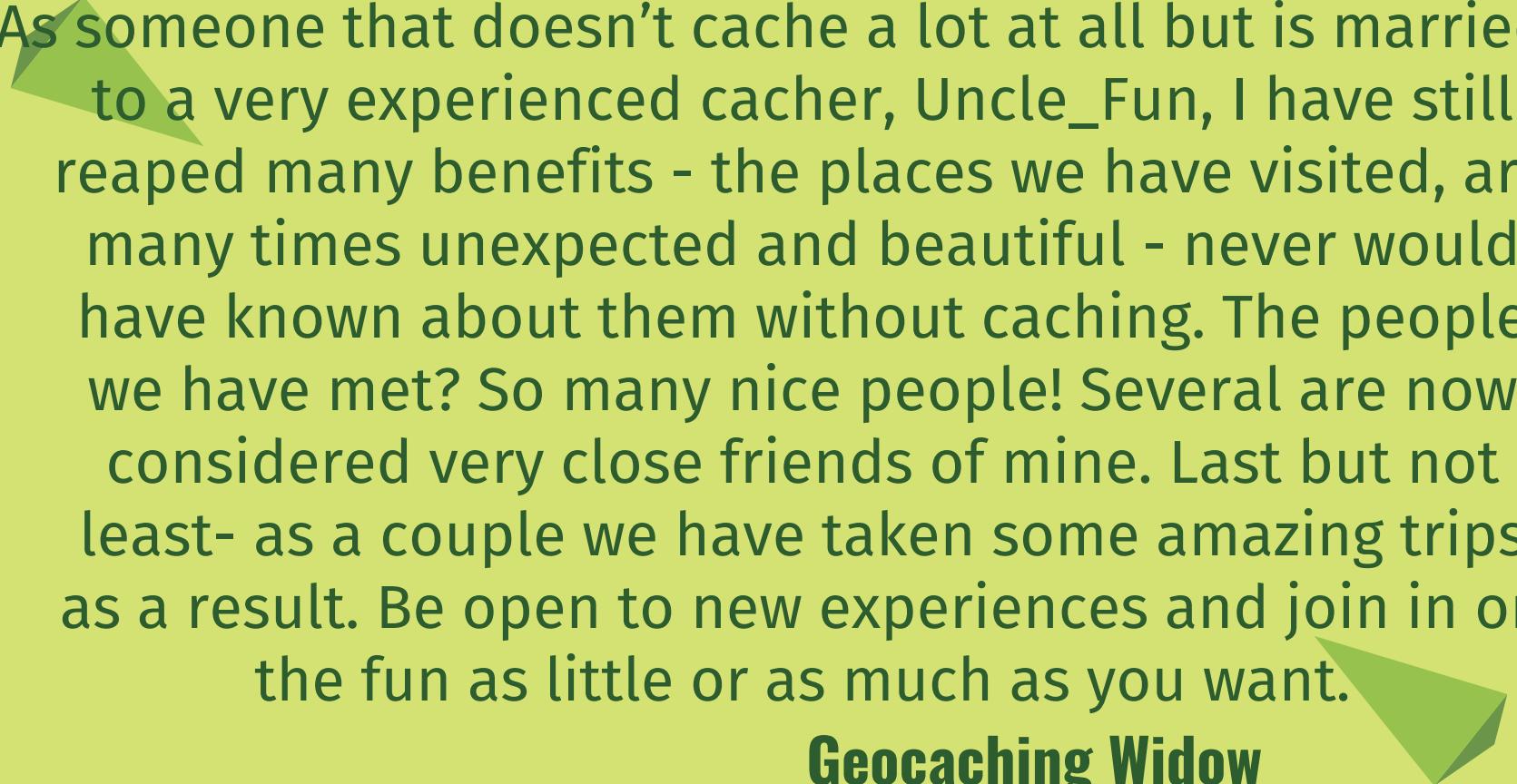
What is Geocaching?

Combination of
Technology,
Nature, and Fun!



What is Geocaching?

- Geocaching is an eco-sport or outdoor adventure game for GPS users of all ages.
- **There are over 3 million active geocaches and over 1 million active geocachers worldwide.**
- You'll find places you never knew existed!



As someone that doesn't cache a lot at all but is married to a very experienced cacher, Uncle_Fun, I have still reaped many benefits - the places we have visited, are many times unexpected and beautiful - never would have known about them without caching. The people we have met? So many nice people! Several are now considered very close friends of mine. Last but not least- as a couple we have taken some amazing trips as a result. Be open to new experiences and join in on the fun as little or as much as you want.

Geocaching Widow

Who Goes Geocaching?

- Anybody and everybody who enjoys the outdoors and looking for treasure!
- Families with kids.
- People looking for something to do while walking their dog.
- Solo geocachers of all ages.

What is GPS?

- GPS stands for *Global Positioning System*.
- As of February 2019, the system contains 31 satellites (27 active, 4 reserve) in low Earth orbit that continuously broadcast their position.
- GPS makes our hobby possible!



What is a GPSr?

- *GPS receivers* are personal devices that display their current location and help the user navigate to another location.
- The term GPSr often refers to a dedicated device.
- Today's smartphones double as GPSrs when paired with the right app(s).



What is a Geocache?

- A geocacher hides a container somewhere in the world and posts the GPS coordinates online.
- The container is the geocache!
- Other players use a handheld device to search for it.
- Caches can be hidden anywhere, from busy urban settings to the middle of the woods.
- Your goal is to find the cache, sign the physical log inside, and share your experience online!



Contact an experienced cacher in your area with ANY questions, most of us are willing to share our knowledge with new cachers.

Douce Us 5



What is a Muggle?

- Borrowed from the world of *Harry Potter*, the term *muggle* refers to someone who is not a geocacher.
- Missing caches are sometimes said to be *mugged*, potentially removed by someone who is unaware of our game.
- Geocaching doesn't have to be secret, but drawing unnecessary attention can compromise caches.

Acronyms

CO		Cache Owner
DNF		Did Not Find
FTF		First to Find
GZ		Ground Zero
PNG		Park 'n' Grab
TNLN		Took Nothing Left Nothing
TOTT		Tool of the Trade



02

Getting Started

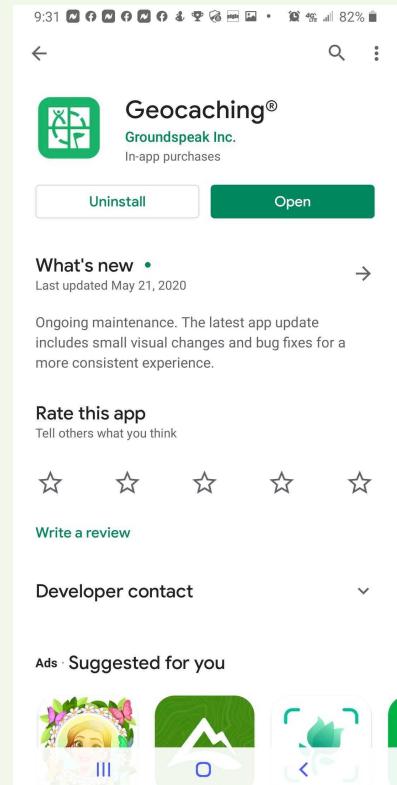
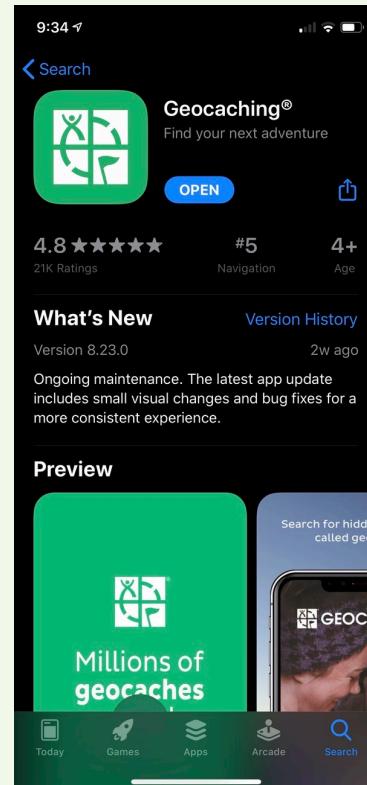
Create an account and find your first cache!

An App or a Website?

- It's both!
- All geocaches are listed on the geocaching.com website.
- Many players choose to use a smartphone app to access the online database of geocaches. Others use a computer and dedicated GPSr.
- Since a smartphone app is the easiest way to get into geocaching, that's what we plan to cover in this presentation.
- You can do many of the same things and more using geocaching.com.

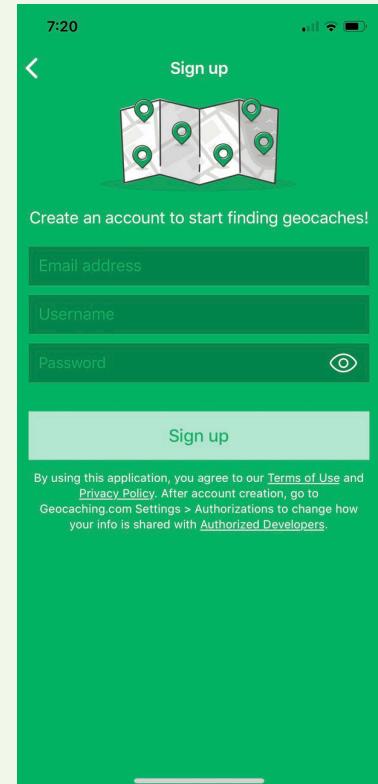
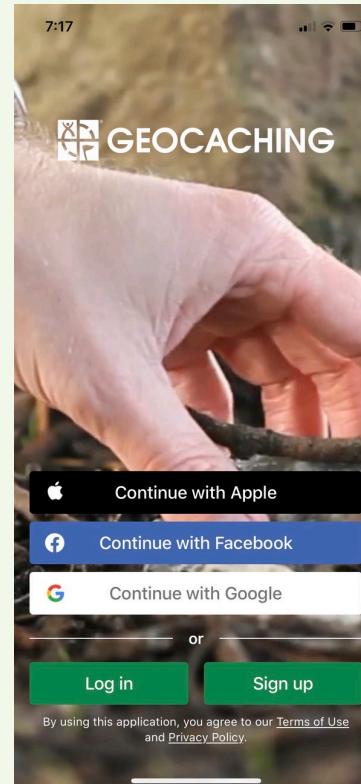
Download the App

- To create your account from your phone, you will need the Geocaching app released by Groundspeak Inc. available for iOS and Android devices.
- The app is free.



Create an Account

- Login using a third-party provider OR
- Create an account directly with geocaching.com (shown here)



Choose Your Username Wisely!

- This is the name by which you will be known online and in the community, even after you meet other geocachers in person.
- You'll also be signing it on every log (some of them tiny), so consider keeping it shorter or choose something you can abbreviate.
- Be creative but keep it family friendly.
- If you decide you aren't happy with your choice, you can change it later.



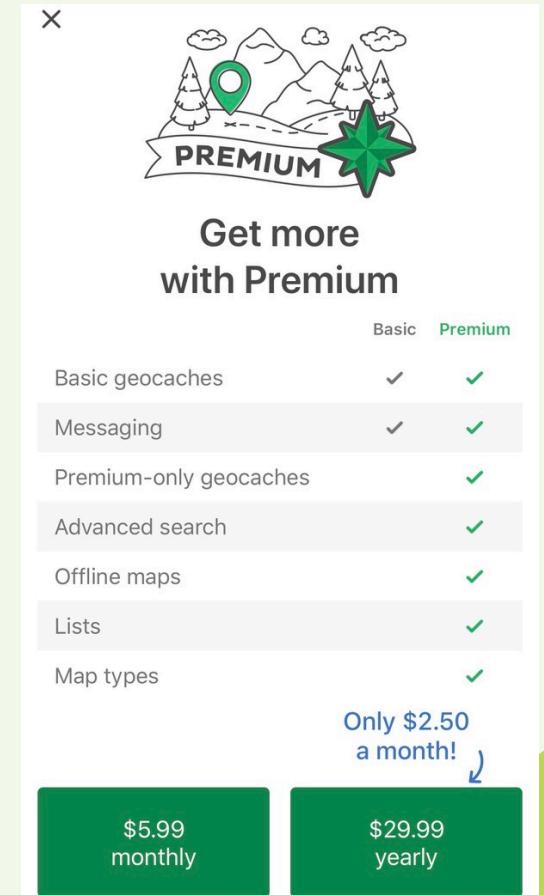
While the find is always exciting, the hiking, the scenery, and the time spent together is the true prize.

mate dulce



Membership Types

- You can play for free with a Basic membership that has restrictions (fewer on the website).
- Upgrade to Premium membership to eliminate restrictions and access more features.



A promotional graphic for a Premium membership. It features a green banner with a location pin and a green star, with the word 'PREMIUM' in white. The background shows a stylized landscape with mountains, trees, and clouds. Below the banner, the text 'Get more with Premium' is displayed. A comparison table follows, showing features for Basic and Premium members. At the bottom, a green button offers '\$5.99 monthly' and another green button offers '\$29.99 yearly'. A blue callout on the right says 'Only \$2.50 a month!' with a downward arrow.

	Basic	Premium
Basic geocaches	✓	✓
Messaging	✓	✓
Premium-only geocaches		✓
Advanced search		✓
Offline maps		✓
Lists		✓
Map types		✓

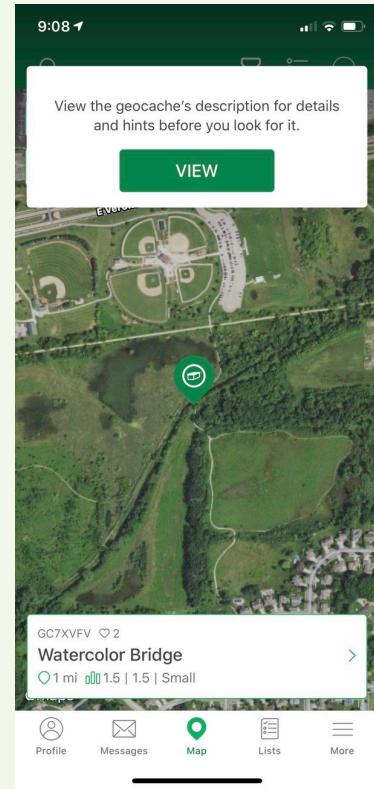
Only \$2.50 a month!

\$5.99 monthly

\$29.99 yearly

Choose Your First Geocache

After creating your account, the app will automatically direct you to a nearby traditional cache.



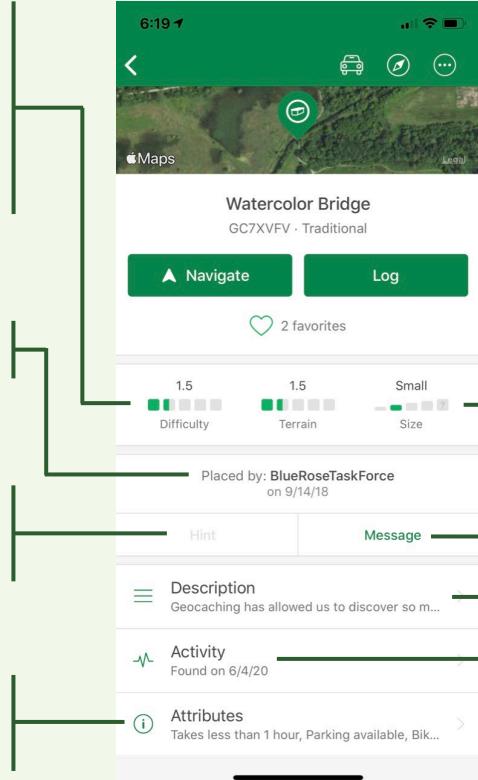
Cache Details

Difficulty and terrain ratings measured from 1 to 5 with half-step increments give you an idea of what to expect. Start with lower ratings for a better success rate.

The owner is responsible for this cache.

The hint might help if you're struggling. No promises, though. (No hint here.)

Attributes tell you more about the hide and terrain along the way.



Container size gives you some idea of what you're looking for and where it could be hidden. Small to large usually have room for SWAG and trackables.

Micro – Film canister or smaller
Small – Sandwich container

Regular – Shoe box
Large – 5-gallon bucket

Other – Doesn't fit another category

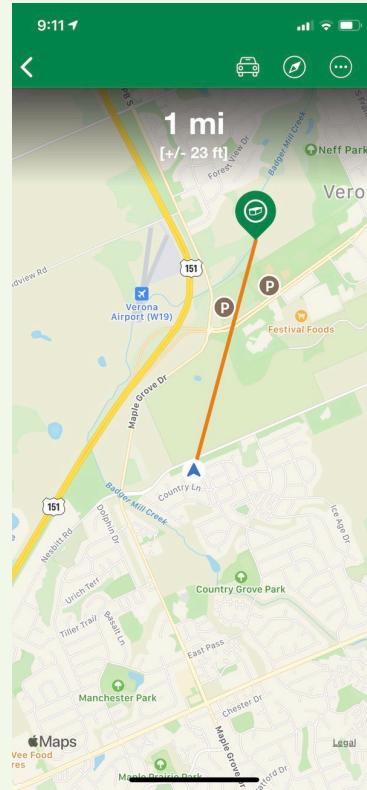
Message the owner about this cache.

Read the description! It often contains important details.

Logs from recent finders might also hold clues.

Go Get It!

- Tap **Navigate** once to see a map view.
- Tap the compass icon in the upper right for a simpler pointer view.



The Search

- When you get near GZ, put your phone away!
- Even a dedicated GPSr is only accurate to within about 20 feet.
- Use your brain – where would you hide a container here?
- It takes some practice, but you will eventually build up some “geo-sense” for where people like to stash containers.
- Struggling? Change your thinking or perspective.
- Expand your search area before declaring a DNF.



It's OK to DNF. We all do, even on the
easy ones!

MTCLMBR



You Found It! Now What?

- Get excited!
- Open the container and sign the physical log inside (this is required!).
- Trade items (optional).
- Replace the cache exactly as you found it!
- Tap the Log button to submit your find online OR
- Save a draft to complete your online log later (Premium only).



Log your DNFs. It might not feel good, but it will help others and the CO. And if you've got a couple DNFs going for you....aim for a nice P&G, so you can get your geo-mojo back.

TheOtherGuy



03

Best Practices

Do's and Don'ts.



I cache alone, and being a woman, I am always keeping an eye on safety. And sometimes, you just don't feel like ducking into a scratchy, mosquito-filled, muddy woods. If you aren't dressed for walking in the woods, then go for the urban caches!

WiscBikeGal



Safety

- Make a plan and tell someone where you are going, especially when visiting remote areas.
- Carry more water than you think you'll need.
- Understand the kind of wildlife you might encounter so you can tell the difference between harmless and dangerous.
- Dress appropriately and carry supplies like water, sunscreen, bug spray, and more.
- Know your limits. Stop if you're uncomfortable. You don't have to find every cache.
- Have we mentioned lots of water?

Leave No Trace

- Be a responsible geocacher.
- Carry out your trash.
- Stick to the trail as much as possible. The easiest path to the cache is not always a straight line!
- Do your best not to disturb the natural fauna of an area.
- Minimize your impact on the environment.





As a CO, I love descriptive logs and
read every single log on my caches.
It's exciting to hear what your
experience might have been.

MTCLMBR

Logging a Cache

- Try to avoid short, generic logs like TFTC.
- Take a moment to share your experience. Owners will appreciate it!
- Mention the condition of the cache, especially if there is an issue.
- Avoid spoilers in your log and/or photos. Subtle clues are OK, even appreciated by other cachers reading later.
- Log your DNFs! They alert the cache owner of a potential problem.

SWAG

Trade even, trade up,
or do not trade at all.



Trading SWAG

- Trade items are usually inexpensive trinkets, but they don't have to be junk.
- Good examples include small toys, key chains, magnets.
- Some cachers make their own signature items to leave in caches.
- Make sure whatever you're trading fits in the container.
- If you can't trade, don't take anything!

More on SWAG

- Keep it safe, legal, and family friendly.
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, explosives, matches, lighters, knives, weapons, etc.
- No soap bubbles or other liquids. (They explode!)
- No food or heavily scented items. (Attracts wildlife!)
- Remember that caches are out in the elements year-round with significant temperature fluctuations over time.

Other Tips

- Carry a pen or pencil. Keep extras in your caching bag and your car.
- Pens can freeze in cold weather!
- Replace it exactly as you found it! You may think you are helping by moving the cache to a "better" spot, but you could be compromising the integrity of the cache. If you think it is wrong, message the CO so they can fix it if needed.
- Logs in the lid.





04

Advanced Topics

Trackables, Pathtags, alternative apps, and more.

Physical Caches



Traditional



Multi-Cache



Mystery/Puzzle



Letterbox Hybrid



Wherigo



Geocaching HQ

Caches Without a Container



EarthCache



Locationless



Virtual



Adventure Lab



Webcam



Partner with a more experienced cacher. It will get easier after your first 100 when you've learned some of the ropes. Attend events to meet people if you don't know local cachers.

CashtonGS



Events



Event



Geocaching HQ Block Party



Cache In Trash Out (CITO)



GPS Adventure Maze



Mega Event



Geocaching HQ Celebration



Giga Event



Community Celebration Event

Trackables

- Not typical SWAG.
- Trackable items take many forms, but always have a tracking code on them.
- They are meant to travel from cache to cache, with progress tracked online.
- Most have a specific goal.
- Only take a trackable from a cache if you are willing to log it online and help it toward its goal by placing it in another cache.



Geocoins

Custom-minted, trackable coins. Due to their higher value, they are often kept in personal collections instead of placed in caches to travel.



Logging Trackables

- **Discovered It** – You saw the item but didn't take it.
- **Retrieved from Cache** – You found and took the item from the cache indicated in the last log.
- **Retrieve from Somewhere Else** – You found and took the item from somewhere other than the last logged cache.
- **Dropped Off in Cache** – You took the item to a new cache and left it there.
- **Visited Cache** – You took the item to a cache but didn't leave it. Also known as *dipping*.
- **Mark as Missing** – The item has not been successfully logged in a long time and is not where it is supposed to be according to the last log. Only available to trackable/cache owners.
- **Write Note** – A log that doesn't fit the others. Maybe you want to add some photos. Or maybe you want to let the owner know the item wasn't in the last cache where it was logged, but you don't have access to Mark as Missing.



Geocaching has a lot to offer! You don't need to learn everything right away. Each geocaching experience can only be new once. Take your time and enjoy each one!

ACME_WildCachers



Pathtags

- One type of custom-designed personal signature item.
- Single-sided metal tag about the size of a quarter.
- Can be found in caches or traded at events.
- They are not trackable on geocaching.com, so it's OK to take and keep one for yourself.
- Manage and track your collection at pathtags.com.





If you think you are going to stick with it and eventually want to fill your calendar, save the caches close to home for days you need to fill when the weather is not so great.

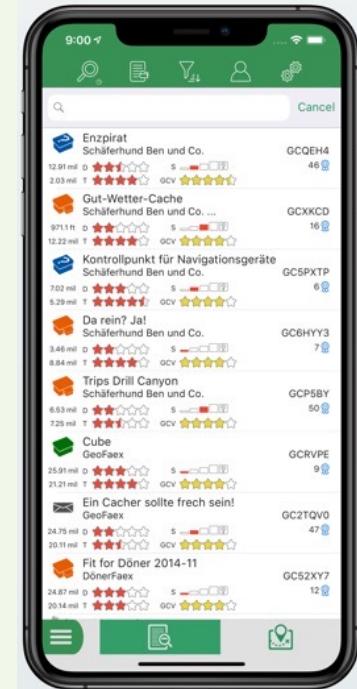
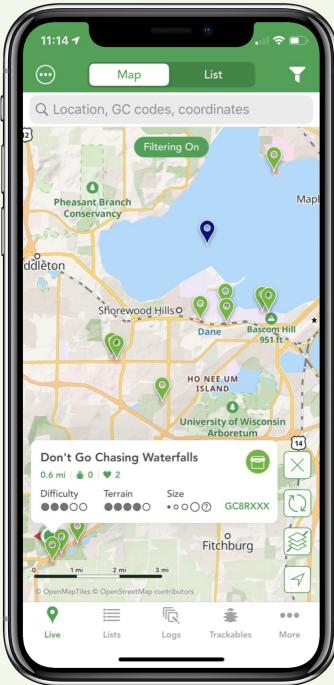
Chatauqua560



Alternative Apps for iOS

Cachly

- \$4.99 one-time purchase
- \$2.99 one-time in-app purchase for Premium Offline Maps



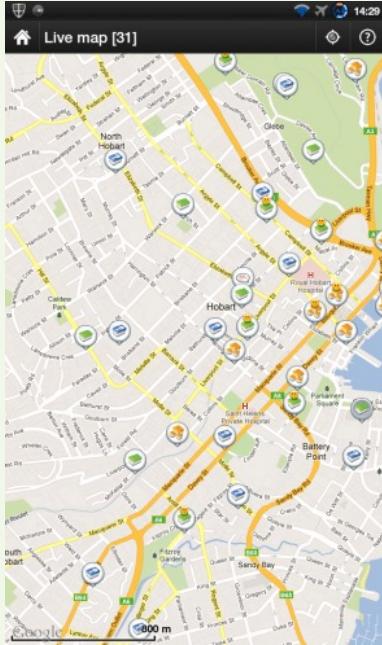
Looking4Cache

- Lite version is free
- \$5.99 for Pro

Alternative Apps for Android

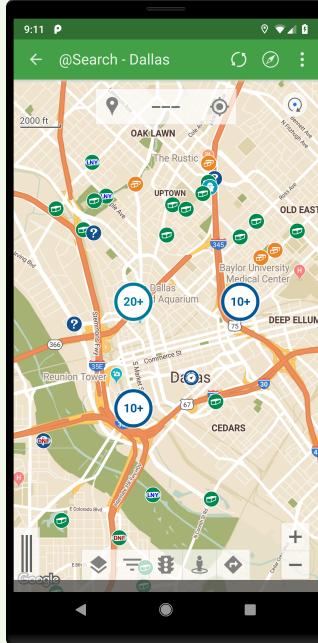
c:geo

- Free



Geooh Go

- \$4.99 one-time purchase
- \$0.99 semi-annual subscription for enhanced features



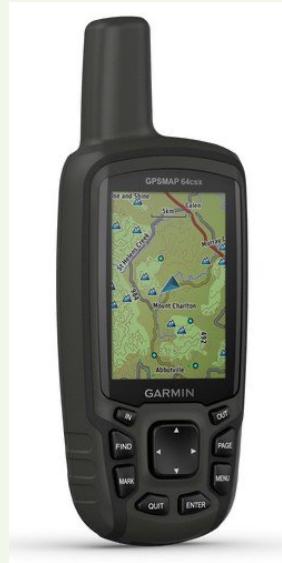
Garmin Handheld GPSr Options



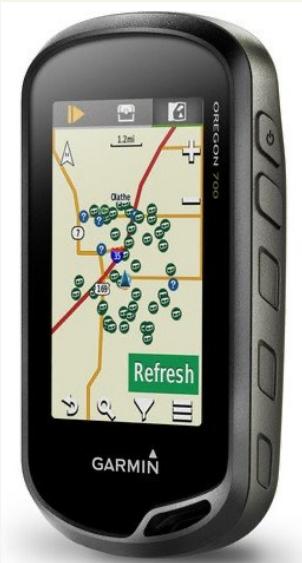
eTrex



eTrex Touch



GPSMAP 64x



Oregon 700/750



GPSMAP 66



Don't let anyone else tell you the "right" way to cache. Experienced geocachers often are going for the numbers, or difficulty, or some sort of challenge achievement. Just enjoy finding something hidden wherever you are. It shouldn't be a burden that you HAVE to do.

WiscBikeGal

Resources

Geocaching HQ

- www.geocaching.com
- www.geocaching.com/help/ - Help Center
- forums.geocaching.com/GC/
- www.geocaching.com/blog/
- shop.geocaching.com

GPSRs and Apps

- www.cach.ly
- www.cgeo.org
- geooh-go.com
- www.looking4cache.com

Podcasts

- [Geocache Talk](#)
- [The Geocaching Podcast](#)
- [GeoGearHeads](#)
- [Inside Geocaching HQ](#)
- [PodCacher](#)

EarthCaches

- www.earthcache.org

Other Tools

- www.project-gc.com – Statistics and Planning
- www.geocachingtoolbox.com – Puzzle Tools



Questions?



The WGA is a great resource for everything from hiding to finding to events. The website is a great tool.

rawevil



Wisconsin Geocaching Association

- We are a group of fun-loving, enthusiastic, outdoor-minded people who like to geocache, and we want to help others do the same.
- Join us for community, games, and more!
- Wisconsin Geocaching Association 
- @WIGeocaching 
- wigeocachingassociation 





A large, bold, dark green text 'Thank You!' is centered on a light yellow background. The background features a repeating pattern of green and yellow triangles, creating a sense of depth and motion.

Thank You!