

Barnaby Goes Geocaching

Geocaching is hunting for treasure with the Global Positioning System. Satellites orbiting earth send signals to a hand-held GPS unit to tell it exactly where you are - what longitude and latitude and even the height above sea level.

Barnaby's host family in Tasmania Australia had decided to play the game and bought a brand new GPS which looked like a big orange mobile phone. In the game people hide a geocache (a container with logbook and treasure) and publish the coordinates on a free website www.geocaching.com where members can look them up.



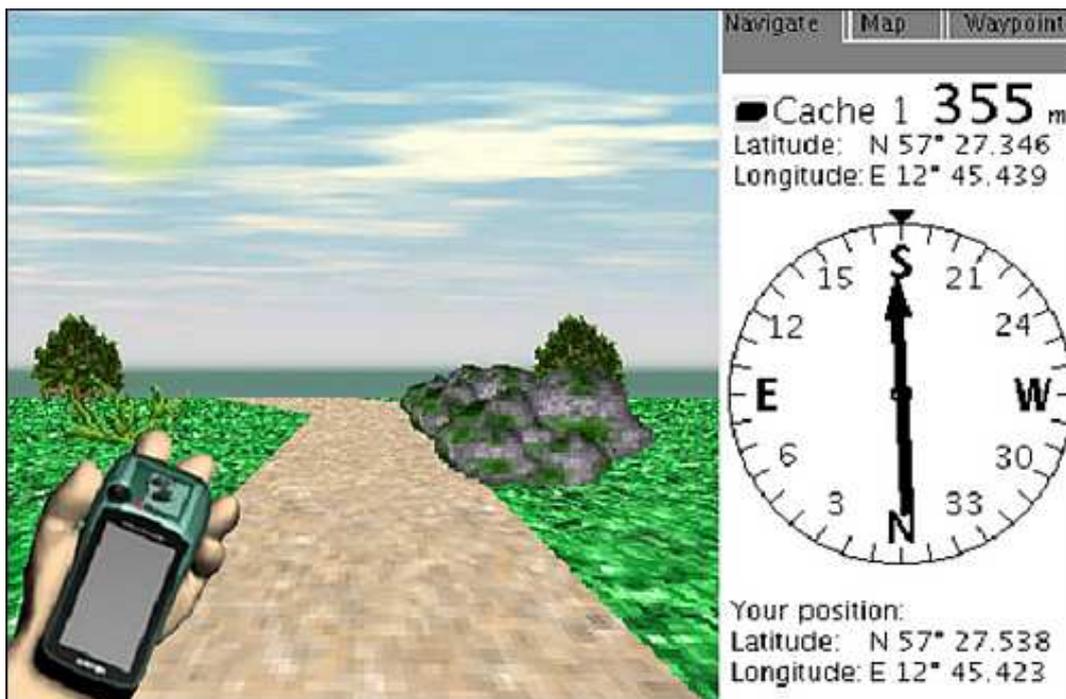
Barnaby and Michael

What treasure would they discover? Barnaby was keen to find out.

First they had to calibrate the GPS by sitting it outside to find satellites. GPS units work best under clear skies because they have to send and receive radio signals from satellites miles above the earth, and clouds, trees, tall buildings and mountains can block the signals. Barnaby found he was getting a reading even at the kitchen table because the house was on a hill and had big windows!

Then they practiced online with a Geocaching simulator.

http://web.telia.com/~u32007998/geocache/eng/gpscache_eng.html



Coordinates for caches are usually in WGS84 format (World Geodetic System 1984) which is slightly different to the latitude and longitude format used on maps. The GPS knows several formats and there are online converting tools such as the one found at <http://boulter.com/gps/>

They hid Barnaby around the garden by using the 'mark' button to show their latitude and longitude and entering a label for his 'waypoint'. To find him again they used the 'go to' button and selected the saved waypoint from a list. A little compass needle showed them when they were heading towards the right spot. The GPS compass works only when you are walking. A regular compass likes you to stand still! The GPS kept a track of where they walked which

looked like a dizzy ant trail!

When they felt prepared, they started to get ready for a geocaching adventure! They:

- Decided on a team name 'Forthferalz'
- Signed up to the websites www.geocaching.com and www.geocaching.com.au
- Chose some easy 'one star' caches for their first trip
- Printed the hints
- Entered the coordinates into the GPS
- Packed a small bag with gloves, spare batteries and some little things to swap for the treasure and set off!



They searched and searched but the GPS was only able to tell them they were 3-7 metres away from the exact spot and there were a **lot** of bushes to look under! The view was spectacular though and Barnaby learnt a bit about the founding of Australia's government at Braddon's Lookout - even if you don't find the cache people hide them in special spots they want to tell you about. Geocaching is like having a local tour guide.

A Visionary who saw the Federation of the States
SIR EDWARD BRADDON

Edward Braddon, as Premier of Tasmania, could see the far sighted advantage to his State in becoming part of a Commonwealth Federation of States.
In 1895 he hosted the Colonial Premiers Conference in Hobart which gave the impetus towards Federation.

He became a representative of the colony in the second session of the Federal Council held in Hobart, and later was elected a member of the Federal Convention when the present constitution was decided upon.
He brought a boom on the State by including the famous "Braddon blot" in the Federal Constitution, which saw protection for the colonial rights of the smaller states.

The Premiers Conference hosted by Sir Edward Braddon in Hobart in 1895.



Standing for the Free Trade Party at the first Federal election, he topped the poll which reflected on his popularity throughout Tasmania.
At the age of 71 he was the oldest member of the House of Representatives with 75 members and he became Deputy Leader of the Opposition.
He died aged 74 at his home nearby on February 2, 1904 after a short illness and is buried at the Leith Cemetery on the banks of the Forth River



Finding them was going to take a bit more practice!

Geocaches have been really well hidden, sometimes they are camouflaged to make them harder to find accidentally. Some are as small as a pill - these are called micro caches. Micro caches are usually hidden in urban environments like the Chocolate Factory where at last they found a cache! It was a small magnetic box with a logbook to sign and the treasure was plenty of free chocolate to taste and a yummy lunch!



The next day Barnaby flew to Sydney. The GPS moved so far so fast that it seemed to feel lost and asked to be recalibrated!



They decided to try something easier - a 'virtual cache'. Barnaby had to find his favourite plaque near the coordinates given and send a photo of himself with the GPS to the Geocaching website to log a find for 'Writers of Renown'.

http://www.geocaching.com/seek/cache_details.aspx?guid=dac1e85f-c8a9-4ef9-a1ac-282e54e88474

When you log a find you get a smiley icon and the find is counted on your user statistics. Barnaby chose Rudyard Kipling's plaque and logged his First Find!



But he still wanted to find some treasure!

There were lots of caches in Sydney. They tried a 'multi-cache' which is several little caches each with clues to a big one, but they couldn't find the first waypoint. They had an interesting visit though!

At last they tried a cache with a very good hint. Barnaby had to decode the hint using a cypher called ROT 13 (rotation 13). You can make a cypher wheel here:

<http://www.thecachingplace.com/decyphercoin.htm>

The GPS was pointing right in the middle of a walkway so they had to wait till no-one was looking before crawling underneath and finding a cliplock box. It had a geocaching sticker on the front and inside small souvenirs from visitors from around the world. TREASURE!

Barnaby chose a keyring, Michael chose a badge and they left some souvenirs from Tasmania in trade. They read the logbook, wrote what they took and left, and added a stamp with their signatures. Then they carefully hid everything back where they found it when no-one was looking. TFTC! (Thanks for the cache!)

You can find out more at the official geocaching website www.geocaching.com

You might even meet a 'travelbug' named Barnaby Bear! This little bear wears a metal tag with a tracking number on it and travels around the world hitchhiking with geocachers who take him from cache to cache.

<http://www.geocaching.com/track/details.aspx?guid=13c0901a-8fb5-4584-a5e5-2f7d5416cc5b>

***Michael, Carolyn and Barnaby
Tasmania 2005***