

SENIOR ESSAY – SECOND PLACE

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Age 14
Christian Scholars at Home

INFAMOUS GEOCACHING

According to Wikipedia geocaching is an outdoor recreational activity in which the participant uses a Global Positioning System {GPS} device to hide and seek containers called caches anywhere in the world. These containers come in all shapes and sizes and can be hidden about any way you can imagine.

The contents of the cache include a logbook for recording the finders and inexpensive toys or trinkets for exchanging with other finders. Sometimes individuals create a code name and may coordinate their code name with their treasures. Some leave area specific trinkets; other may leave professional geocaching cards, while some just put in loose change.

My family and I have limited experience in this area and are presently using an older Garmin automobile GPS with a pedestrian setting. After attending an instructional park program at Petit Jean State Park on geocaching we were able to locate some geocaches and we enjoyed searching for the treasures along the trails in the park

On a return trip to Petite Jean State Park this year we decided to search for a few of the other geocaches in the park. Park Interpreter Mr. B. T. Jones suggested we seek the Red Bluff Road geocache. This particular geocache was easily accessible because it was near the parking area of a scenic mountain overlook. We parked and walked a short distance. As the GPS continued to indicate we had arrived at our coordinates we found a suspicious pile of rocks and bark. Feeling sure we had found our cache, we eagerly uncovered what was beneath. Unfortunately it was not the geocache but rather someone's improvised outhouse.

Several ounces of hand gel later we returned to the park interpreter. After he was able to contain his laughter, he informed us we should look up and not down but to be careful where we stepped. We returned to the parking area, adjusted our zoom setting on the GPS, proceeded to the true coordinates, which were about twenty feet from our original find, and looked up to locate the actual geocache!

Geocaching is an educational and entertaining outdoor activity. I suggest an accurate GPS, a unique code name, a creative item to leave and caution when seeking because you never know what could be hiding in the woods!