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SEEKER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE GEOCACHING ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN

GEOCACHING THINGS TO DO WHILST AT HOME

HOW TO CREATE AN ADVENTURE LAB

GAGB.org.uk

SEEKER 41

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Cover: *Bluebells near GC1JA0F. Courtesy of Griff Grof.*
Above: *Snaefell, Isle Of Man, near GCQ68D. Courtesy of richt2000.*

The **Geocaching Association of Great Britain** is the leading UK Geocaching body, recognised by and acting on behalf of geocachers. The Association was established in 2003 to provide a national organisation that represented geocaching, and to serve as a UK point of contact for geocachers, landowners, the media and others with an interest in geocaching. Find us online at www.gagb.org.uk.

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Chair's Message

I hope this issue of Seeker finds you and your family well. Spring is well and truly underway, and we can all hopefully look forward to finding some geocaches as the season draws to a close and summer begins.

We have another bumper edition for you to enjoy, beginning with a list of geocaching-related things to do whilst staying at home. One of these includes writing a story for our competition - make sure you enter as you could win a prize! All stories will be published in a future issue of Seeker.

We then join Simply Paul on the Jasmer Trail as he recounts the journey to complete his grid. It's a great read!

For those of you who have been awarded an Adventure Lab credit in recent months, we have a handy guide on how to create one. We also have an interesting article explaining the difference between OS maps, Streetmap, OpenStreetMap and several others.

This issue also marks the return of the 'Travel Diaries' feature, as we find out all about Jennthefunkyranger's trip to Germany for the Hamburg Giga in 2019.

Enjoy, and stay safe.

Sharon Reid
GAGB Chair

NEWS ROUND-UP

COVID-19 statement

Remember to follow the latest advice from the Government and World Health Organisation. Geocaching-related updates will be provided by Geocaching HQ, and we will endeavour to share this information with you as it comes in. There will be no more GAGB roving events for the foreseeable future, and our spring SWAG Weekend has been postponed indefinitely.

Extended deadlines

Geocaching HQ have confirmed that you now have until the end of 2021 to find and log the new Locationless cache (GC8FR0G) - an extra year. Likewise, Community Celebration events can also take place during 2021 if necessary or desired. Other deadlines and souvenir dates have also changed - see this webpage for more information and the latest updates.

GAGB Story Competition

Have you got a great geocaching story to tell? If so, we'd love to hear it! We are running a story competition, so if you type it up and submit it to us (email: stories@gagb.org.uk), you'll be in with a chance of winning! More information can be found on page 21.

MEGA Event Updates

With the COVID-19 situation rapidly evolving since the last issue of Seeker, here are some important updates regarding the UK's 2020 Mega events:

Piratemania 2020 cancelled

The Piratemania team have decided to cancel this year's Mega. We were saddened to hear of this decision, but are sure that it will return bigger and better than ever in the not too distant future. Remember that you can still visit the Piratemania Store to purchase merchandise. This will help the committee financially.

Sussex Mega cancelled

We were also extremely sad to hear that the Sussex Mega committee had to make the very difficult decision to cancel the event. We would like to thank the whole committee for all of their hard work, and offer our deepest sympathies. Please visit their online shop to purchase merchandise if you can to help the committee cover costs.

Geolympix going ahead

The Geolympix is still scheduled for August 30th 2020. The committee have been working hard on developing risk management plans to ensure everyone's safety. Check out this announcement log for more details. If anything changes, there is a chance that the event will be rescheduled to autumn 2020 (Oct or Nov) or spring 2021.

Some major international event updates: The Geocaching HQ Celebration Event in Seattle (GC896PK) has been rescheduled to August 21st 2021. As things stand, the Prague Giga (GC7WWWW) is still set to take place on September 19th 2020.

Geocaching things to do whilst AT HOME

By Geocaching Womble

Are you currently self-isolating? If so, there are a number of geocaching-related things that you can do whilst at home. Here are some suggestions:

Solve some puzzle caches

This one may seem obvious as a solution to alleviate boredom. Try to solve as many of your local puzzle series as possible - now is the perfect time to look up the obscure puzzle references and begin planning your caching for when you can head out again. If you've already solved all your local puzzles, pick a puzzle series a little further from home. Check out Seeker #36, #37 and #38 to find out how to solve puzzles that contain ciphers, codes and strange alphabets.

Write your entry for the GAGB Geocaching Story Competition

If you have a geocaching story you want to share with the world, please enter our story competition. It should ideally be non-fiction. It could be an interesting experience you had whilst out in the field, a misunderstanding with a member of the uninformed services or just an amusing anecdote about your time as geocacher. See page 21 for more information.

Submit articles for Seeker

This one is a good one if you are looking to give an insight into why you became a cacher, offer tips for newbies, or maybe recount a particular caching trip that you want to share with others. If this sounds like something you could be interested in, why don't you try writing an article for Seeker today? Once you're done, email it to editor@gagb.org.uk.

Help contribute to the new GAGB Geocaching News Archive

If you're bored and need something to do, why not look and see if you can find any media, articles, television interviews, radio interviews or documentaries about geocaching and digitise them. Once you've digitised them, please email them as an attachment to archive@gagb.org.uk with the heading 'GAGB Geocaching News Archive'.

Plan your maintenance trips for when COVID-19 is over

It's fair to say that caches will take a bit of a battering with both the predicted weather and increased animal damage, so plan your maintenance trips - which caches will you maintain first? What do you need to bring?

Attend UK Cache Hour

If you're disapppointed that you can't attend any events, why not log on to Twitter and join UK Cache Hour on Tuesdays as a way of keeping yourself engaged with the geocaching community - it takes place every Tuesday evening at 8pm. Use the #UKCacheHour hashtag to join the conversation.

On the Jasmer Trail with Simply Paul

Paul at GC1D

Responding to our recent call for articles, well-known UK cacher and man behind the Geolympix Mega events Simply Paul responded with his story of Jasmer Grid filler hunting. He began by explaining what that is.

For those in the dark, the Jasmer Grid is the calendar of months from May 2000 in which caches have been set. How full yours is is easy to check. Just go to Geocaching.com, select your profile and then the Geocaches tab. Then 'All Caches Found' and click on Placed. This will show you the most recently set finds, including events. Click 'Placed' again and a list of the oldest caches you've ever found will appear.

My mission, which I chose to accept, was to fill my Set Month calendar up. It became a casual ambition in early 2011, around the time I first heard the phrase 'Jasmer Grid', but I'm already getting ahead of myself. It really began on October 11th 2003, when I found GC171 View from Coombe Hill, which happens to be pretty close to home and my 18th cache find. It overlooks Chequers, the PM's country retreat, from a chalk escarpment at the edge of the Chiltern Hills in Buckinghamshire.

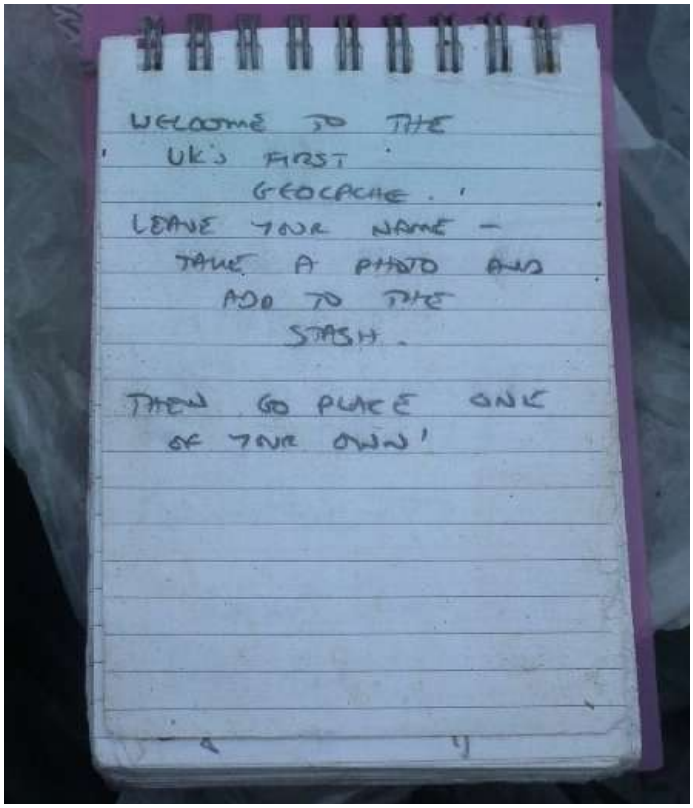
Set on January 14th 2001, it was and is England's oldest surviving cache; a fact I was ignorant of at the time. However, around 2010 I grew aware of GCF0 Scotland's First, the only older cache in the UK. Set on the side of a Scottish mountain – the 1,174m/3,852ft Ben More – by 'Jock Scott' a decade earlier, I was impressed to see an event to go find it on its 10th 'birthday', in the snow. I wasn't available to attend but instead organised my own event (GC2FVMA) to ascend the steep slope to it with a group on June 25th 2011. Despite poor weather, little visibility and a very slippery hillside to zigzag up on wet grass, I was very pleased to get an earlier cache than GC171. I'd improved on it by a whole month and it'd only taken me seven and a half years...

With my first 'Millennium Cache' in the bag, I knew I wanted to find an earlier cache and opportunity knocked in April 2013 when a US road-trip with my brother brought us to GC1E – the world's oldest active Multi cache (June 11th 2000) – at Stone Mountain east of Atlanta. However, terrible weather and a reluctant bro meant we skipped it in favour of GC1D, Beaver Cache (the beavers have moved on), set on June 3rd 2000. So older (actually the oldest surviving cache in Georgia and

joint oldest June '00 cache anywhere), and another month crossed off my caching calendar. This was considerably easier to reach, although it was still raining. I also knew it was among the oldest live caches in the world (I'd done my research ahead of the trip) and as the photo I took shows, I was very pleased with my find.

So far I've focused on 2000 caches, but in truth I'd been looking closely at 2001 survivors too. July 2011 had brought me February while hopping from hot rock to hot rock on a sunny Welsh hillside for GC2BA, The First in Wales, to complete my England/Scotland/Wales' oldest triumvirate. Prior to realising I was on a mission I'd also picked off April 2001, by finding GC781, Angels View (Tyne & Wear) while exploring the Northeast's tourist spots in June '09. May '01 I filled in June '13 (Percy's Cross, GCAA2) while picking off old caches on my way up to Scotland. June '01 had to wait until June '16 when in the area of GCBE3 The Queen Oak for a cache meet promoting that year's Geolympix Mega. July '01 I'd ticked off by accident in November '04 (GC2BA0, now archived) and I'd found a few from August '01 in Ashridge in August '04, when they were still pretty fresh, comparatively speaking. That included GC18BC, the UK's oldest Puzzle, which I went on to adopt years later.

Paul at GCF0



GCF0's logbook

Later stuff had come with trips to the Isles of Scilly in 2008, London in 2004, and so on. But 2001 caches don't really pose a big challenge in the UK, with the exception of March 2001, as they've all come and gone. Knowing this I was able to get one from that month added to the itinerary for the near-legendary 'Giga or Bust' coach trip I organised to attend the first ever Giga event, held in Munich in August 2014. By picking up caches in England, France, Belgium – GC40 from July 2000 in the pouring rain no less, filling another box. 52 soggy-but-happy cachers streaming back onto the coach is an image which will stick with me! – and Luxembourg, plus Austria, Liechtenstein and

Switzerland on the way back, we'd also comprehensively filled a few caching maps. Anyway, it was the last of these and Hagenholx 491 aka GC516 from March 2001 which was the target of interest and I was impressed that our coach driver – a white-haired chap you might have seen on Celebrity Coach Trip – was able to get so close up winding narrow lanes with few places to stop a full-sized coach. As a long snake of cachers we headed the half-mile along paths through rolling Swiss farmland and into the woods. Deep into the woods. At GZ we left a cachers' motorway in the undergrowth but left the cache well-hidden as we headed back to the patient coach drivers. I had an extra spring in my step with another month under my belt. It actually remains my only March 2001 find, although GC3CF, G'ebbes in the Netherlands, remains on my caching radar as it's the closest 03/01 cache to home.

To recap, by the end of 2016 I'd completed the 2001 calendar which I'd begun in October 2003 (Jan) and completed in June 2016 (June). That's nice and clear I hope! I'd also picked up June (GA, USA, 2013), July (Belgium,2014) and December (Scotland, 2011) from 2000. Although it didn't add to my haul, I couldn't resist jumping on the DART train in Dublin in March 2017 to find GC43, 'Europe's First'. After a lovely walk along the cliff-top path from Bray it was a fast find. Set on the 3rd of June 2000, it exactly matched the set date of the Beaver cache I'd found nearly four years earlier and so not only was I no closer to completing my Jasmer grid, I'd not even managed to improve on my 'earliest set on date found' stat. Bah! Still, well worth the train ride and bracing walk in the spring sunshine, with a few other fun caches to find along the way.

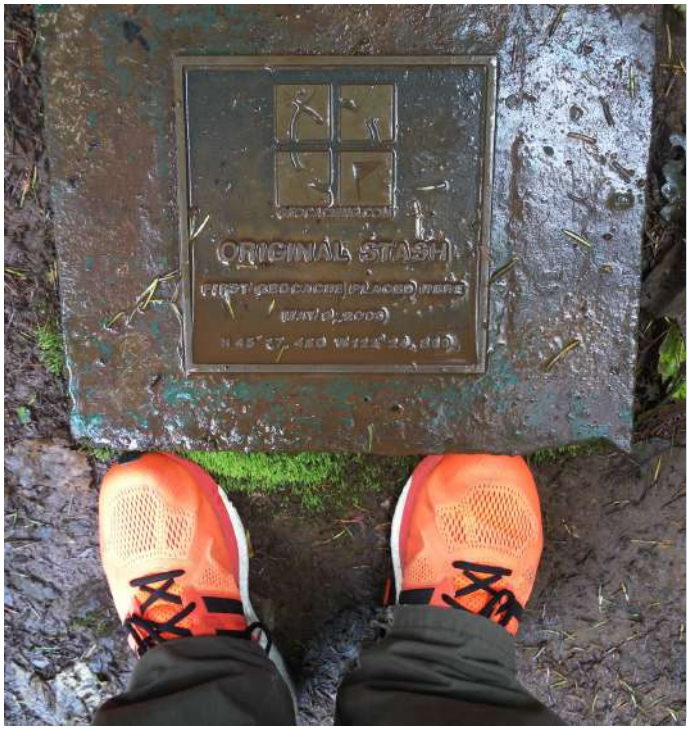
I needed to up my game though, and a plan for a birthday trip to the US began to form. After various shenanigans, in November 2018 I was able to secure September 2000 with GC5B – Phil's Memorial Stash (California's oldest) – which was a lovely walk in a national park, and October 2000. GC78, set on

Paul at GC12

the 2nd of that month, is north of the Golden Gate bridge and San Francisco, and a more precarious route to reach. Called Firestone, I wasn't sure what to expect at GZ, but discovered a rusty wrecked truck from around 1960 which had gone off the road and down a very steep hillside before coming to rest amongst the rocks and fir trees. Another dramatic spot for an early cache, this time overlooking the rolling vastness of the Pacific.

Now I had just May 2000 – when the first caches were placed after The Big Blue Switch controlling the accuracy of civilian GPS equipment was thrown - plus August and November 2000 to find. My next opportunity presented itself with to cheap impulse trip to the Seattle area in October 2019. I'd been toying with attending the 20 Years of Geocaching celebrations in August 2020, but decided to make use of my ESTA from 2018 and the much, much lower prices for travel and accommodation by heading over earlier. I'd also miss the masses and experience the many key caches in the area 'as they were meant to be experienced' – i.e. in solitude. I'd be able to combine it with an additional country again (Canada this time, Mexico the year before) and a long list of other caching ambitions. Not only my first GeoTour, but a visit to 'the lillypad'; GC HQ in Fremont, Seattle (GCK25B, new icon plus souvenir), The Original Stash Tribute Plaque (GCGV0P). A 'Must Do' for any cacher in Washington State, surely?) – which came with a bonus Oct '00 cache a few feet away, GC92 – and another 'biggie', GC1169 from July 2001. It's best known as one of two surviving A.P.E. caches (the other is in Brazil) and another souvenir and new icon! However, you'll have spotted none of these were set in May, August or November 2000...

Luckily the Pacific NorthWest of Washington and Oregon is a happy hunting ground not only for fans of cache icons but more particularly, old ones. Close by the A.P.E. is GCD, the world's last remaining three figure GC-coded cache. It's from June 2000 though and since I already had that 'in the can', I



Original Stash Tribute Plaque

Tunnel of Light (to the APE cache)

The view near GCA5

skipped it on this trip. I'd earlier fish to fry... Specifically GC12, plus GC16 and GC17, which are from May, June and July 2000, in that order. Of these, GC16 stands alone, several miles south-south-west of The Original Stash Tribute Plaque, while 12 and 17 are miles to the west of the plaque and a lot more remote. I found all three on a damp October 18th 2019. I spotted GC16 after a long climb and lots of bouncing about under tree cover with a vague clue, pushing through wet ferns and slipping and tripping in the undergrowth between huge firs.

This was as nothing to the grim slog to GC12 – worth it for the world's 2nd oldest surviving cache, set on the 12th, just a day after Mingo, GC30. In the very early days, GC codes weren't always sequential which is why some old ones have apparently newer codes than caches set after them (see also GCs 40 and 43 previously mentioned). I'd found the suggested parking spot up a logging track in the middle of nowhere, in the incessant rain, and headed into the woods later than planned, with no phone signal, to the sound of gunfire. They like their hunting hereabouts. It was a fair way off and I felt reasonably safe as I headed along a good track towards GZ. It got narrower and rougher with time. Slowly losing light and with GPS struggling under evergreens, I was delighted to go to this large bucket cache pretty quickly and risked getting my camera out in the rain for some shots. May 2000, and the world's 2nd oldest surviving cache, done and dusted!

Now I was faced with an option. Two miles away as the crow flies is GC17. My original plan had been to walk back to the car, move it further up the lane, and climb from there. However, my screenshot of the map showed a good path to it, and I thought it might be a nicer walk... Perhaps it is, but as it got darker, and wetter, and colder, I was soon regretting my choice. These woods are home to various large predators (the cache page for GC17 warns to look out for cougars and I doubt it means the human sort) and I'd run my head-torch flat going through a long tunnel to reach the A.P.E. cache the day before.

So I was using the back-up option; the little LED on my emergency phone battery charger. Not ideal. As I got more tired, hungry, and cold I was joined by Wayne 'The Rock' Johnson. Not really, but I felt his reassuring presence walk beside me. I'm told this isn't an

unusual psychological effect. He vanished, wishing me well after I'd eventually found GC17 on a dark, lonely, cloud-muffled mountain top and began my long climb back down through the forest, to hit the logging road and make a circular walk of it. I don't think I've ever been happier to see a rental car than when my feeble light fell on it, with all tyres and windows intact.

I quickly stripped out of my soaked jacket and top and swapped them for a warmer, dry hoody, got in the car and got to food (a large plate of cheesy chips at Calamity Jane's) as fast as I dared. I do this for fun, I reminded myself while still shivering in soaked trousers, in an empty diner about to close, surrounded by Hallowe'en decorations.

In comparison, the seven hour damp expedition for GCA5, a November 2000 cache called Hembre Ridge, the following day was a piece of cake. Sure, I couldn't get my non-4x4 car closer than 3.5 miles away from it, and the zigzagging paths and tracks, and large elevation changes, made that more like 5 or 6 miles each way, and it was still raining, but at no point did I hallucinate a WWE wrestler/Hollywood star. I did meet a coyote on the walk back down, some stereotypical hunters, and guys in a tiny 2-stroke Suzuki 4x4. I also picked up my most westerly cache find in these Oregon hills. GC7YCWE at W123° 34.074', if you were wondering. The cherry on the cake – at the literal highpoint, complete with remains of a radio mast of some sort – was Hembre Ridge though. There are very few November 2000 caches left so I was really pleased to sign in on this ammo can after I found it in a woodpile. Not least because I'd been walking and climbing for

GCA5

Near GCA5

three and a half hours, spending much of my time inside clouds with only occasional hints of magnificent sweeping mountain and forest landscapes. It was atmospheric though and I was back to the car long before sunset, which was another major advantage of an earlier start. Another warm glow of achievement for the hike and climb too.

This left me just August 2000 to find to complete my Jasmer, and as I noted in my log for GC5A, we've a few of those in Europe. Actually I was wrong. There's only one. There are also three others, all in the US, but none close to where I was. As it was I'd no immediate plans to get one, but I knew I wouldn't leave it too long. You see they're only getting rarer, old caches. As they say, they're not making them anymore. In November 2018 we lost GC103, High Tension in the Bog. At the time it was Europe's 7th oldest cache. Around Christmas I spotted cheap flights to Thailand with NorwegianAir and a plan began to form yet again. Could I make use of the cheapest route – Stockholm to Bangkok – to explore some new countries and pick up my missing month at the same time?

GC4D. Match Stash. It's a simple-enough Trad cache outside of Stockholm and I found it on January 18th 2020. Most importantly it was set on August 11th 2000 and thus was the final piece of my Jasmer jigsaw puzzle. I also made it my 13,000th cache find and note that it's he oldest cache in Sweden and the third oldest in Europe, although the cache page says second. Perhaps the owner discovered GC43 in Ireland actually got muggled, archived and later resurrected..? Anyway, it was a simple train ride from town and a walk into the woods to reach. A scramble up onto a large rock outcrop made for a fittingly elevated location to achieve my silly and pointless, yet deeply satisfying ambition. I filmed it (well, faked it) for a future GIFF entry or two, but the smiles and gleaming eyes were very genuine.

So that's the convoluted, occasionally confusing story of my 17-year mission. A tale of ruthless ambition, dramatic peril, hope in the face of insurmountable odds, and other nonsense. While meaningless in the grand scheme of things, these dozen-or-so deliberate Jasmer-filling cache expeditions have given me statistical satisfaction, magnificent memories, and taken me places I wouldn't have picked otherwise, in several senses! I've no regrets and if you're up for the challenge yourself, dear reader, consider the gauntlet thrown down.

Landmark near GC4D

WMidlands MEGA 2022

We hope that you are all keeping well in this difficult time. After so much uncertainty the WM Mega 2022 committee are getting back on track – so watch this space.

If you are one of the lucky people to have signed up to be a **Founder Member**, thank you, and you should by now have received your Founders Membership Lanyard that allows you a Free Raffle ticket at any of our forthcoming events. Considering the current circumstances, we have extended the period of sign up for Founder status and welcome any new applications. Those wanting to become a **Founder Member** please visit our Website below and click the link to get in touch. **REMEMBER** – the Founder packs will contain a special trackable unique to Founder members only and so extremely rare.
We will be launching our online shop soon. Make sure you follow our Facebook page so you get notified when its live – or visit the webpage of course.

Let's hope that we can all safely go geocaching soon! Until then, stay safe.

http://mega2022.org.uk/

Facebook search: West Midlands Mega 2022

HOW TO

CREATE AN ADVENTURE LAB

BY RICHT2000

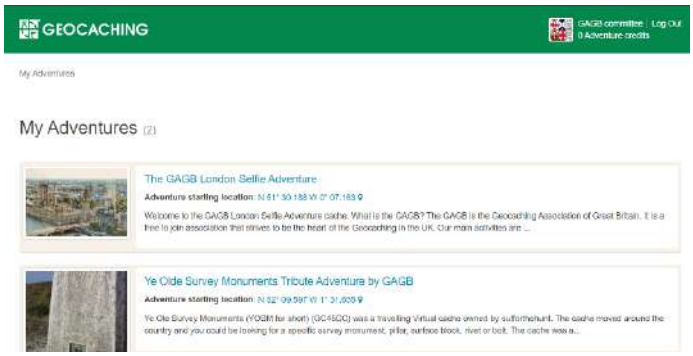
I expect many of the Seeker readers have found a Lab cache or more recently an Adventure Lab over the last few years. As Groundspeak has extended the time allowed to create Adventure Lab caches, it seems a good time to look at how to create an Adventure Lab if you are one of the lucky ones to have been awarded an Adventure credit. This is something that you can do from home, you can plan out the stages, look at writing the descriptions for each of the stages and have a think about what pictures you might include as part of the adventure.

HOW DO YOU GET AN ADVENTURE LAB?

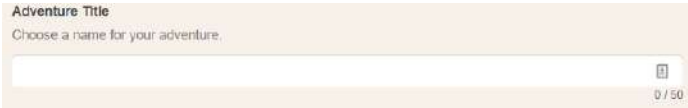
Groundspeak had a ballot of Geocaching users and they randomly awarded Adventure Lab credits to 5000 or so individuals. These credits allow a user to create a 5-stage adventure. Groundspeak also gave credits to large organisations like the GAGB, large Geocaching Facebook groups and the different Mega committees. These will typically have 10 stages.

BUILDING YOUR ADVENTURE

Adventures can only be created via a browser at https://labs.geocaching.com/builder/. The Adventure Lab App can only be used for playing adventures. It cannot be used for building adventures. Once you have gone to the URL above and logged into the site using your Geocaching.com username and password, you should see a screen like this one:



Click the "+Create New Adventure" button to begin building your adventure. The first page is the basic information on the Adventure including the title, description and the image that people will see when they click on the Adventure in the App. Each section of text has a limit to the number of characters. This is shown below the box of text. For example, the Adventure Title is limited to 50 characters.



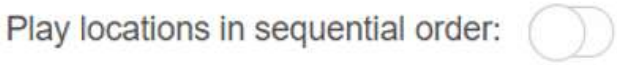
Each Adventure has a start location. This is the first location which you can think of as the base coordinates of a Multi cache. The Custom Access Code is to allow the adventure creator to share the adventure with users who would like to play the adventure. I found it particularly useful in testing so I could share the custom code with testers without making the whole adventure public. The custom code for my Nottingham based Adventure is "RobinHood" for example.

Once you have added your title, description, cover image, starting location and have agreed to the terms and conditions, then it is

time to “Create Adventure”.

Note: All the titles, descriptions and locations are editable before and after the Adventure Lab is made public.

The next step is to create one or more locations. Each location will be counted as a smiley if the player gets the location question correct. The locations can be independent, played in any order or the builder can mandate that the locations must be visited in a specific order. The image below shows that this Adventure can be played in any order.



Originally, both Adventures I created had to be played in a specific order, but following feedback from players, I removed this restriction. It prevents any issues with locations being inaccessible due to roadworks, building work etc.

Each location must have a title, description, image, coordinates and a question. It can include a video via a link to a YouTube video.

The location question and answer are a key part of the experience. The player must get the location answer correct to get the smiley. The builder should remember that English may not be the players first language. The questions should be easy to understand and must demand a specific answer. The best questions ask for an answer in the form of numbers or names. A question that demands the user provide an opinion on something is going to be more difficult to answer. For example, “What colour is the flower on the stained glass window?” may be difficult for people to answer. They may be colour blind. The_dolan and I have done several Adventure Labs abroad. Google translating Norwegian questions into English, working out the answer and then doing the reverse for the answer was challenging to say the least! Try to keep the questions simple and easily understandable.

Each location also has a Geofencing distance. This is the maximum distance the user must be from the location before they are able to answer the question. Typically, the distances I have seen are 1km or less. The minimum is 20 metres.

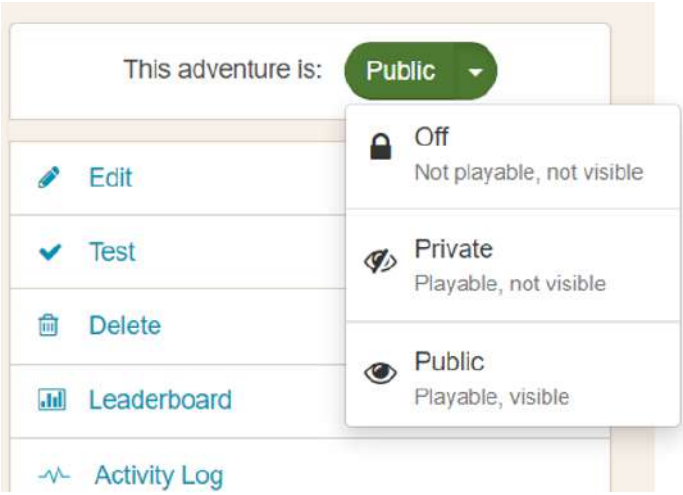
Once the player gets the answer correct, they are rewarded with a Location Completion image and message. The message can tell the player how to get to other locations.

You add locations in any order at any time. If you have chosen to make your locations playable in a particular order, you can rearrange the order of the locations at any time.

Once you have completed the development of your adventure, added all the locations, questions, images and text, you can test your adventure in the real world by choosing the “Test” option from the side menu. This generates a test copy of the adventure which you can access via the URL generated.

Each adventure has a visibility setting. By default, they are “Off” so no-one can see them or play them. Groundspeak have mandated

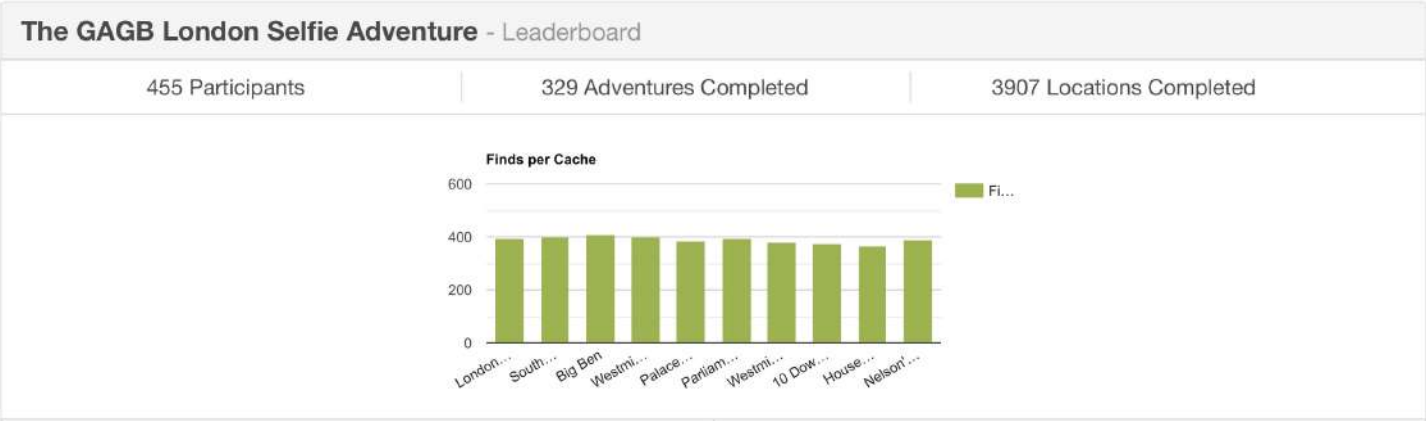
that Adventures can only remain Private for a period of testing. After that, they must be Public. Private adventures are accessible only via the Custom Access Code.



If the testing has worked successfully, you can "publish" your Adventure by changing the visibility setting from "Off" to "Public". Congratulations! Your new Adventure cache will be live. Unlike geocaches, I don't believe that the adventure is reviewed or checked by anyone when you make it public. There is no wait for it to be visible. It is live immediately.

Once it is live, you can view the Leaderboard and Activity Log to see who has completed your Adventures. The leaderboard shows how many people have visited each location and the total number of visits.

The activity log gives the builder the ability to see the review comments left by the players.



Activity Log

The GAGB London Selfie Adventure (search)	Date created
Luonnonihme I (mother) was in London visiting my there living daughter. One thing on my must do -list was this adventure and my daughter and her friends were happy to help. (Luckily, as this was easier for twenty year olds than me.) We did this 14.3.2020. It was nice for all of us to see the familiar places in a new way! Thanks and greetings from Finland!	15/04/2020
lillesandler Very nice walk in the morning, thanks.	27/03/2020
bjever We were on an extended weekend to London and of course we had to find some geocaches. We also took this nice trip on March 9. However we ran into a Challenge as the area around Westminster Abbey was closed off as the royale family was due to pay a visit later that day, and we had no chance to get back since we were gooing home to Denmark. But with great help from The GAGB org. we succeded. 😊	20/03/2020

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Streetmap? OpenStreetMap? OS Maps? Huh?

By Ant Reid (of sharant)

Have you noticed how most mapping apps are rubbish when it comes to footpaths? Google, Apple, they just don't care about muddy trails or smelly alleyways, do they? So, you've looked into using other maps, and why do they all sound alike? What's the difference between these maps, and which can we trust?

Ordnance Survey (OS) maps are uniquely British. Originally military, for a long time they were a government agency but nowadays they are a commercial mapping business and provider of mapping databases. You'll recognise their maps straight away - see image comparisons - and likely you'll have sat through a lesson or two in how to read them back in school. They come in different sizes ('zooms' in 21st century language) and often show nice view points, pubs, and pretty much all footpaths. The OS company make them, and the data is as up-to-date as the last time you paid them (in my case, about 40 years ago!). If a footpath is shown on an OS map, it's very likely to be accurate (but things might have changed since your map was paid for...). These are the go-to paper maps for serious hikers, as the details really help with steep hills and other natural features.

OS have their own app, which you can use for free, but the free version doesn't have footpaths or anything of much use. If you subscribe (£4/month or £24/year) you get all the maps, but you still can't integrate with other apps (eg cycling, geocaching, running). Someone should have a chat with them about that... I tried once but they knew better!

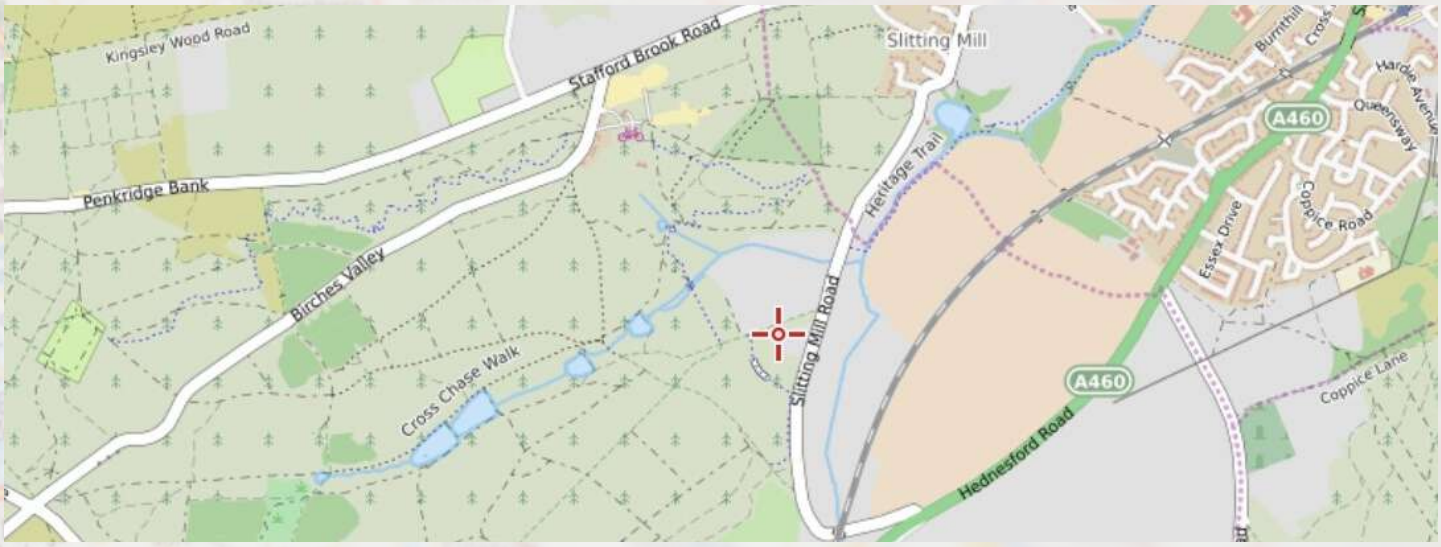
Streetmap is nothing whatsoever to do with OpenStreetMap... It's a simple UK-based website that uses slightly out-of-date (but not too bad) Ordnance Survey Maps, and gets its money from on-screen adverts. It's great for planning, and you can print from it easily, so

Ordnance Survey (premium)

best for desktop-warriors, not great for tablet-junkies. Its best feature is that you can type in anything (street, farm, village, postcode, etc) and it'll plonk a nice, big, friendly arrow where it guesses you want to go. You can almost hear it patting you on the head as it goes off to help someone else!

The free Streetmap website and the premium OS map are the same thing, visually - they key difference is that the premium map is in an app, and you can plot trails, integrate it, and generally go app-crazy, whereas the website is just a bunch of images to look at. And it has a Big Friendly Arrow to hug!

OpenStreetMap (OSM) is completely different and nothing at all to do with the Ordnance Survey. A global organization, they uploaded a base map of the world man years ago and have relied on local people to fill in details ever since - it's a crowdsourced map! This means it integrates well with many different apps and may well have extra details that the OS map simply don't care about - the names of pubs or chip shops, auto-calculate walking, cycling, or horse routes, the ability to correct the map when things change (like a housing estate pops up!). But equally, if some kind geek hasn't already walked your path and added it online, this map won't show the path- or may show it wrong. Of course, you could become that geek - record your trail, upload it, and add to the OSM database.



OpenStreetMap

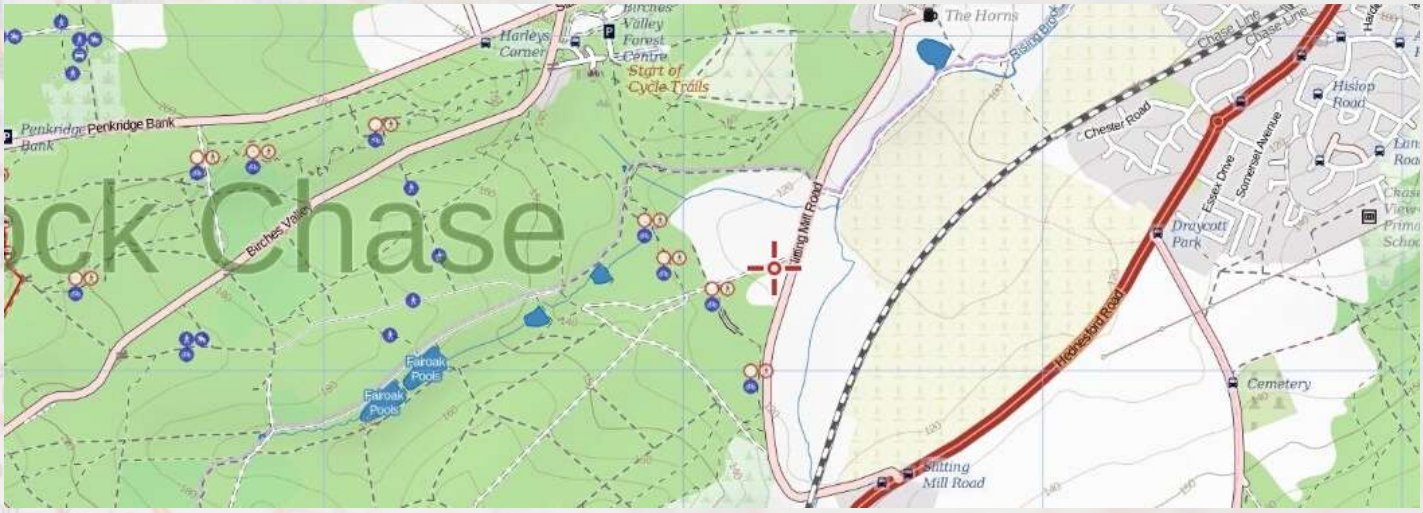
Ordnance Survey (free version)

The free version of the OS Map and the free OpenStreetMap are very similar to each other. They both have small paths shown, road names, the railway station (top-right), and all the water features. However, the OS map has contours to show height changes, whereas the OSM map doesn't (it can use shading, but that doesn't really work for anywhere less steep than Snowdonia). The OSM map does have some more details - differently-shaded trees, some extra names for places, and more useful detail in the towns, but it's main benefit is that it can be shown in any other app - you can do more with it.

Other maps

A few other maps are fine - for example the wonderfully-colourful Maps4u and the far-too-detailed Map1.EU. These two - and several others - simply use the OSM database and present it using their own colour scheme. As far as the countryside is concerned, almost every other map is just pants (as in ripped pants - on barbed wire - that your map didn't tell you about - because you got lost). Most simply don't show footpaths at all, let alone fence lines, streams, cliffs, or the nearest pub. Unless you are using OS or OSM you aren't going to get much farther than the towns, and had better leave your wellies at home. Mapping apps - that's a totally different article. Whether you use a simple app like Cachly or C:Geo, Komoot or OSMAnd, Galileo and so on, or a complex full-featured app like Locus maps, they should all allow you to switch and choose your maps, so pick one that shows footpaths, terrain, and features - and I bet it'll be powered by data from either OSM or OS :-)

Maps4u



Map1.EU

Have you got a great geocaching story to tell? The GAGB are running a competition to find the best geocaching story out there! We invite you to submit up to two stories by July 31st 2020.

Stories have to be between 500-2,000 words. We would prefer for your story to be non-fiction - a story you have to tell from your great geocaching experiences.

Ideas and themes you can base your stories around include (but are not limited to):

- Adventure
- Unforgettable
- Milestone
- Achievement
- Geocaching trip or holiday
- DNF
- Nemesis cache
- First to find
- Funny
- Strange
- Event
- Something else - think outside the box!

Stories will be judged anonymously by the GAGB Committee, and there will be prizes for first, second and third place. All stories will be published in Seeker!

We strongly encourage you to write a new story, but you are welcome to submit an existing online geocache log or blog post if you prefer. However, this log or blog post must be altered in some way.

To submit your word-processed story, send it to stories@gagb.org.uk as an attachment (file type DOCX, DOC or PDF).

Make sure you check out the official webpage for further details about what we're looking for, how to enter and some tips. Please ensure that you also read the rules and terms and conditions provided.

We look forward to reading your stories and deciding the winners.

Good luck!

Travel Diaries

A trip to Germany for the Hamburg Giga (2019)

By Jennthefunkyranger

It was New Year 2018 when Sharon (sharant) mooted the idea of going to the Hamburg Giga, followed by a week driving round Germany picking up as many webcam caches as possible. In February we were in the pub at a caching event and flight tickets got booked (not the first time now we've gone booking caching trips abroad in the pub).

We had a few months of planning, including a few late nights at Sharant HQ sat at the computer coming up with route maps, booking accommodation, a suitable hire car, and then finally it was Friday 3 May and Sharon was at my house at 3-30am to head off to Manchester Airport. A few hours later we were in Hamburg, and had the keys to our car, which was to be known as the Renault Clio Peril. We headed straight to our first webcam (GCNM5G) just outside Hamburg, where it soon became apparent that the car did not like being driven at speed. It became apparent not much later on that we were accompanied by Klaus the Maus in the brakes. And by the time we returned the car at the end of the week we were down to the metal. Anyway.

With one webcam under our belt within a few hours, it was onto Hamburg itself, where we made use of the large Parkplatz right by the mega site, left the car for the costly sum of just 2€ and caught the U-Bahn into the centre of Hamburg. My ticket was again extortionate – a kindly local saw us at the machine and handed me her day ticket as she'd finished with it.

At GC7BA3B

At the Harbour we met up with a rather large group of UK cachers, and took over the top deck of one of the public transport boats to complete a few of the virtuals that have to be done on the water, before heading off and getting some of the new Lab Adventures. This included the old tunnel under the River Elb, complete with lifts big enough to take cars. Sharon really wanted to bring the hire car through here, but unfortunately time was not on our side.

It was then onto the webcam at the harbour (GCGR9B), a few more virtuals and then meandering our way up to the welcome event for the Giga. This consisted of us standing in a very long queue, before curiosity got the better of me and I went to investigate why some people had been walking down the side. Turned out we were in the queue for people needing to pay still, as we were pre-booked we could have joined those heading down the side long before. Not to worry, we soon had the supporters' pack and all important wristbands before heading off for one more webcam (GCP4WM), food, and making it to our accommodation at 11pm.

At the harbour

6000 finds!

Day two, and Giga day! This was a first for both of us, so we weren't sure what to expect. Far more stalls than a mega, and rather packed in places. It was also mostly outside. It rained. We got wet! This theme would continue throughout our trip, it seemed we'd been somewhat unlucky with the weather. After completing the labs, we made the most of the rain for me to get a photo next to the now deserted log book (boat) to commemorate my 6000th cache, before heading out into Hamburg to explore the areas we'd missed the previous day, picking up the rest of the lab caches, several more virtuals, and finally making it to our accommodation once again rather late.

Day three we left Hamburg, and headed south to Bremen (GCQQT0 where we had just missed the once an hour refresh on the way, then GCJ8H7) for a very quick visit of the town, with Sharon sitting on the floor measuring a manhole cover for a virtual, down through Munster (GCPT9B via GCQWPZ) and Dortmund (GCHTA7 via GCM8KK) before ending up in Wuppertal, our base for the next few days.

Day four, and this time it was a long round trip, though with a few hours to explore Cologne, which had been one of my stipulations for the trip! We started out in Dusseldorf (GCE3F3) for breakfast before heading to GCKZK7 and GCBCFF, before we headed over the border into the Netherlands to Sittard (GCG8B1) and back into Germany for GCQDVE. These last two were both ones we'd meant to do the previous year on our trip to Luxembourg, but had not had time for, so it was great actually finally get these in the bag! Onto Cologne for GCMX7C where we had problems finding the right location, before then spending a few hours out of the car and exploring the city in the rain. We were too late to tackle the cathedral dome virtual (planning rule – check opening times), but we did manage another virtual where we got to go up a tower with spectacular views over the city in the dark. It was late when we left Cologne, but Sharon decided we were nearer to GCQY8D than we would be the following day, so on we went again, picking it up around midnight, and making this our latest night of the trip.

Day five was one of the days of the trip where we drove in a big circle, spending a small amount of time in various places, but none of them well known, picking up GCQY8D, GCPZCA, GCKZ1E, GCQ6WT and GCQ6X7. We broke up the day with a visit to a technology museum, where we spent a long time on one cache, but which was a very clever multi all around the museum, and highly recommended. Sharon loved the museum, and I think would probably still be exploring it now had we not had a mission to complete.

In the tunnel (GC7B7V6)

At GC7C5CJ

Day six, and we were on the move to a new area again, this time heading further north, towards Hannover. On the way up we picked up GCQ6X7, GCQAH7, GCR1TX and GCR34P, before arriving in Hameln where we would be staying, a lot later than planned (again). But we didn't have time to hang around, it was onto Hannover to pick up GCP0A9, in the rain. We had been advised that caches in Hannover are good – we got a good taster of this this evening. Phoning a shop dummy to reveal the code for a key safe had to be a favourite.

Day seven, and our last webcam day. Our final caches were GCQ6YP, GCPK2M and GCJVHE, before landing up in Gotenburg where we picked up GCHKB1, our last webcam of the trip, where we sat and celebrated in a café. It had been a lot of driving, and several very long days, but finally our mission was complete (well, almost, it wasn't until we were back home and logging that I realised we'd somehow managed to miss off a cache). Day eight, and our last day. We spent several hours back in Hannover, where I ended up giving more favourite points than I ever have in a day before. The mix of trads and lab caches included watching a small display in the zoo, pulling different blocks of wood to open a cache, figuring out the code to remove the packlock on a wheelie bin, deciphering morse code on a fake fire in a tent in a camping shop, and using a cup of hot water to heat a diode to count how many times it flashed. I was so impressed with the ingenuity of the caches. Unfortunately we didn't have time to do them all, we had the drive back to Hamburg and a flight to catch.

It was as we were sat in the car, and were about to set off for Hamburg that I smelled something. It smelled like toast. It seemed to be getting stronger. I looked around, wondering what on earth it was, as something was clearly not right, when I spotted smoke coming from Sharon's caching bag. "Sharon, you're smoking"! "Aaargh!" Sharon whipped of her bag, and quickly started pulling things out to check what was on fire. Turns out that if a piece of the metal wrapper from a packet of mints touches both terminals on a 9V battery it will start to short circuit.

We arrived in the airport, and made it through security, hungry. But the airport seemed to be shutting down quite early. We then discovered that our flight was delayed. A chat with the information desk revealed worrying news. Hamburg airport has a very strict night flight curfew.

At just before 11pm we would have been one of the last flights out of the day, and we were going to miss this. Special dispensation had been obtained (at considerable cost), and we were allowed until midnight. Being German and efficient it was midnight on the dot, 12.01 would be too late.

It was touch and go, and no-one in the airport knew if we would make it. We were allowed to board the plane, but even at this point take off was not certain! Would we be in Hamburg for another night? We were boarded in record time, and the cabin crew ran down the aisle shutting the overhead lockers at the speed of light, whilst the captain made his announcements confirming that take off was still not guaranteed. He would taxi to the runway, but again, there was a chance we wouldn't make it. The tension inside the cabin was high. We caused a few worried looks by laughing when the safety announcement mentioned letting staff know if an electrical item had become hot. But against all the odds, the crew pulled it off, and at 11-58pm we were airborne, making this the only flight I have been on where passengers have clapped on take off.

And that was it, after several months of planning. Plotting the webcams, and working out the best route between them on Google Maps was definitely a smart move, this had taken hours, but it also saved us a lot of time when we were there, and meant we could get round as efficiently as possible. We had also found links to all the caches that we saved down, so these could be accessed quickly by whoever was navigating, and have it loaded by the time we reached GZ. As many of the caches are now a live feed this meant we could get to GZ, grab the picture and go. We'd also translated the pages beforehand to find out what we needed to do, and what special equipment we needed, planning who was going to take what to minimise luggage.

2 cachers, 8 days, 1 Giga, 29 webcam caches (more than twice the amount still in existence in the UK at the time of writing) and 2600km driven – I call that a successful geotrip!

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In 2019, the GAGB made a significant amount of its income at events (through sales and other means of fundraising). With several Megas and events sadly cancelled, we would appreciate it if you could support us by purchasing what you can from our online shop (please note that clothing is currently unavailable). Alternatively, you can donate any amount here. This will enable us to continue to sponsor Mega events, support geocaching in the UK, and put our funds to good use in the year ahead. Thank you for your support.

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Email all articles:

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