

GEOCACHE ALASKA! Inc.

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MAY 2011 NEWSLETTER

HAPPENING NOW:

First mosquito hatch is well underway - NorthWes reported a mosquito 'strike' on April 9th in Seward!! Did you know there's 39 different species of mosquitos found across Alaska? The 'State Bird' is well-known for increasing the difficulty rating of some cache placements to the point where if you're not properly equipped from the moment you step into the woods you're doomed... And - with Memorial Day looming - be safe on the cache hunt and in the backwoods! Be Prepared!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

May 26 - **EarthCaching FUNDamentals GC2VZ41**
BP Energy Center 6:45pm - 7:45pm Thursday
FREE event hosted by GeocacheAlaska! Inc.
Participate in an analysis of this cache type's uniqueness, and learn how to develop and publish an EarthCache of your own. **Special photo highlights of EarthCaches worldwide!**
Also hosted onsite in Valdez as GC2VZ43.

June 4 - **WWFM 8 - Anchorage AK - Town Square Flash Mob 2 - GC2PNYM** - 9am Saturday
Meet up with fellow cachers for a brief well-mannered event moment in Town Square!

June 26 - **GeoWoodstock IX or Bust !!!** - 3pm Saturday
Join fellow cachers in sending off Cavyguy to Geowoodstock IX at this fun little event down at Westchester Lagoon.

LAND ACCESS HIGHLIGHTS:

This year's Chugach State Park (CSP) Geocaching Permit Number is **11-007**. It must appear on your CSP cache container and on your cache listing page. Thanks to the Advocacy Committee members for working hard and complying with all the information requests to secure that permit which allows us to continue geocaching in Chugach State Park!

See GeocacheAlaska! Inc's Land Access data at the [Land Managers](#) link on our www.geocachealaska.org website.

CITO EVENT:

GeocacheAlaska!, Inc. has adopted the first two miles 'northbound' out of Girdwood, on the Seward Highway. In exchange for two signs announcing our stewardship, the State DOT expects us to complete a cleanup activity along our area three times a year. In 2010 we had 3 terrific CITO events and removed hundreds of pounds of trash from the highway corridor. This year's first event on Saturday May 21st was a terrific success. Watch the cache listings for a midsummer and an end of summer event along the shores of beautiful Turnagain Arm!



GEAR GUIDE - ALASKA STYLE:

This month's featured indispensable TOTT (Tool Of The Trade) is the combo of a headnet and mosquito repellent. While a headnet can obscure your vision a bit on the hunt for micros hidden in the woods, it's essential for keeping your sanity during the approach to ground zero in thick cover or near wetlands. A favorite trick is to put on a ball cap, then the headnet - and lift the headnet up onto the brim of the hat for those closeup searches and log signing moments. Many ditch the headnet in favor of a large dose of mosquito repellent (100% DEET is alleged to be the most effective); and there are those cachers who wouldn't be caught on the hunt without both in their bag!

TIME to JOIN - or INVITE a FRIEND!

Visit geocachealaska.org today and sign up for an annual subscription Premium Membership! Help underwrite our land use advocacy outreach efforts and the annual website hosting costs. Each member makes a difference!

EDUCATE YOURSELF:

The GeocacheAlaska! Inc. website's EDUCATION page has PDF presentations from our entire Eduvent Series. To date, we've seen Geocaching basics, SWAG,

Earthcaching, Benchmarking, Cache Placements, Cache Submittals and the role of the Groundspeak Reviewer covered. Download them online from the [EDUCATION](#) page on our website and power-up your geocaching skills! (<http://geocachealaska.org/education.htm>)

Each month's newsletter looks for a feature article or two which carries the reader beyond their boundaries, to broaden experiences, better equip for the future, or just share in some fun. Here a veteran geocacher is going to share his "12 Countries in 12 Days" GeoJourney – an experience your editor dubbed a 'Geosmaching Road Trip'. The label stuck – and here's part 1 of our story:

Road Trippin' – Geosmaching Europe By Ladybug Kids

One of my work assignments is to participate in a joint industry project that requires the participants to meet in person in Europe once or twice a year. When my schedule permits, I add vacation days to the beginning or the end of the trips for sightseeing and ca(t)ching up with friends. This year's first meeting is in Pau, France, located near the Spanish border in the foothills of the Pyrenees. A quick perusal of GoogleEarth revealed other points of interest such as Lourdes, San Sebastian on the Bay of Biscay, and a couple of high mountain passes the Tour de France crosses.

With Pau as the anchor for the trip, I sent e-mails to my French work colleagues to get specific tips for what to do with a couple of extra days in the area and to cachers I know in the Netherlands (Johny Cache, for whom I maintain international exchange cache [GCMXEK](#)) and Switzerland (Worlddiver, whom some local cachers met during his Alaskan visit last summer) to check on their schedules. Both cachers were available to road trip, but on different weekends, so I looked at airline possibilities that would allow me to visit both of them. It was easy enough to fly into Paris or Amsterdam and use the Thalys or TGV high speed trains to connect with Johny Cache, but getting to Switzerland proved to be much more expensive and less convenient.

Worlddiver provided the solution...meet him in Nice on the Mediterranean's Cote d'Azur and he'd drive us back toward his home in Lucerne. At first, his suggestion didn't make sense until I looked at GoogleEarth again and paid another visit to Orbitz. As it turns out, air travel within the same country on that country's national airline in Europe is a lot cheaper than air travel between countries, so for about \$150 I could fly from Pau to Nice compared to \$800 between Pau and Zurich even though it's only about fifty air miles further to Zurich. And flying home from Zurich rather than Amsterdam didn't change the price of that ticket at all!

While I was pushing Orbitz to the limit to find multi-city itineraries that didn't break the bank, Johny Cache and Worlddiver were getting creative on their end. Johny Cache laid out an "Ardennes Offensive" weekend that will feature Rock Labyrinths [GCSF71](#) in Luxembourg, a Gold Rush in Waimes [GC1J1GR](#) in Belgium, and a webcam [GCJRN5](#) in Mouchau, Germany, after stopping by the Netherlands master benchmark [GCKPYT](#) in Amsterdam.

Worlddiver, for his part, is mapping out an itinerary that involves a stop in Monaco before turning north into Italy to reach Switzerland with a possible detour through Liechtenstein. Literal high points of his proposed route include the Dragon's Window [GC2BR4M](#) and the Gotthard Pass [GCXCFF](#) with a stop at the Gummi Bear factory [GC2A2QV](#).

So, how does this all shake out? Anchorage-Amsterdam (plane) to connect with Johny Cache, to run through Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Luxembourg (car), travel from Rotterdam to Paris (train), and then from Paris to Pau (plane), actually work for a couple of days, visit sites around Pau and the Basque and coastal regions of Spain/France (rental car), hop from Pau to Nice (plane) to connect with Worlddiver, and visit the Cote d'Azur including Monaco, before moving on to Italy, Switzerland, and perhaps Liechtenstein (car), and finally Zurich-Anchorage (plane). Talk about an ugly American trip across a big chunk of Europe! Fortunately, very little of this 12-day, ten country Geosmache is my idea...it's completely being enabled by my European hosts.

Now that I know where I'm going, I've pulled out a packing list that has worked well for me in the past and am modifying it for specific activities and anticipated weather:

<p>Electronics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caching bag • GPS • GPS USB Cord • Rechargeable Batteries • Battery Charger • Lithium battery set to back up rechargeables • LBK Stickers for log books • Travel Bugs/Coins • Cell Phone • Cell Phone Charger • Laptop (w/ extra opportunistic GPX files for drag & drop to GPS) • Laptop Charger • Second laptop battery for those ten-hour flights • Thumb Drive w/ backed up files. Also facilitates file transfers with traveling companions • Digital Camera w/ extra memory chip • Headlamp/flashlight w/ extra batteries • Local maps and trails loaded to GPS • Power cord adaptor kit so your items will plug into the wall outlet and make certain all your chargers are rated 110/220V, or you'll also need a voltage converter 	<p>Clothing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light gloves (optional, depending on local weather) • Wind Shell (top and bottom) • Sunglasses • Reflective Vest • Sport Hills (cool weather weight) • Long-sleeve quick dry shirt • Bicycle jersey (I like all the pockets) • Hat • Gaiters, good for snow, brambles, wet grass, etc. • Business casual clothes for traveling/gatherings (I wear these coming/going...seem to get treated better by airline personnel than when I'm wearing my outdoor gear) • T-shirts (1 long sleeve, 1 short sleeve) (I always have something dry to change into, but you already know that coming from Alaska) • Socks & underwear • Lightweight hiking boots/trail running shoes • Money belt to keep all documents, cards, etc. under clothing. Some folks prefer to use a pouch around their neck.
<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$200 US currency (for quick exchange in a pinch. I don't exchange in the US, preferring to wait until I reach the airport to do an ATM draw where I'll get a MUCH better exchange rate) • Passport • Drivers License • Two different credit cards. Call bank with itinerary to keep card from being turned off. • ATM card. Call bank with itinerary to keep card from being turned off. • Photocopies of Passport, travel itinerary/confirmations, lodging contact information and addresses, credit card(s), debit card, and any other important documents, scanned and saved to laptop and external drive. Second copy for traveling companion in case of document loss. • Powerbars/Energy bars. It's always good to have snacks available because 24-hour eateries are fewer and farther between in Europe. • Earplugs. These help me sleep on the airplane and in hostels with dorm-style sleeping arrangements. • Toiletries. Standard stuff...toothbrush, tooth paste, floss, deodorant, sewing kit, shampoo. • Medications in original containers. (Bring copy of prescription from your doctor in case of loss. • Empty Water Bottle(s) for use on plane after clearing security and for vehicle while sightseeing. I recycle soft drink bottles so it's no big loss when I inevitably leave one on the plane, in the rental, etc. • Camelback for hiking w/ pocket(s) for lunch, snacks, etc. These pack really flat. • Alaskan geobling for gifts and cache exchanges. • Book 	

End of Part 1 – stay tuned for the rest of the story in next month's newsletter – and watch for a social event in late June where the Ladybug Kids will share the journey in photos on widescreen! Next month's newsletter features some editor-selected recent cache photos as well – perhaps yours!
