

Ages: 10 years and up

Time: At least 1 week prep time, plus 60 minutes for the initial activity

CYFERnet Travel Bug World Adventure

Tour the globe via a Travel Bug: a metal tag that allows contestants to follow their "hitchhiker". The Travel Bug Adventure is a great activity for any CYFER or 4-H program who would like to learn more about the world in a fun and exciting way.



SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Computer and Internet access
- At least 1 Travel Bug tag per hitchhiker (see "Do Ahead" section)
- At least 1 per team (something you don't want back – see Make a Travel Bug Hitchhiker (<http://www1.cyfernet.org/act-CYFER/mom/09-07-GIS/mascot-instructions.pdf>))
- 1 GPS unit per team
- 1 compass per team
- A digital camera if you want to document the trip
- Transportation to and from Geocache site
- Print-out of your cache description, including lat/lon coordinates
- Pen/pencil to make notes in the logbook at the cache site

DO AHEAD


1-3 weeks in advance:

- Go to the online Groundspeak store and purchase a [Travel Bug for Hitchhikers](#) (\$5.99 plus shipping; less if you purchase in quantity).
- Visit www.geocaching.com and register as a user. There is no charge for the Basic Account. Once you have an account, you can access information about the existing geocaches in your area (and around the world).
- In the left-hand column of the Geocaching Web site, go to [Hide & Seek a Cache](#). Enter your ZIP code (or the ZIP code of your program or location) and the miles you are willing to travel from that point. Click "Go" to see a list of the caches in your area.
- Identify potential caches for your Travel Bug. Check the distance first if that will be a factor (📍 icon). You will want a "traditional cache" (📦 icon) that is big enough (mouse over the 📏 icons to see cache size) to hold your Travel Bug and its hitchhiker. Note: A "micro" cache is the size of a 35 mm film canister; a "small" cache is the size of a sandwich; a "regular" cache is the size of a shoe box —11 x 6 x 7"; and a "large" cache is five gallons or larger.
- Now review the cache descriptions to identify several that sound interesting. Select one, or consider several if you are concerned your preferred cache will be too small, too

difficult to find or the terrain too difficult.

- Remember Flat Stanley? In this popular children's book, Flat Stanley traveled the world by mail. You can personalize your club's geocaching experience by creating a club hitchhiker to attach to the Travel Bug. Instructions available at <http://www1.cyfernet.org/act-CYFAR/mom/09-07-GIS/mascot-instructions.pdf>.
- Arrange to use one or several GPS units and a compass. The group will be looking for a single cache so only one is needed, but it might be more fun with several (in addition to a digital camera if you want to document the trip).
- You may need to make arrangements for transportation, additional volunteers to manage the group, parental permission, wearing of appropriate shoes and clothes for hiking, etc.

1 week-1 day in advance:

- Print out the description of the cache(s) that meets your needs, including latitude/longitude and any other hints, and confirm that it hasn't been archived or disabled. We recommend that you visit the cache to ensure all of its contents are appropriate for youth before using it in this activity.
- Decide on a "mission" for your Travel Bug and hitchhiker, and write it on the back of the hitchhiker. Be sure to include your club's e-mail address (instructions: <http://www1.cyfernet.org/act-CYFAR/mom/09-07-GIS/mascot-instructions.pdf>)
- Once you receive the Travel Bug tag, log in to your Geocache account, click on  and follow the directions (enter tracking number and activation code from the tag's plastic wrapper; the name and mission of your hitchhiker; a description and photo, etc.). Record your TRAVEL number. This is NOT your tracking number, but a number you get when you register that you can share with others. People who find your hitchhiker verify that they found it by using the tracking number.
- Attach the Travel Bug to your small hitchhiker, if any. Be sure the item will fit inside the cache you are looking for.

Day of the activity:

- Pack up your Travel Bug and hitchhiker for their trip to the Geocache.
- Travel to the Geocache site. When you get close to the Geocache (within 300 feet, the length of a football field), make sure to check your GPS unit signal. Sometimes the signal will have an error between 25-200 feet. As you get closer to the site, don't concentrate as much on the arrow as you do on the distance decreasing.
- For the last 30 feet, use a compass or direct your buddy in the direction of the cache. If you have trouble locating it, try circling the site with the GPS unit to get a good search area. Check the description for any hints.
- The final 30-100 feet is the hardest. Think like the person who hid the cache. If there are stumps around, investigate around the base. Check for a pile of rocks. Some stashes are ingeniously hidden—especially in people-trafficked areas—so it helps to know the container they used.
- Find the Geocache! Take a photo of your group with the cache and your Travel Bug and hitchhiker. Typically, you take an item out of the Geocache (to keep, if desired) and leave an item in its place (your Travel Bug). Take time to read through the logbook if you'd like. Then enter your Geocache name and the experience you had finding it/starting out your Travel Bug in the logbook.
- Make sure to seal the cache and place it back where you found it. If it had something covering it (rocks, for example), please replace them.
- When you get home, e-mail the person who hid the cache and let them know you found

it. They're always happy to know the condition of their cache and it's nice to know that people are looking for them.

- Log in to the [Travel Bug site](#), enter your "Travel Bug Number" and add a "Log Entry" to launch your hitchhiker.
- It's finally time to track your Travel Bug. This happens automatically on the Travel Bug's personal Web page. Each log includes the bug's current location and miles traveled, complete with a map view. Check on your hitchhiker's progress over the coming months.

Timeline Review

NOW:

Adopt the CYFERnet Travel Bug Adventure as a program activity.

Order a Travel Bug and select a hitchhiker.

Get the needed supplies and make travel arrangements.

Register your Travel Bug online with Geocache.

Place your Travel Bug in its first Geocache.

Begin to Monitor your Hitchhiker's progress!

GEOCACHING GLOSSARY

Archive/Disable: An archived cache has been removed; a disabled cache is temporarily removed. When identifying a cache in which to place your Travel Bug, don't select one that has been disabled or archived.

Cache: Pronounced "cash." In Geocaching, it is a hidden container filled with a logbook and pencil/pen, and possibly prizes.

Hitchhiker: A hitchhiker is an item that is placed in a cache, and has instructions to travel to other caches. Sometimes they have logbooks attached so you can log their travels.

Muggles: Non-Geocachers who are unaware of the game's existence. A cache that has been discovered and damaged or removed by non-cachers is said to have been *muggled*. Don't retrieve a Geocache in the presence of Muggles since the caches often contain somewhat valuable items and their contents could be easily stolen by others if not careful. A typical comment on Geocaching.com is "I found the cache site but I had to wait 10 minutes to retrieve it because muggles were around."

TFTC: Thanks for the cache.

TFTH: Thanks for the hunt.

TNLNSL: Took nothing, left nothing, signed log.

Mention or display of a trademark, proprietary product or firm in text or figures does not constitute an endorsement by CYFERnet, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, or National 4-H Headquarters and does not imply approval to the exclusion of other suitable products or firms.