

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER GEOTRAIL - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Help! I don't know anything about geocaching! Discovering a geocache is very much like going on a treasure hunt. Geocachers use a hand-held GPS (Global Positioning System) to plot map coordinates to locate the treasure or "cache," which usually consists of a container, a log book, trinkets and trade items. Geocache etiquette asks that each discoverer of the cache who takes a trinket, replace it with another item. Many of the caches along the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail also include information about the host site.

Here is a link to two brochures you can download to learn more:

http://friendsofchesapeakegateways.org/projects/ssb_geotrail/new_to_geocaching/

How does GPS work?

Each GPS receiver is a computer that receives signals broadcast from GPS satellites. A receiver needs to read signals from at least three satellites at a time to calculate its general location by a process called trilateration. With signals from four satellites, a GPS receiver can get a more accurate fix that includes altitude and the exact time, as well as latitude and longitude. The more satellite signals the receiver reads, the more accurate the position it reports to you.

What are the rules in Geocaching? *(Courtesy of geocaching.com)*

1. If you take something from the cache, leave something of equal or greater value.
2. Write about your find in the cache logbook.
3. Log your experience at www.geocaching.com.

What is a Geotrail? A geotrail is a series of caches tied together by a common theme. There is not a traditional itinerary. Instead, a geotrail is self-guided adventure. Participants can pick and choose which caches they wish to seek,

Along the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail, all the sites have a connection to the War of 1812. Some are famous places known around the world; others reflect the landscape of the conflict – such as communities that were burned or points near water where residents could watch troop movements. The trail aims to connect contemporary visitors to the people, places, landscapes and stories of the conflict, in a way that is relevant to our lives today, while also encouraging the public to visit interesting and unique places throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia.

Most of the sites are also designated as Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails.

Why is Friends of Chesapeake Gateways sponsoring the Geotrail? Friends is a nonprofit that supports the objectives of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network. Friends works to encourage visitation to member sites and to spread the message of Chesapeake conservation

and stewardship. The Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail is a perfect way to promote both these goals. You can learn more about Friends at www.friendsofchesapeakegateways.org

Is the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail the same route as the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail? No, it isn't. Many of the sites are the same, but the geotrail extends beyond the boundaries of the National Historic Trail (NHT). The NHT recently started developing its management plan, a multi-year, collaborative process that sets goals and cements partnerships for future endeavors. If you want to know more about management planning, contact Suzanne Copping, National Park Service program manager for the trail at suzanne_copping@nps.gov

Does the National Park Service have a lot of Geotrails? No, this is the one of the first multi-state projects the NPS has participated in and helped sponsor. This is an exciting partnership!

What is a cache "code word?" All of the caches on the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail contain a code word connected to the host site. These code words will be recorded by geocachers on a **passport** as they visit each a site. The code words are a secret so don't reveal them!

What is a passport? Geocachers who participate in the trail can download a passport and record code words from all the sites they visit. Once a geocacher locates at least 20 caches, enters in the code words and uploads a photo to geocaching.com, he or she can send the passport to the Friends of Chesapeake Gateways to earn a commemorative geo-coin. The address is – 410 Severn Avenue, Suite 314, Annapolis, MD 21403.

See the passport - http://friendsofchesapeakegateways.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/GeoPassport_Final-01-25-09.pdf

What is a Geocoin? Geocoins are special trackable coins created to commemorate special events or as a signature item to leave in caches.

We have developed a wonderful geo-coin for the Star-Spangled Banner Geotrail. It will be given to the first 400 geocachers who visit and find at least 20 caches along the trail. To be eligible for the coin, geocachers must first download the passport at www.friendsofchesapeakegateways.org, www.mdgps.org or www.nps.gov.stsp. Then, as geocachers discover caches along the trail, they will copy a code word (available at each cache site) into the appropriate place on the passport and take a photo of themselves at the cache, to be uploaded later to www.geocaching.com. After visiting the minimum number of sites, geocachers will notify Friends of Chesapeake Gateways to have their passports validated and receive their collectable coin. Geocachers highly prize geo coins!

Sound confusing? To see how this all works on the ground, you can visit these sites:

http://www.pgparcs.com/About-Parks-and-Recreation/Park_Rangers/Geocaching.htm

<http://www.mdmunicipal.org/programs/geocache.cfm>

<http://www.visitdelaware.com/geo/index.php>

You may also visit the Maryland Geocaching Society website at www.mdgps.org.

What do we need to do at our site? Keep an eye on the cache. Make sure that it still has trinkets inside and that the container is hidden properly. Do not place food items in the cache! This is a bad idea. Animals have better noses than humans, and in some cases caches have been chewed through and destroyed because of food items in a cache.

The volunteer you worked with to place the cache may have showed you how to track visits at www.geocaching.com – check comments to make sure everything with the cache is going alright. Be sure to add your cache to your “watch list” on February 27th. If you need assistance, you can email Susan Kelley, our Geocaching coordinator, at Calvertcachers@gmail.com for instructions.

Can I move a cache at our site? Please, do not move the cache from its original location without consulting the volunteer cacher you worked with to get it placed. If you feel that the cache may not be located in the proper location, work with the volunteer so that all the information on geocaching.com can be updated as well.