

DiveCaching – Looking For Fun!

Tom Ingram, DEMA

What is DiveCaching? It's all about diving adventure and fun! It's an underwater "treasure" hunting game and activity for snorkelers and certified divers that can be organized by any group of divers or by professional dive centers. It is ideal for keeping your customers involved in both local diving and dive travel, and for divers who may have been out of the water for a while this is a great, fun reason for them to take a refresher scuba course and get back into diving!

DiveCaching combines certified scuba diving skills or snorkeling skills with some high tech equipment and simple underwater search techniques, while looking for a hidden "cache" of goodies. The premise is simple; divers hide a "treasure" or cache underwater, they post the location of the hidden cache online, and other divers search for it. When the cache is found, the finder logs their visit to the cache by recording their name on an on-site visitor's log book or slate, and puts the cache back where they found it. Sometimes the finders enhance the cache by placing additional items in the cache container. Other times the finders simply put the cache back in the hiding place unchanged for the next DiveCacher to locate. After returning to the surface, the diver's visit to the cache is logged online.

For divers there can be many rewards for DiveCaching and everyone has their favorite reason for participating. Some thrive on the fun and adventure of the hunt. Others enjoy exploring a new dive site or returning to one that they have not visited in a while. Still others enjoy practicing their diving skills, using new diving equipment, or using skills in navigation, buoyancy control or search, or just simply being with friends and family. Some, especially the younger DiveCachers will love the treasure!

DiveCaching is an underwater form of "Geocaching," a decade-old land-based activity with more than 5 million participants worldwide. There are already some underwater geocaches listed on the Geocaching.com website, and more are being listed every day. Because it's an activity which can be done on land AND underwater looking for geocaches both in and out of the water is a great activity for customers with family members who are not yet divers.

The cache container itself should be made of an environmentally-friendly material, and include a visitor's log along with various "treasures" that might be of interest to the diver; collectible coins, magnets, lapel pins, key chains, beads, money, stones, or other treasures. These items, known as SWAG (Stuff We All Get) should not include commercial items such as coupons or ads, but can include almost anything else that is a reflection of the cacher's personality. There are even trackable items which can be used in various underwater games and puzzles constructed by cachers. No matter what is included, the point of the game, and the fun, is the search!

To play DiveCaching, divers search for caches already hidden underwater by going to DEMA's partner website Geocaching.com and looking for listings that include keywords such as "divecache," "dive," "underwater" or "scuba." Underwater caches are hidden out of sight of non-caching divers or swimmers and the entry-point coordinates (or in some cases the actual coordinates at the surface above the cache) are recorded using a Global Position System (GPS). The GPS coordinates are posted online along with any compass directions needed so that other

divers can find the cache. If there are no (or relatively few) underwater caches in your area...hide some!

Hiding a cache is simple, but in some situations placing a cache may not be permitted. You'll find guidelines on DiveCaching.org for properly hiding caches and for playing the game in areas where hiding caches may be restricted. Keep in mind that this should be a fun experience for the cacher seeking your container – pick a unique but safely accessible location, one that is scenic but challenging, and fun!

It is important to make sure your caches meet a few specific requirements:

1. Caches must meet the listing requirements of the geocaching community found on Geocaching.com before they can be posted online. Pay close attention to the distance between caches and the items contained in the cache.
2. You'll have to decide whether divers should sign the log underwater (a "wet" cache) or must bring the cache to the surface ("dry" cache), or if there is no log at all. See the recommendations on DiveCaching.org for more information wet or dry DiveCaches.
3. Along with directions and a description make sure the specific diving requirements for locating the cache are listed online. Pay particular attention to this information in cases where divers may need special training and equipment to reach the cache.
4. Avoid hiding caches in environmentally sensitive areas and avoid damaging the aquatic environment when hiding the container. If hiding a cache in a restricted or private area, seek the permission from the landowner, government entity, or property manager before hiding it.

As the owner of the cache you are ultimately responsible for it, so make sure you know and obey the rules for the area where you place it. Avoid hiding a DiveCache while on vacation or traveling because someone must be nearby to periodically service the cache, change the log or re-secure it in its hiding place.

How will DiveCaching help your dive center? When divers hide caches in their local dive lake, quarry or river it will encourage more local diving participation by current customers. Divers working or living in resorts can also hide underwater geocaches in these locations making it possible to play the game anywhere in the world; there is almost no limit to the type of caches and hiding places. Divers can play all manner of games that promote both diving and DiveCaching once containers are hidden and logged on geocaching.com, and stores can develop their own games. DEMA will also provide suggestions to member stores.

Divers will want to upgrade equipment and get additional training to participate. Consider promoting additional training in buoyancy control, search and compass navigation as a starter, but don't forget underwater photography, drysuit diving and training for low visibility diving.

DiveCaching can also help acquire new customers. Families with non-divers can participate in land-based geocaching while their families are looking for caches underwater, encouraging more family-friendly outings and diving-related social events. In addition the geocaching

community is very large (more than 5 million world-wide) and there are many who will be interested in finding caches underwater.

The data on the current geocaching audience indicates it is attractive for the diving community, and expanding our reach:

Gender	Percentage
Male	55%
Female	45%
Income	Percentage
\$0 – \$30K	17%
\$30K – \$60K	33%
\$60K - \$100K	34%
\$100k+	17%
Age	Percentage
3 - 12	3%
13 - 17	13%
18 - 34	28%
35 - 49	29%
50+	27%
College Attendance	Percentage
No college	36%
College	50%
Graduate School	14%
Kids in Household	Percentage
No kids 0 – 17 years	65%
Have Kids 0 – 17 years	35%
No kids 0 – 3 years	90%
Have kids 0 – 3 years	10%
No kids 3 – 12 years	75%
Have kids 3 – 12 years	25%
No kids 13 – 17 years	84%
Have kids 13 – 17 years	16%

Geocachers are also found in states that rank highly in the DEMA Certification Census for entry level (Open Water) certifications.

States	Rank: Geocaching.com	Rank: Open Water Certifications (DEMA Certification Census)
CALIFORNIA	1	1
FLORIDA	3	2
TEXAS	2	3
NEW YORK	4	4
ILLINOIS	7	6

Environmental initiatives are also possible with DiveCaching. “Cache In Trash Out” (CITO) is the geocaching community’s environmental initiative, and when searching for caches underwater or on land cachers can pick up any garbage they encounter and carry it out of the area. Similar to beach cleanups and other diving-related environmental efforts, this one also helps keep our dive areas clean. CITO events should be considered by every dive center!

DiveCaching is a fun activity for all divers and dive centers should get involved to bring their current customers in for more diving fun! For more information on DiveCaching log onto www.DiveCaching.org and www.geocaching.com, or contact DEMA at info@dema.org.