

ABOUT LETTERBOXING

What is this all about?

Letterboxing is an intriguing pastime combining map-reading skills and artistic ability with delightful "treasure-hunts" in beautiful, scenic places.

How can I participate?

- 1) Take a copy of this info sheet and check out the references listed.
- 2) If you are intrigued, get yourself a personalized **rubber stamp**, either hand-carved or commercially made, with something of importance to you in the image. You will use this to sign in to the guestbook contained in each box you find. (This is optional; some just write their details in the book with a pen.)
- 3) Obtain a small journal (such as an artist's sketch book) and an inked stamp pad. Each letterbox contains a rubber stamp for you to print into your personal book as proof of your visit.
- 4) Now, all you need to begin your search are **clues**. Many clues are available from Internet sites. Some of the letterboxes you find will contain clues to others locations. Eventually, you will meet other Letterboxers and learn of their experiences. Likely, many of the clues you come across will require a compass to follow. If you want to visit Great Britain, a book of clues is available for Dartmoor, the birthplace of letterboxing. (See references.)

How did this all get started?

According to legend, in 1854 a Victorian gentlemen hiker put his calling card in a bottle and stuck it into a bank at Cranmere Pool, in a remote part of Dartmoor in southwestern England. Over the years, the hobby developed; current reports indicate that as many as 10,000 letterboxes are presently hidden in Dartmoor, now a National Park. Visitors from around the globe prowl the heath at Dartmoor in search of the elusive boxes and the artful stamps inside.

How did the hobby get started in the United States?

In April of 1998, *Smithsonian* magazine published an article on the Dartmoor letterboxes. Within a very short time, a loose alliance of adventurers and rubber stamp enthusiasts pioneered the introduction of the hobby to the US. With the Internet as a primary means of communication, the idea soon spread around the country. Web-sites and a discussion group were established. Letterboxes began to be placed in inconspicuous but interesting locations throughout the US.

Are there any rules?

Letterboxes should be hidden on land to which the public has access. They should be placed so that a casual find by a "non-letterboxer" is unlikely, yet they must be accessible without impacting the natural surroundings. They are not to be buried in the earth, but placed under rocks or in existing natural holes, crevices or cavities. They should not interfere with native wildlife or habitats. They should not be placed close to one another (to avoid damage from over-intensive use of an area), nor should they be located in any potentially dangerous situation. A contact number/address should be provided so that information pertaining to the box can be passed to the owner.

When hunting for letterboxes, please respect the land upon which they are hidden. Do not disturb any historical landmark or private property. Do not break sod, remove native vegetation, disturb natural rock formations, or interfere with animals or their habitats. Leave the site better than you find it; you are encouraged to remove any litter left behind by people who care less for the land than you.

Also, please respect the contents of each letterbox and the effort put into it by its sponsor. Replace the box carefully and leave it as you would hope to find it: hidden from view, with contents intact. If a box is damaged, please notify its owner.

Finally, you may wish to create some boxes of your own and hide them in interesting places. There are no rules as to size or format; helpful suggestions can be found at the sources below... ENJOY!!!

Reference Sources:

United States:

"Letterboxing North America" website: <http://www.letterboxing.org>

"Letterbox USA" Internet e-mail discussion group:

to join, send an e-mail message to: letterbox-usa-subscribe@egroups.com

Dartmoor:

"They Live and Breathe Letterboxing," *Smithsonian* magazine, April 1998.

Dartmoor Letterboxes, and More Dartmoor Letterboxes, by Anne Swinscow, Kirkford Publications (Totnes, Devon, U.K.)

101 Dartmoor Letterboxes, by John Hayward with Anne Swinscow, Kirkford Publicat.

Catalogue of Dartmoor Letterboxes, by A. R. Moore, 100 Club, 25 Sanderspool Cross, South Brent, Devon, TQ10 9LR, U.K.