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Clued In

By: Susan Van Dongen , TIMEOFF

Ravenchase Adventures offers 'The Father of All Chases' through Princeton.

Equal parts *Amazing Race*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *National Treasure*, Ravenchase Adventures is a mixture of a scavenger hunt and an adventure race, according to Hamilton resident and cluemaster Kristine Jenner. Picture getting together with a couple of friends or a savvy significant other and, with a handmade treasure map in hand and cleverly rhyming clues, racing competitors around a town like Princeton, being led to the fountain at the Woodrow Wilson School, then to the tiger statues on Princeton's campus, to the bust of Einstein at the municipal complex, then perhaps to Hoagie Haven.

Like the movie *National Treasure*, the race leads participants to local historical sites, museums, parks and other local treasures. Teams end up at a final mysterious locale, like a favorite restaurant or bar, and collect their prizes — but mostly to have a few laughs over the adventure.

Ms. Jenner and her husband, Robert ("chief gadgetmaster/map maker"), launched their first chase in March. For the day before Father's Day, June 16, the New Jersey branch of Ravenchase Adventures presents *The Father of All Chases* in Princeton.

"So maybe Dad spends most of his weekends on the couch falling asleep watching golf or some other 'big' game with remote clutched in hand," Ms. Jenner writes on the Ravenchase Web site. "Deep down you know he wants some adventure in his life. So don't give Dad another cheesy coffee mug this Father's Day. Arm him with a handmade treasure map, mind-numbing clues and gadgets for 'The Father of All Chases' throughout Princeton. No dad necessary to play, but if he comes along, he will play for free. And as always your first round is on us."

Don't worry about having to take the bus or shuttle around Princeton, or having to parallel park. Ms. Jenner assures that the Princeton chase will be an on-foot event and half of the fun of the chase is being outside, wandering purposefully around and discovering secrets and treasures of the town.

"Everything is accessible," she says. "Depending on how good you are at solving clues, it's manageable in an afternoon. Most chases last two-and-a-half to three hours."

If you're the type that loves to peruse maps and solve crossword puzzles, the clue-busting will be the most fun, but the chases appeal to a variety of personality types.

"Especially a person who is curious and adventurous," Ms. Jenner says. "There's also the element (that likes to pretend) 'this is a reality show, this is a movie,' but it's more for the person who wants to go out and do something different. It's also an educational experience, but you don't even realize it."

The clues are challenging but solvable, thanks to the materials Ravenchase provides. You just have to put on your thinking cap to figure things out. Although there might be chases for little ones in the future, Ms. Jenner says the chases planned for the summer are for high school age and up.

Ravenchase works when participants sign up in teams and subsequently receive their first clue via e-mail. If they can figure the clue out, it will tell them the starting location of the race. At the start of the race, teams will be provided with handmade treasure maps, "brilliant" clues, and any necessary devices, such as black lights and cipher wheels.

"I personally write all the clues and my husband, Robert, makes the maps and necessary gadgets," Ms. Jenner says.

Don't get too excited about the booty, though. No huge cash payouts or luxury cars offered here — more like fun, semi-tacky prizes. But then there are those free libations as a reward for finishing.

Ms. Jenner says she and her husband first discovered Ravenchase Adventures in 2005 in a local newspaper in Richmond, Va., where they were both attending the University of Virginia.

"I reluctantly went along trying to appease him," she says. "I thought 'this sounds so boring' but we had so much fun. We fought like crazy at first — 'No we need to go this way, no that way' — but we learned our strengths and weaknesses. It was something we really bonded over. Although, I wouldn't recommend it for a first date."



TIMEOFF/MARK CZAJKOWSKI

Kristine and Robert Jenner will lead a race to historical sites in Princeton.

"But we were both hooked when we received our treasure map and clues from Ravenchase Adventures founder, Josh Czarda," she continues. "We were loyal participants to Ravenchase events until we moved back home to New Jersey in the fall of 2006. We quickly realized that we missed our monthly adventures. Luckily, we discovered that Princeton, with its rich history and beautiful setting, was the perfect place to run our own adventures."

Mr. Jenner, 29, is from Australia and has a background in marine archaeology and Pacific history. He is a realtor with ReMax TriCounty in Hamilton. Ms. Jenner, 23, attended the Lawrenceville School and the University of Virginia and has degrees in English and leadership studies.

The couple admits to being reality TV junkies, but they also love museums and little historic markers.

"We're always saying, 'Let's go see what that says, let's see what that's about,'" Ms. Jenner says. "We couldn't walk past a museum and not have that curiosity."

The Father of All Chases, a 'treasure hunt' from Ravenchase Adventures, will begin at a location to be revealed by clue upon registration, Princeton, June 16, 1 p.m. \$25; bring a dad and he can participate for free. Registration will be taken three hours prior to the event. (609) 838-1500; www.ravenchase.com. E-mail jersey@ravenchase.com

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