

**Thousands of people are looking for the \$2 million treasure buried in the Rocky Mountains by art dealer Forrest Fenn.**

It's not only pirates in stories who go hunting for buried treasure. Every year, thousands of people search in the Rocky Mountains in the US for hidden treasure. Unlike pirate treasure in stories, there's no map to follow. Somewhere, in an area that includes four states – Wyoming, Colorado, Montana and New Mexico – lies a chest with \$2 million worth of gold and jewels. And the clues to where it is are written in a poem.

The treasure was buried by an art dealer, Forrest Fenn, in 2010. He was 80 when he made the trip into the Rocky Mountains by car and then on foot. This fact itself is a clue to where the treasure is: it is somewhere an old man could walk to with a heavy box. But the nine main clues in the poem (available to read on his website) are much more difficult to figure out. Treasure hunters spend ages in internet chat rooms discussing the meaning of every word in the six-verse poem and looking for extra clues in Forrest's two books about his life.

Here is one verse to get you started:

*Begin it where warm waters halt  
And take it in the canyon down,  
Not far, but too far to walk.  
Put in below the home of Brown.*

There are many possible meanings. Perhaps every word has importance, but you can probably focus on 'warm waters' and 'the home of Brown' to start. Some people look for a place where warm and cold water meet, perhaps two rivers. Others look for a more poetic meaning, for example a person's tears could be warm water. Brown might be a person because names usually start with a capital letter. So maybe you have to look for people called Brown who live in the Rocky Mountains. Unfortunately, Brown is a very common surname!

These places must be near a canyon, but what does the third line mean? How far is 'too far to walk'? Also, if you are really looking at details, 'put in' is a strange way to say 'go', so maybe Forrest chose those words for a reason. You can see why people spend a long time analysing the poem, can't you?

Of course, the only way to test your ideas is to follow the clues to try and find the treasure. Forrest advises people to wait until spring to avoid dangerous winter weather and he says people shouldn't go alone. But not everyone has listened to his advice. Three people have gone missing while looking for the treasure. Police who work in the area wish Forrest would call off the hunt so no more people die. They want him to retrieve the treasure and put a photo of himself with the chest on the internet so all the treasure hunters will stop looking.

But Forrest refuses. He says he's extremely sad about any loss of life, but he points out that 'if someone drowns in the swimming pool we shouldn't empty the pool, we should teach people to swim'. He wants people to learn about nature and how to hike and hunt in the woods. A big part of his reason for hiding the treasure is that he thinks people spend too much time inside their houses, sitting in offices or playing on computers and phones. He remembers his own childhood adventures in the Rocky Mountains and he wants families to have those adventures together too.

His plan is working. Joe's dad took him camping in the woods and he says, 'I enjoyed acting tough. We saw some bears but our dog scared them away before I had to shoot them with my gun. But we had to sleep on the ground in the freezing cold and everything got wet. We couldn't even light the fire.'

Some treasure hunters have been out looking for the chest too many times to count. Marti and her daughter Libbi travel from their home in Georgia to search in Montana. Libbi says: 'The thought of bears  
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around every corner was a horrible fear for the first two years, but you slowly get over the fear of animals. I love the scenery of Montana – seeing so many animals up close, camping in the mountains and crossing rivers and streams. It's all so exciting, even if we never find the treasure.'

But there are people who think the whole thing is a hoax. Some say maybe Forrest had a chest of treasure, but they don't believe he hid it in the mountains. Others say he retrieved it years ago. They say maybe he just likes the attention. Unless someone finds the treasure, we won't know if it really is hidden. But even the people who complain it's a hoax are often still out in the Rocky Mountains testing their ideas. Often they're so sure they're right this time that they say it's a hoax just because they're angry their idea didn't lead them to the treasure. Of course, one possibility is that someone has already found the treasure and not told anyone. But that won't stop hundreds more people going treasure hunting this spring. Would you accept the challenge?

*Nicola Prentis*