

The Odd Trail

History and provenance

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The polar-walk riddle

Presh Talwalkar's February 22, 2011 exposition gives the one-mile south, east, north puzzle and its North Pole and South Pole families of solutions [1]. Walking west rather than east produces the same set of starting locations in the spherical model.

Related versions

A common retelling asks about an explorer and a bear. Another presents the question as an interview puzzle. Neither a famous interviewer nor a particular modern retelling establishes the puzzle's invention.

The less obvious southern answers depend on making one or more complete circuits of a very short latitude circle during the middle leg. There are infinitely many such circles, and infinitely many starting points on each corresponding circle one mile farther north.

I did not verify an earliest publication or original author. The cited article is a documented modern exposition, not an origin claim. The solution explicitly uses an ideal spherical Earth and ignores practical geography.

Sources

- [1] Presh Talwalkar, One Mile South, One Mile East, One Mile North—a Classic Puzzle (February 22, 2011).

<https://mindyourdecisions.com/blog/2011/02/22/one-mile-south-one-mile-east-one-mile-north-a-classic-puzzle/>

Sources checked September 7, 2026. A documented appearance is not necessarily the earliest appearance.