

# Dig This, North America's First Heavy Equipment Theme Park

## Get a Load of This!

After renting a bulldozer and excavator to build his home in Colorado, New Zealand entrepreneur Ed Mumm thought there might be a business in giving people the chance to operate a 20-ton vehicle.

He was right. Ever since he unearthed the idea in December 2007, Dig This has been attracting hundreds of experience-seeking vacationers to its 10-acre "sandbox" in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. "Today's traveler is looking for new experiences," Mumm said. "This was a niche that hadn't been filled yet."

Mumm spent months researching this new brand of theme park by talking to people both inside and outside the construction industry. After all the fun he had, it was no surprise to him to find others who said they would pay for the experience.



As if the first year numbers, and a heavy load of media attention, were not enough to prove its success, Mumm said this summer's bookings have exceeded their expectations. In fact, there is enough demand to expand. Dig This will open a second location in Las Vegas later this summer and they are looking into more locations across the country.

Just what is it about these everyday work machines that make them a genuine tourist attraction?

## Digging Is Therapeutic

Vacations are supposed to relieve stress and take one's mind off the anxiety of everyday life. With today's worrisome economy, there could not be a better time for this truly unique vacation experience to come into play.

"It's an awesome stress reliever," Mumm said. "When they finish and look at what they've done, it's a huge release and they have a really big smile." Mumm said if anything the economy is having a positive effect on business. "People are seeking memories, they want a once-in-a-lifetime experience," he said.

## Digging Is Hands-on

The day begins with a safety talk followed by a visual orientation where participants learn what they will be doing with toys in a sandbox. Afterward the newly oriented diggers try the real thing.



Equipped with radios, participants climb into the cab of their assigned vehicle. They learn how to maneuver while receiving guidance from Dig This' instructors. Once they get a hang of the machine, usually a 20-minute learning curve, they set out to complete several digging activities.

"I want people to feel what it's like to experience a big piece of machinery," Mumm said. "It's a rush!" It does not take long for the fun factor to kick in.

Dig This offers half-day and full day adventures as well as "First Tracks," a two-hour condensed program to get feet dirty. Full day adventures offer four to six hours of operating the equipment while the half-day allows for two hours at the controls.

### **Digging Is a Unique Gift**

For someone who has everything, Dig This is a rare gem. Mumm said he has hosted people who received the experience as a wedding, anniversary or birthday gift. "People want this for different reasons," Mumm said. "And a lot of guys are booking this for their wives." Digging is a battle of the sexes? "Couples can have some really good fun," Mumm said. "It's friendly competition."

So far, Dig This' clientele has been split right down the middle, and both the men and the women really dig it. According to Mumm, women often pick it up faster than men because they are better listeners. "Women are fun to have out there, they're always screaming and laughing," he said.



Mumm said he would like to see more women sign-up. So much so, Dig This launched "Excavate and Exfoliate," a lodging and spa package with the Steamboat Grand Resort Hotel. Mumm also hopes families are part of his future business. Kids must be at least 14 to participate, and Mumm believes the experience would be educational and confidence building.

Whatever the reason people come to Dig This, the concept points toward a new trend in theme parks and new level of fun, 20-tons of fun in their case.

Amusement parks provide thrills, this one can guarantee euphoria, or as Mumm describes it, "They

come in not knowing what to expect, they leave totally ecstatic.”

**By Riley Polumbus**

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