

MOUNT RUSHMORE PULLS IN THE CROWDS



An extraordinary project to boost tourism in South Dakota is now one of America's most famous sites and one of the biggest tourist attractions in North America. 400 men helped to build it over a period of 14 years and 90% of the whole project was accomplished thanks to blasts of dynamite and cost a mere \$1 million. So what could it be? The answer: The Mount Rushmore National Memorial, a giant granite sculpture commemorating the first 150 years of American history.

Even when the project was completed, by a relatively unknown artist called Gutzen Borglum, few predicted that it would have such an impact on American tourism as it does today. Indeed, the sculptures are visited by no less than 2 million people every year.

In the US Presidential Memorial, there are sculptures of the US presidents Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln. However, it is not just what the sculptures stand for what attracts visitors, yet it is the pure size and originality. Stone sites are popular around the planet, the most common examples being Easter Island, Stonehenge and Macchu Pichu. Although the Presidential Memorial is far newer than the afore-mentioned places yet still looks as impressive.

Tourists are advised to take part in the so-called presidential trail which involves travelling, or walking, a half-mile loop around the area. The course starts with a visit to the Grand View Terrace, then moves down to the Sculptor's Studio, where one is able to get a grasp of the enormity of completing such work. The atmosphere conveys just how hard the 400 men had to work. There are also two theatres on the presidential trail, both providing 13-minute films about the history of the sites. There are gift shops for those wishing to take souvenirs home and we should not forget about other natural activities such as hiking and camping in the nearby area.

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