

Make Your Vacation Pay You

Many times we hesitate to take the family on vacation because of the cost. What if you could take a fun vacation with the whole family and not only have it paid for, but earn money doing it?

I know a place where you can do just that.

Wait, you say, I can't get my kids to agree to being in the same room for an evening, how am I going to get them to agree on a vacation destination?

I have the answer.

First, you appeal to their greed. Does your son want a new video game? Does your teenage daughter like jewelry? Once they find out that, on this vacation, they will have the chance earn enough in just a few days to pay for their heart's desire, they will not only be willing, but eager to vacation with the family.

What is this magic place?

Its name is Crater of Diamonds State Park near Murfreesboro, Arkansas. It is the **ONLY** diamond mine in the US that is not only open to the public, it also allows visitors to search for – and keep – whatever diamonds they find.

Still skeptical? Just look at these statistics: There were 1024 diamonds found there in 2007.

Ok, you say, but I just can't imagine spending an entire vacation hunting for diamonds. What else is there to do?

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, the park interpreters present programs on everything from mining demonstrations, rock hound hikes, and history walks during the day and some days in the evening there are nature programs.

There is a special summer program called "Crater Minors" for children ages 6-12, which offers various fun, hands-on programs during the day.

You can fish for trout, largemouth bass, catfish and bream – best times are late summer. Be sure to get your fishing license and trout stamps before arrival.

You can view and photograph a variety of wildlife such as deer, turkey, squirrels and birds from the Wildlife Observation Blind accessed by a gravel walkway through the forest.

A big attraction for the younger set is the Diamond Springs Water Park. It is open 12:00 noon to 6:00 pm daily from May 26 through August 19, then Saturday and Sunday August 25 to September 3. Admission fees are based on height and one adult must accompany each 3 children.

Pack your bags

GETTING THERE

Crater of Diamonds State Park is located on Arkansas 301 near Murfreesboro in the southwest corner of Arkansas.

From Little Rock - Travel west on I-30 approximately 56 miles and take exit #73 at Arkadelphia, then go south on Ark. 26 for approximately 34 miles to Murfreesboro. From downtown Murfreesboro, take Ark. 301 and go 2 1/2 miles southwest to the park.

From Texarkana - Go east on I-30 for 30 miles and take Exit #30 at Hope. Take US 278 north and go 27 miles to Nashville. From Nashville, take Ark. 27 north and go 13 miles to Murfreesboro. At Murfreesboro, take Ark. 301 and go southeast approximately 2 1/2 miles to the park.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Crater of Diamonds State Park offers 59 campsites, all with water and electric. A dump site is available as are two bathhouses with showers and restrooms and a laundry facility.

Nearby towns of Murphreesboro, Glenwood and Kirby offer various hotels, motels, lodges and cabins.

FEES:

Price: \$6.50 adults; \$3.50 children ages 6-12 (fall 2008 prices)

PLEASE NOTE THAT ARKANSAS STATE PARKS CAMPGROUNDS DO NOT ACCEPT THE FEDERAL GOLDEN EAGLE PASS, GOLDEN AGE PASSPORT, OR GOLDEN ACCESS PASSPORT FOR DISCOUNTS.

More INFORMATION

Pets are allowed at all facilities with the exception of the Diamond Springs Water Park and Kimberlite Cafe', as long as they remain on a leash under the owner's control at all times.

Crater of Diamonds State Park has a website that is loaded with additional information at:
www.craterofdiamondsstatepark.com.