



HOOKED ON THE OUTDOORS

By
Mike Johnson

Whether it is TV, radio, or print advertising, you often hear the word “magic” associated with Disney World. It goes along the lines of something like, “Something magical happens when your family visits Disney World”. Now truth be told is the magic that happens at Disney is not a creation of the late, great Walt Disney. The magic that happens at Disney is what happens when a family disconnects from the everyday routine and worries for a while, and spends quality time together. Indeed magical things can and usually do happen when the family gets to spend time together. Now here is a secret, North Carolina, in fact areas just not too far away from us afford families the opportunity to find a bit of that magic for a fraction of the (Disney) cost.

One of the truly unique and fun things you can do with your family just a short drive from here is gem mining. Yes, you heard me right, gem mining. Now the first thing you need to do before you read further is remove any visions you might have of this being some sort of get rich or early retirement scheme.....let me just say you won't become rich gem mining, but you will certainly become enriched. Gem mining is another reason/excuse/way for the family to get together, share a common (and unusual) experience, and create memories that will last a lifetime.

You don't need any special equipment to go gem mining, most places that offer this have all the requisite equipment you will need. Do not wear your Sunday best when you go gem mining, there is a good chance you'll get a bit muddy and wet (after our 2nd time doing it we found bring a spare set of clothes is a really good idea). Most gem mining places will offer you the opportunity to sort through preloaded buckets of dirt to look for gems, or the ability to dig the dirt yourself, or sift for gems in streams. For the full experience, go for the latter two options. Now what you will find when gem mining is really pretty colored rocks with very unusual names, none of which I would spell right if I tried at this very moment. It becomes quite the friendly competition among the family members as to who can find the “coolest” gem....I believe I am still looking for my first “victory” in this category in my family.

While the mental images from your day of gem mining will last a lifetime, do bring a camera to record the event. Leave the nice digital camera at home though....remember the bit earlier about things becoming muddy and wet? You'll leave your day mining with bags of rocks, I mean gems, and most times they'll find their way to a permanent resting place somewhere in the garage. If you have a surplus of mason jars around, you can put some of the more colorful gems in them and put them on a window sill...the look pretty neat when the sun hits them. Just like that pair of Mouse ears one might buy when finding magic at Disney....your gems will serve as a visible reminder of the magic your family found here, not far from Lewisville. A great place to check out for your inaugural foray into gem mining is the Emerald Hollow Mine in Hiddenite:

<http://www.hiddenitegems.com/>

Until next time my fellow prospectors!