

A Different Kind of Hobby Store

Most hobby stores specialize: they carry only model trains or radio-controlled vehicles, and they're the go-to source for those hobbyists and collectors. But now there's HobbyTownUSA in Sanford, a family-friendly store with something for everyone. The store carries toys for kids of all ages, plus games, puzzles, science kits and supplies. And, yes, they have model train equipment and RC cars, boats, planes and helicopters (they repair RC vehicles, as well). But they also carry wooden model ships and planes, and most of the major brands of models including the die-cast Forces of Valor line.

HobbyTownUSA also has many school-related educational supplies and products, such as the Scene-A+-Rama line for creating dioramas, landscapes and project displays. They have Pinewood derby products for Boy Scout events. And the digital slot-car table, where you can "try before you buy," is a big draw.

Many hobby shops don't make time for beginners, but that's not the case here: HobbyTownUSA caters to newbies young and old (which adds to its family-friendliness). The staff can offer all the information a customer needs to make an informed choice and buy something that's suited to age, interest and skill level.

"The worst thing that can happen is that a child gets a model or project that's above their skill level, and they get frustrated with it," says owner Jim Howerton. The shop carries models in skill levels 1 through 5, and Howerton and his staff can guide to buyer the right level for the child's ability.

Howerton has 19 years in the hobby business, 16 of them in Ormond Beach. He moved the business to Sanford in November 2008. His expertise and passion: model railroads. "Model railroads are what got me into the business, and that's what I enjoy the most," he says. "The most fun I have in the store is when I'm back there on Saturdays with the public, building the model railroads."

HobbyTownUSA holds a free model railroad-building class on Saturdays from 10:00am-4:00pm. Right now the class is building a 6x3-foot, N-scale model railroad layout on a platform toward the back of the store. Anyone can participate, or just come and watch. There's also a modeling contest twice a year. The Sanford store's winners compete against other HobbyTown stores for a chance at the Nationals.



Bill Ernst

Jim Howerton, owner

HobbyTownUSA is on N. Entrance Rd. near Books-a-Million, just north of Seminole Towne Center Mall. Store hours are Mon.-Fri. 10:00am-8:00pm, Sat. 10:00am-6:00pm, and Sun. noon-5:00pm.

HobbyTownUSA
300 N. Entrance Rd., Sanford
407.321.4003
hobbytown.com/flsan

Scale New Heights of Adventure

The holidays are all about spending time with the people you love, so why not give a gift everyone can enjoy? Whether for a family, a group of young people sharing an apartment, or a set of good friends, the Aiguille Family Fun Pass for five is a gift of adventure they'll long remember.

This special pass covers the cost of climbing, instruction, and rental gear for up to five people. Aiguille welcomes everyone age 4 and up, and at all ability levels. No experience or prior knowledge needed. So make some memories this holiday season. Give the gift of challenge, the gift of adventure, the gift of a Family Fun Pass from Aiguille Rock Climbing Center.

Aiguille Rock Climbing Center
999 Charles St., Longwood
407.332.1430
aiguille.com.

