

Adventures in Manufacturing



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GRANTS PASS, OR - Everyone who climbs aboard a Hellgate Jetboat in Grants Pass, Oregon, knows they're about to experience a once-in-a-lifetime adventure that includes magnificent scenery in hydro-jet powered boats skimming along the Wild and Scenic Rogue River down through Hellgate Canyon. But what's not quite as obvious is that the super sleek and highly technical jetboats are manufactured locally via the boat-making division of Hellgate Jetboat Excursions called Katanacraft.

Until recently, Hellgate owner and entrepreneur Robert Hamlyn, along with his son Travis Hamlyn – fellow entrepreneur and Hellgate Jetboat Excursion's president – used their lean manufacturing facility to make jetboats exclusively for their own water adventures. In doing so, their boat manufacturing expertise continued to excel. Finally, in 2014, the father-son team expanded operations to manufacture extreme shallow draft vessels and other water craft for clients such as the Department of Homeland Security and the State of Oregon.

by Make It Happen Marketing

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- Robert Hamlyn, owner
Hellgate Jetboat Excursions

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With the precise technicalities that go into the production of every custom-made boat, Travis suggested the new name for the expanded division. "The word Katana references a long, curved single-edged sword traditionally used by Japanese Samurai," he explains. "We took the name Katana because we're on the cutting edge of the boat manufacturing industry, and because that name reflects the precision by which our boats are manufactured."



Katanacraft is environmentally conscious. Their commitment to the environment is represented in their waste reduction practices at the facility, and in every detail of the final product.

Since the expansion, Hellgate's Katanacraft division has achieved national attention based on the team's commitment to excellence, and their ability to manufacture cutting edge extreme shallow draft vessels. And since the Rogue River is protected, the Katana brand incorporates technical and environmental design elements that promote the preservation of natural habitats nearby and in rivers, as well as other water systems. "We are extremely environmentally conscious," says Robert. "Our commitment to the environment is represented in our waste reduction practices at our facility, and in every detail of our final product."

In total, Hellgate employs an average of 150 people seasonally. These include jetboat pilots who double as river guides and preservationists, retail professionals in the ShopRiverRock gift shop, and staff at the OK Corral restaurant where lunch and dinner excursions stop for family style and all you can eat meals and drinks. In addition, Katanacraft employs five full-time jetboat manufacturing professionals who have a goal to produce at least six custom crafted boats per year.

"We admit to being extreme entrepreneurs in everything we do, from the design and build of our brand of jetboats, to the excursions on the river, to the restaurant experience, and even the merchandise we sell in our gift shop," says Robert. "We don't limit ourselves to what we're already doing and what we already know. We're open to ideas that will enhance the Southern Oregon experience and boost the economic vitality of the company and the region."

Robert's entrepreneurial journey started with sales of high-end luxury vehicles in Los Angeles before relocating to Grants Pass in the 1990s. While his goal was to trade the fast pace of a large city for the slower pace of a smaller rural town, Robert's passion actually gained momentum. He first purchased a rental company and later bought Hellgate Jetboat Excursions because of its history and potential for growth.

Today, upwards of 80,000 people from around the world take a Hellgate Jetboat Excursion each year. And while both Robert and Travis believe that number will rise, they are just as anxious for the world to discover what's going on behind the manufacturing scenes in their Katanacraft division. "We have a strategy that is proving to work," Travis explains. "And we are very grateful for the support we have received from SOREDI, other local businesses, and the community."



Hellgate Jetboat Excursions & Katanacraft | 966 SW 6th St., Grants Pass, OR 97526 | www.Hellgate.com | www.Katanacraft.com | (541) 479-7204 or (888) 952-8262

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