

Paultons plugs into popular Peppa



IT CAN be tricky to fathom the huge popularity of Peppa Pig and her porcine family.

To the adult eye, the characters in the Channel 5 and Nick Jr TV series appear to do little more than splash around in muddy puddles.

But it is testimony to the huge success of this children's favourite that a theme park dedicated to Peppa, her baby brother George and her piggy parents is opening on April 9 at Paultons Family Theme Park near Romsey in the New Forest, Hampshire. Indoor Play sent Helen Carroll to find out more.

Following an investment of around £6million in the fully themed park, the brains behind family-run Paultons are clearly confident that Peppa and her clan will go on appealing to little ones for many years to come.

And while it's the pre-schoolers who go potty for Peppa, with older siblings in tow we found the park has plenty to entertain under-10s.

Its target market is the one to six year age group and parents are able to accompany their little ones on all rides.

The park boasts seven rides, indoor and outdoor play areas and themed buildings, including Peppa Pig's home and school.

Rides, including the Windy Castle, which reaches dizzy heights and then spins around, provide enough of a stomach-flipping thrill for those way beyond the toddler years.

In fact, children have to be at least eight to experience around half the rides without an adult chaperone, suggesting that Paultons wants to maximise the pulling power of the park.

As well as a Peppa's Big Balloon Ride, there is Miss Rabbit's Helicopter Ride, Daddy Pig's Car Ride, George's Dinosaur Adventure and Grandpa Pig's Little Train and Boat Trip.

And one of the major highlights is the indoor George's Spaceship Play Zone, complete with covered and open slides,

climbing equipment, a fire engine positioned several storeys high and a noughts and crosses game played with symbol-etched mats.

Children can zig zag barefoot through the obstacle run, navigate the rope maze room, climb the moonwalk ramp and see the view at the top from Peppa's balloon.

In the "recycle centre" soft balls explode from the ball volcano before being recycled back into collection buckets from where they are vacuumed up and reused.

There is an all-important seated area in the play zone, which is adjacent to the open air Daddy Pig's Tummy cafe, where parents can relax with a cup of tea and a snack while their children burn off some energy and explore.

The cafe, shop and spaceship play zone are housed in one of the country's largest grass-roofed buildings, featuring special wild flower meadow grass.

"We looked at other options but felt that Peppa Pig was the right fit for Paultons," said Stephen Lorton, commercial director of Paultons Park and Peppa Pig World. "We were one of the first theme parks to run Peppa Pig "meet and greet" weekends and were impressed by how popular the characters were.

"Paultons developed an excellent relationship with the licence holders, Entertainment One, and our licence is exclusive meaning it is the only Peppa Pig World that will exist in the UK."

Five of the rides were supplied by Metallbau Emmein and the rest by Zierer.

Back home, watching an episode of Peppa Pig with his three-year-old brother, Christian, and exhibiting a renewed interest in the programme following our visit to the park, my nine-year-old, Daniel, remarked: "Mummy and Daddy Pig have too much time on their hands. They're always off jumping in muddy puddles with their kids."

Perhaps that's the root of Peppa's appeal: Most children would love their parents to make more time for larking around.

And Paultons is hopeful that its new theme park will provide the perfect place to play.