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www.goldenticketawards.com

## Cedar Point welcomes 2016 Golden Ticket Awards

### Ohio park and resort host event for second time

SANDUSKY, Ohio — The first chapter in Cedar Point's long history was written in 1870, when a bathing beach opened on the peninsula at a time when such recreation was finding popularity with lake island areas. Known for an abundance of cedar trees, the resort took its name from the region's natural beauty. It would have been impossible for owners at the time to ever envision the world's largest ride park. Today the resort has evolved into a funseeker's dream with a total of 71 rides, including one of the most impressive lineups of roller coasters on the planet.

Tourism became a booming business with the help of steamships and railroad lines. The original bathhouse, beer garden and dance floor soon were joined by hotels, picnic areas, baseball diamonds and a Grand Pavilion that hosted musical concerts and included a bowling alley. The first ride on property was a toboggan water slide in Lake Erie itself, which was installed in 1890. Electricity was added to the park in 1891 and amusement rides were soon to follow, including the park's first roller coaster a year later.

Various owners and managers had their own vision for the park, with each taking their own place in writing the park's history. **George Boeckling** took the property from a picnic resort to a full-fledged amusement park. Surviving difficult times during World War II, the park hung on and saw growth at a slower pace. **George Roose** took the reins in 1958. He immediately set out to freshen up the resort and new rides were brought in. The park's oldest operating coaster, Blue Streak, was built in 1964. But it was under the vision of **Richard Kinzel** that Cedar Point solidified its position as a land of giants, taking "The Amusement Park" into the reputation as "America's Roller Coast." Magnum XL-200 in 1989 was just the beginning of one record-breaking coaster after another. Among its 17 roller coasters today, three of them have taken Golden Ticket Awards and four of them continue to score strongly in the Top 25 Steel Roller Coasters chart. In the past 27 years, Cedar Point has taken the roller coasters through the 200-foot, 300-foot and 400-foot barriers.

Today, Cedar Point not only adds record-setting rides, such as the new-for-2016 Valravn, but has a strong focus on the resort as a whole. **Cedar Fair** continues to make great strides by investing in and developing the resort property in grand style with its resort hotel improvements, transformed entrances

and beyond.

America's top-rated park first hosted the Golden Ticket Awards in 2004, well before the ceremony continued to grow into the "Networking Event of the Year." At that time, the awards were given out below the final curve of the award-winning Millennium Force. For 2016, the event offered a full weekend of activities, including behind-the-scenes tours of the park, dinners and receptions, networking opportunities, ride time and a Jet Express excursion around the resort peninsula benefiting the **National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives**.

Amusement Today asked Vice President and General Manager **Jason McClure** what he was personally looking forward to most about hosting the event. "It's always good to catch up with colleagues in the industry, and it will be nice for everyone to see all that Cedar Point has to offer and the many changes on the peninsula since their previous visits," he said. "I really look forward to providing a good experience as well, an opportunity after a long season for folks to kick back and relax along the Cedar Point beach."

"The pressure is on!" added **Tony Clark**, director of communications. "But the entire Cedar Point team is ready to show everyone that we're more than Millennium Force or Top Thrill Dragster. This place is really special, and I hope our friends in the industry will feel the same way when they arrive. It's time to celebrate!"

The weekend event celebrated the 19th annual presentation of the Golden Ticket Awards in the resort's Convention Center. Created to acknowledge the best practices and strong efforts of industry peers striving to do their best, the awards now bring professionals together each September to talk shop and connect with each other to share ideas.

"I even bought new shoes," laughed Clark.

"I hope guests take the opportunity to explore all that is Cedar Point," said McClure. "Our roller coasters get the glory and they definitely deserve it, but the Cedar Point experience is a lot more than most people realize."

*All stories this issue  
by Tim Baldwin  
unless otherwise noted*



In addition to the largest collection of rides on the planet, the Cedar Point resort features hotels, a water park, a marina and a legendary lineup of roller coasters.

AT/TIM BALDWIN



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# NEWSTALK

EDITORIAL: Gary Slade, [gslade@amusementtoday.com](mailto:gslade@amusementtoday.com)

## A time to reflect



Slade

As we gather at Cedar Point with friends and associates for our Golden Ticket Awards event, we need to reflect on the recent flooding disaster that has struck our industry colleagues in Baton Rouge, La.

Sam Haines, Jr., owner of the Dixie Landing and Blue Bayou water park there, informed AT that while his park suffered very light damage, his management team and seasonal staff have been hit hard. He told us that five of his managers had water in their house ranging from a couple of feet to all the way up to the roof. And he said it was impossible to tell just how many seasonal staff members were suffering the same fate. As a result of the citywide crisis, the park has been closed — not from flooding but from inaccessibility and the lack of available employees.

"When all the government money is paid out here for the damage, we will see that the financial totals will be on par or worse than that of Hurricane Katrina," Haines told AT.

And Sam's unfortunate 2016 season didn't just start with the three feet of rainfall. It began a month earlier with the racial riots in the city that then led to the shooting of four Baton Rouge police officers. "Tourists don't want to come to a city where there are racial riots," Haines said.

Our industry has seen it's fair share of accidents and other unusual incidents this summer, which has many ready to "Put the 2016 season in the rear view mirror" — as one park executive told me following an accident in their park.

Making it even tougher are the losses we have had through the passing of our industry legends.

Thanks to all for attending our GTA event, and here's hoping you had an enjoyable time as we remember our industry friends who were not able to join us this year.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



INDUSTRY OPINION: Tim Baldwin, [tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com](mailto:tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com)

### Rio Olympics, GTA's see mix of youth with veterans

With the Rio Olympics still fresh in our minds, I was thinking how the relay teams in swimming and "Final Five" in gymnastics were comprised of new fresh talent and returning veterans to make up the group. I find our Golden Ticket Awards categories very similar. While there are star performers who are expected to place well, it is always refreshing year after year to see new finalists in numerous categories. Nine new finalists in our categories must certainly feel a sense of pride of being recognized in this overwhelming field of solid candidates. Combine with that the four finalists that have made strides in returning to the charts after slipping off and it becomes even more rewarding. Quite often the worldwide stage is only focused on the very top winner. While certainly, that achievement is to be congratulated, it should not over-



Baldwin

shadow the achievements of the many whose best practices have landed them on the charts. When considering the number of properties globally, the dedication and drive to land them on our chart of finalists is something to take pride in indeed.

I'm also grateful to our dedicated voters who make this all possible. "Once again it was an honor to be chosen as a voter, and I always look forward to the results," one voter conveyed to us. "Thanks again, it was a privilege."

Amusement Today salutes both sides of the equation — those in the industry trying their hardest day after day to bring their guests the best experience they can, as well as the supportive, passionate fans that demonstrate their loyalty season after season with their hard-earned dollars and positive praise.



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**Address:** P.O. Box 5427, Arlington, Texas 76005-5427, USA  
**Deliveries:** 2012 E. Randol Mill Road #203, Arlington, Texas 76011, USA  
**Phone:** (817) 460-7220  
**Fax:** (817) 265-NEWS (6397)  
**Web Sites:** [www.AmusementToday.com](http://www.AmusementToday.com), [www.GoldenTicketAwards.com](http://www.GoldenTicketAwards.com)

**Founder, Publisher and Editor**  
 Gary Slade • (817) 460-7220 x3  
[gslade@amusementtoday.com](mailto:gslade@amusementtoday.com)

**Accounting & Classified**  
 Sammy Piccola • (817) 460-7220 x1  
[spiccola@amusementtoday.com](mailto:spiccola@amusementtoday.com)

**Advertising**  
 Sue Nichols • (615) 477-5432  
[snichols@amusementtoday.com](mailto:snichols@amusementtoday.com)

**Special Projects & Editorial**  
 Jeffrey Seifert • (817) 460-7220 x2  
[jseifert@amusementtoday.com](mailto:jseifert@amusementtoday.com)

**Social Media & Editorial**  
 Dean Lamanna  
[dlamanna@amusementtoday.com](mailto:dlamanna@amusementtoday.com)

**Editorial**  
 Tim Baldwin  
[tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com](mailto:tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com)

B. Derek Shaw • (717) 650-8330  
[bdshaw@amusementtoday.com](mailto:bdshaw@amusementtoday.com)

Pam Sherborne • (615) 308-3310  
[psherborne@amusementtoday.com](mailto:psherborne@amusementtoday.com)

**Monthly Contributors**  
 Dan Feicht, Bubba Flint, Andrew Mellor,  
 Richard Munch, Janice Witherow

**Print Issue & Extra Extra Desktop Edition Production**  
 John Robinson • (513) 256-1441  
[AT@whrobinsoninc.com](mailto:AT@whrobinsoninc.com)

**Website Maintenance**  
 Stacey Childress  
[stacey@bakersfielddigital.com](mailto:stacey@bakersfielddigital.com)

**Association Memberships**  
 AIMS International, IAAPA, IISF, IRT/iROC,  
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# Seaside park continues to be a tight race in Best Parks

Making it three in a row, **Europa-Park** takes the gold for **BEST PARK**. Germany's largest theme park resort has been watched over the past decade inching its way to the very top and it appears Europa-Park is on a roll. During the 2016 season, the park added a new "country" (Ireland) among its themed lands which has been enthusiastically received by guests.

America's highest-rated park and Golden Ticket Awards host **Cedar Point** still has a strong showing at No. 2. Adding Valravn, the world's largest dive coaster complements an already impressive lineup of coasters.

**Dollywood**, coming in this year at No. 3, just might be following Europa-Park's playbook. In 2008, it appeared on this list at No. 10. Two years later, the park inched



up to No. 9. For the past few years, it and Knoebels have danced around the No. 3 and No. 4 positions. The resort is a finalist in more categories than any other park. Might it move up another notch in the future? Time will tell. And, in this year's dance, **Knoebels Amusement Resort** follows in 4th place. **Universal's Islands of Adventure** leaps up from No. 8 to No. 5 in 2016.

Completing the Top 10 are familiar faces **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** (No. 6) and **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** (No. 7) which are now joined by a newcomer, **Phantasialand** in Germany (No. 8). The

addition of the thematic masterpiece Klugeheim this year shone a huge spotlight on the highly imaginative theme park. Tying for 9th position is **Alton Towers** and **Tokyo DisneySea**.

In the **BEST WATER PARK** category, **Schlitterbahn New Braunfels** remains the No. 1 juggernaut. Its unique Hill Country setting, massive size, colorful history and innovative rides are virtually impossible to duplicate, even by Schlitterbahn management themselves.

Holiday World's **Splashin' Safari** retains its spot at No. 2 as does **Dollywood's Splash Country** at No. 3. The latter has already announced a new addition for 2017 to further its charge.

Disney's **Blizzard Beach**, having slipped off the charts, makes a return this year popping up in the No. 4 position. It is joined by SeaWorld Orlando's **Aquatica** at No. 5 on our list of finalists.

As witnessed last year, **BEST SEASIDE PARK** is one of the Golden Ticket Awards' fiercest battles. After holding the Golden Ticket for eight years, it slipped out of the grasp of **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** last year. In the 2016 balloting it returns home.

"There are so many excellent seaside parks across the country and abroad, and to be recognized as the best is truly special and something we never take for granted," said **Karl Rice**, president of Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. "Ever since we won the first award in 2007, we've worked to integrate it into our culture, encouraged our employees to embrace the idea of being the best and tried to share the honor with our guests. Losing the award in 2015 stung a bit, but reminded us not to be become complacent. It gave us the opportunity to ask our-

► See PARKS, page 8



**BEST SEASIDE PARK: Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** (above) AT/GARY SLADE

**BEST SEASIDE PARK No. 2: Blackpool Pleasure Beach** (below) AT/TIM BALDWIN



**BEST PARK: Europa-Park**  
COURTESY EUROPA-PARK



**BEST PARK No. 2: Cedar Point**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN



**BEST CHILDREN'S PARK: Idlewild & Soak Zone**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN



**BEST CHILDREN'S PARK No. 2: Storybook Land**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN



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# THANKS TO ALL VOTERS FOR THIS AMAZING AWARD!



And a special thanks to the wonderful host of the Golden Ticket Awards, **Cedar Point**, 16-time winner of "Best Park." There is a lot which we can learn from you.

Stay tuned for more news to come – announcement of  
at EAS in Barcelona, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016



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- #2 Millennium Force®  
Cedar Point
- #7 Leviathan®  
Canada's Wonderland
- #8 Intimidator®  
Carowinds
- #9 Diamondback  
Kings Island
- #12 Maverick®  
Cedar Point
- #13 Banshee®  
Kings Island
- #15 Magnum XL-200  
Cedar Point
- #17 Intimidator® 305  
Kings Dominion
- #19 Top Thrill Dragster®  
Cedar Point
- #24 Behemoth®  
Canada's Wonderland

### TOP Wooden Roller Coasters

- #6 The Beast®  
Kings Island
- #9 Gold Striker®  
California's Great America
- #14 Prowler®  
Worlds of Fun
- #19 Shivering Timbers®  
Michigan's Adventure







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**BEST Kids' Area**

- #1 Kings Island
- #4 Knott's Berry Farm
- #5 Kings Dominion

**BEST Park**

- #2 Cedar Point

**BEST Landscaping**

- #2 Gilroy Gardens

**BEST Halloween Event**

- #2 Knott's Berry Farm

**BEST New Ride**

- #4 Valravn™  
Cedar Point

**BEST New Water Ride**

- #2 Blackbeard's Revenge  
Carowinds

- #4 Tropical Plunge  
Kings Island

**BEST Water Ride**

- #3 Timber Mountain Log Ride  
Knott's Berry Farm



One Cedar Point Drive  
Sandusky, OH 44870-5259  
(419) 627-2233  
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►PARKS

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selves how we can improve the park and guest experience and the employee experience all in an effort to become even better.”

Still making for a close race are **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** at No. 2 and **Morey’s Piers** at No. 3. These three parks are quintessential examples of what great seaside resorts are all about. Both the Pleasure Beach and Morey’s can give great lessons on how to stack and fit rides into limited space as well.

Making for a complete five, **Gröna Lund** in Stockholm, Sweden, has cruise lines



**BEST WATER PARK: Schlitterbahn New Braunfels**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

from Finland arriving into port a close distance from the park. **Luna Park** at Coney Island (and the 2015 Golden Ticket Awards host) continues its revival of the historic property and places at No. 5.

**BEST CHILDREN’S PARK** is a seven-year reign for

**Idlewild & SoakZone**. The Pennsylvania park boasts a wooded setting, larger than life structures, a one-of-a-kind trolley ride and an assortment of classic rides.

**Storybook Land**, having entered last year, keeps its spot at No. 2. **Legoland**



**BEST WATER PARK No. 2: Splashin’ Safari**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

**California**, a previous Golden Ticket holder, still stays solid on the charts moving up to No. 3, as does **Story Land** at No. 4, landing on the charts for a fourth year.

New for the charts this year is a creatively charming park in England, **Paultons Park**.

Completing the five finalists, this beautifully landscaped, adorable park features many themed areas, the newest for this year is Lost Kingdom, a dinosaur themed land that features two new kid-friendly roller coasters. This brings the

► See PARKS, page 10

PARK AND RIDE WINNERS

Ranked by percentage of votes cast



BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2016 (Amusement Park)			BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2016 (Water Park)		
Lightning Rod	Dollywood	20%	Massiv	Schlitterbahn Galveston Island	48%
Storm Chaser	Kentucky Kingdom	13%	Blackbeard’s Revenge	Carowinds	15%
Mako	SeaWorld Orlando	11%	Cyclone Saucers	Beech Bend	13% (tie)
Valravn	Cedar Point	9%	Tropical Plunge	Kings Island	13% (tie)
Switchback	ZDTs	8%	Wonambi	Raging Waves	6%

BEST PARK			BEST SEASIDE PARK		
Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	26%	Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	30%
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	19%	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	Blackpool, England	28%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	11%	Morey’s Piers	Wildwood, N.J.	26%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	9%	Gröna Lund	Stockholm, Sweden	12%
Universal’s Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	7%	Luna Park	Brooklyn, N.Y.	4%
Blackpool Pleasure Beach	Blackpool, England	6%			
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	5%			
Phantasialand	Brühl, Germany	4.5%			
Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	4% (tie)			
Tokyo DisneySea	Tokyo, Japan	4% (tie)			

BEST WATER PARK			BEST KIDS’ AREA		
Schlitterbahn	New Braunfels, Texas	47%	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	23%
Splashin’ Safari	Santa Claus, Ind.	28%	Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands	13%
Dollywood’s Splash Country	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	6%	Paultons Park	Romsey, England	9%
Blizzard Beach	Orlando, Fla.	5%	Knott’s Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif	8%
Aquatica	Orlando, Fla.	4%	Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	7% (tie)
			Nickelodeon Universe	Bloomington, Minn.	7% (tie)

BEST CHILDREN’S PARK			CLEANEST PARK		
Idlewild & SoakZone	Ligonier, Pa.	23%	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	26%
Storybook Land	Egg Harbor Twp.	12%	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	19%
Legoland California	Carlsbad, Calif.	10% (tie)	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	7.5%
Story Land	Glen, N.H.	10% (tie)	Disneyland	Williamsburg, Va.	7%
Paultons Park	Romsey, England	9%	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	6%

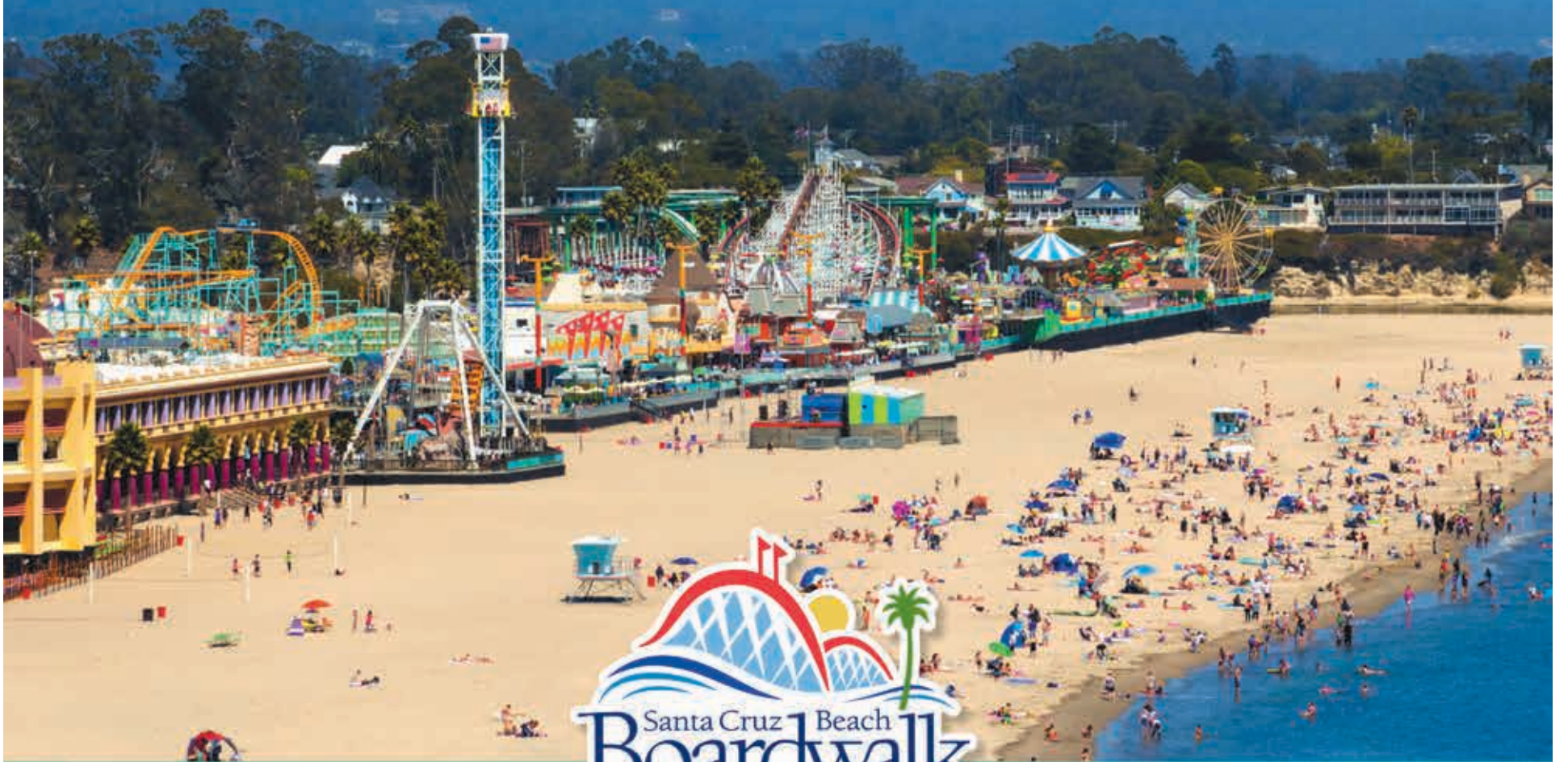
BEST MARINE LIFE PARK			BEST SHOWS		
SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	57%	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	45%
SeaWorld San Diego	San Diego, Calif.	10%	Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	15%
SeaWorld San Antonio	San Antonio, Texas	8%	Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	7%
Six Flags Discovery Kingdom	Vallejo, Calif.	7%	Disney California Adventure	Anaheim, Calif.	6%
Discovery Cove	Orlando, Fla.	6.5% (tie)	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	5%
Ocean Park	Hong Kong, China	6.5% (tie)			

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**BEST MARINE LIFE PARK:**  
SeaWorld Orlando (left)  
AT/GARY SLADE

**BEST MARINE LIFE PARK**  
**No. 2: SeaWorld**  
**San Diego (above)**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

► **PARKS**  
Continued from page 8

number of smaller coasters at the park to five.

In the **BEST MARINE LIFE PARK** category, **SeaWorld Orlando** still reigns supreme with the strongest lead of any category. The addition of new super coaster Mako for this year solidified its dominance.

The usual players are still found in the list: **SeaWorld San Diego** (No. 2), **SeaWorld San Antonio** (No. 3), and **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom** (No. 4). Discovery Cove, slipping to No. 5 this year, is joined by another newcomer on the Golden Ticket charts: **Ocean Park**, which ties for fifth. Ocean Park opened in Hong Kong in 1977, and in the past decade has become the largest theme park in Asia welcoming more than 7 million visitors a year.

**PARK AND RIDE WINNERS**

Ranked by percentage of votes cast



**BEST FOOD**

Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	23%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	20%
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	14%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	13%
Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	8%

**BEST WATER RIDE (PARK)**

Valhalla	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	27%
Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls	Universal's Islands of Adventure	20%
Chiapas	Phantasialand	7% (tie)
Popeye & Bluto's Bilge-rat Barges	Universal's Islands of Adv.	7% (tie)
Splash Mountain	Magic Kingdom	7% (tie)
Timber Mountain Log Ride	Knott's Berry Farm	7% (tie)

**BEST WATER PARK RIDE**

Wildebeest	Splashin' Safari	40%
Mammoth	Splashin' Safari	18%
Master Blaster	Schlitterbahn New Braunfels	11%
The Falls	Schlitterbahn New Braunfels	6%

**BEST INDOOR COASTER**

Revenge of the Mummy	Universal Studios Orlando	24%
Space Mountain	Disneyland	16%
Winja's Fear & Force	Phantasialand	14%
Space Mountain	Magic Kingdom	11%
Black Diamond	Knoebels Amusement Resort	10%

**BEST DARK RIDE**

Twilight Zone Tower of Terror	Disney's Hollywood Studios	14%
Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey	Universal's Islands of Adventure	13.5%
Harry Potter / Escape from Gringotts	Universal Studios Orlando	9%
Haunted Mansion	Knoebels Amusement Resort	8%
Radiator Springs Racers	Disney California Adventure	5%

**BEST LANDSCAPING**

Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	27%
Gilroy Gardens	Gilroy, Calif.	18%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands	15%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	7%
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	6%

**BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT**

Universal Orlando Resort	Orlando, Fla.	27%
Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	20%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	13%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	7%
Busch Gardens Tampa Bay	Tampa, Fla.	6%

**BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT**

Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	41%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	9%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	8.5%
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	7%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	6%

**BEST CAROUSEL**

Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	40%
Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	22%
Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	7%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands	6%
Six Flags Over Georgia	Austell, Ga.	5%

**FRIENDLIEST PARK**

Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	45%
Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	15%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	7%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	6%
Adventure Island	Southend-on-Sea, England	5%

**BEST FUNHOUSE/WALK-THROUGH ATTRACTION**

Noah's Ark	Kennywood	38%
Ghost Ship	Morey's Piers	16%
Gastern Ghost Hotel	Liseberg	14%
Frankenstein's Castle	Indiana Beach	11%
Lustiga Huset	Gröna Lund	9%

**BONUS COVERAGE**  
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# CONGRATULATIONS GOLDEN TICKET WINNERS

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# 2016 Publisher's Picks: Person, Renaissance

## Kaprelyan's 'legacy instinct' reinvigorates Knott's

Anyone can see a theme park's heart. More difficult is to define the perimeter of its soul — to identify the subtle traits and quirks that have formed its character and fueled its longevity.

As vice president and general manager of **Knott's Berry Farm** in Buena Park, Calif., **Raffi Kaprelyan** has demonstrated the ability to analyze, renew and train the spotlight anew on those elements that have made the park a singular Southern California tradition since 1941, when **Walter Knott** opened Ghost Town next to his family's thriving chicken dinner restaurant.

While competitors have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on new rides and themed lands, Kaprelyan — working within a limited block of real estate — has undertaken the renovation of his park's legacy attractions while enhancing and expanding its annual events, upgrading its onsite hotel and introducing signature products.

Kaprelyan's major accomplishments at Knott's in the five years since **Cedar Fair** relocated him there from **Canada's Wonderland** have been numerous.

Property renovations, increased attraction and retail operating hours, and an aggressive youth marketing push in 2012 laid the groundwork for a multi-ride expansion of the Boardwalk section and a careful refurbishment of the classic, **Bud Hurlbut**-designed Timber Mountain Log Ride in 2013. In 2014, Kaprelyan continued investing in the park's legacy attractions — overseeing the renovation of another animatronics-filled Hurlbut landmark, the Calico Mine Ride, and giving the Camp Snoopy area a facelift that included several new rides.

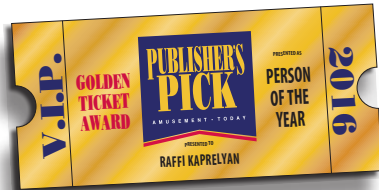
Last year, he repurposed the old space once occupied by the Kingdom of the Dinosaurs dark ride into Voyage to the Iron Reef, bringing Knott's to the forefront of technology with an interactive 3D ride experience.

Kaprelyan's restorative efforts came full circle this year with the revamping of the property's two oldest attractions: Mrs. Knott's Chicken Dinner Restaurant and Ghost Town — the latter newly populated with Old West characters following daily storylines. Additionally, he guided a high-grade wood retracking and rolling stock replacement designed to preserve the experience of the park's world-class coaster, GhostRider, for years to come.

Such well-considered improvements led Knott's to an attendance record of nearly 3.9 million in 2015. This success hasn't gone unnoticed by Cedar Fair, which recently promoted Kaprelyan to regional vice president and expanded his oversight to several parks.

An Orange County resident, Kaprelyan entered the industry via Knott's at age 17 — working his way up from groundskeeping into ride operations and guest services at the park before Cedar Fair tapped him to run Canada's Wonderland in 2006. His long early association with Knott's clearly helped him determine what the property needed when he returned.

For his vision, passion for his park's history and respect for the role of Knott's Berry Farm in the evolution of the theme park concept, **Raffi Kaprelyan** is *Amusement Today's* **2016 Person of the Year**.



**Raffi Kaprelyan in front of the newly renovated Calico Saloon in Knott's Berry Farm's Ghost Town.**  
AT FILE/DEAN LAMANNA

## Kentucky Kingdom's Ed Hart doubles down on success

Once in a great while does the amusement industry witness the rebirth of a closed park and see it thrive under new ownership. What's even more rare is to see the same ownership turn the same park around twice.

Such is the case with **Ed Hart** and **Kentucky Kingdom** in Louisville.

Kentucky Kingdom originally opened in 1987 and lasted only a few months before closing. Lenders to the park called on Hart to try his hand at operating a park. His financial background and strong amusement industry team management skills combined to grow the park into a force — going from 150,000 guests to more than 1.3 million visitors in 1998.

That success spurred a major U.S.-based park chain to purchase Kentucky Kingdom. But soon financial troubles resulted in the closing of the park in 2009.

After five closed seasons, local authorities once again turned to Hart to rescue the rapidly deteriorating property.

Pulling his second team of amusement industry professionals together, Hart and his partners invested \$31 million to reopen the park in May 2014. With a fuller understanding of the local market, Hart hatched a three-year plan to get the park back — all the way back.

And he stayed on that plan. He rebuilt the current park all while also expanding it. Two new coasters were added: the **Chance Rides** Lightning Run in 2014 and the **Rocky Mountain Construction** Storm Chaser, which debuted this season. Cutting-edge new trains from **Kumbak Engineering** were added to the T3 suspended looping coaster along with numerous new flat and kiddie rides.

The hugely popular water park, Hurricane Bay, was doubled in size with additional slide towers, a lazy river, restaurants and more lounge areas.

But Hart did not stop at just what the guests were enjoying. He built a new back area shop to house the park's maintenance, carpenter, plumbing, paint and sign shop needs. He built a new park operations control center complete with new areas dedicated to operations training and safety.

Now in 2016, Hart has a completed park with all the rides fully operational. Marketing this season increased in scope — extending to new markets in Nashville, Indianapolis and Evansville, Ind.

The investment is there, now reaching more than \$60 million. The park experience is there. Even the landscaping has returned in full force with QR codes in all the flower beds that now direct guests, and their smartphones, to a web page describing each flower and plant in the bed they just scanned.

His initial mission accomplished, Hart is ready to start on the long-range plan, thanks to a 75-year lease with the state on the park and associated parking lots.

For his dedication in the preservation of Louisville's treasured **Kentucky Kingdom**, *Amusement Today* is honored to present **Ed Hart** with the **2016 Renaissance Award**.



**Kentucky Kingdom's Ed Hart with his newly built Storm Chaser steel coaster.**  
COURTESY KENTUCKY KINGDOM



Under Raffi Kaprelyan's leadership, Knott's Berry Farm has revamped long-popular attractions such as (clockwise, from top left) Mrs. Knott's Chicken Dinner Restaurant, GhostRider, Circus of Wonder and Calico Saloon.  
COURTESY KNOTT'S BERRY FARM



With the relaunch of Storm Chaser (formerly Twisted Twins) this season, Ed Hart has successfully completed his three-year plan to have all former attractions at Kentucky Kingdom back at full strength for guests' enjoyment.  
COURTESY KENTUCKY KINGDOM



# Congratulations

## Raffi Kaprelyan!



*“ I am honored and grateful to share this recognition with the entire Knott’s Berry Farm team, as it’s their creativity, passion and flawless execution that makes Knott’s a great place to have fun. I’m proud to be part of a team that believes in our brand, and delivers on its promise every day. ”*



# Knott's

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“On behalf  
of my  
**ENTIRE TEAM**  
at Kentucky Kingdom  
& Hurricane Bay,  
**We** deeply  
appreciate  
this **HONOR**  
& Acknowledgment.”  
-Ed Hart





# 2016 Publisher's Picks: Supplier, Park

## B&M revolutionizes industry with 100-plus projects

Honing their craft with other manufacturers, two engineers broke away to start their own company as the 1980s were winding down.

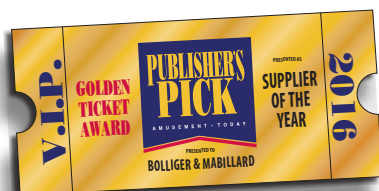
**Walter Bolliger** and **Claude Mabilard**, whose company would become more commonly known as **B&M**, designed their first full coaster project for **Six Flags Great America** in Gurnee, Ill., in 1990: the stand-up coaster known as **Iron Wolf**. It turned heads in the industry. Six Flags continued to invest heavily in B&M product, and other theme park chains came on board. Precision engineering and a smoother ride experience became the company's trademark.

In 1992, B&M did something revolutionary. For the first time, a company built a roller coaster that featured inversions while suspending riders below the track. Known throughout the industry as the inverted roller coaster, this new genre took theme parks by storm and went on to become B&M's most popular product. The first inverted roller coaster opened in 1992 and the company is still building them today.

Along the way, technological boundaries were stretched with B&M introducing riders to innovative genres such as the floorless coaster, flying coaster, the wing coaster and the dive machine, as well as bringing their own skill to the popular hypercoaster. Through the years, these magnificent projects have brought recognition and increased attendance to theme parks around the world, delivering reliable operation and high throughput.

This season, **Cedar Point** commissioned the company's 100th project and opened the dive coaster **Valravn**, the fourth record-breaking installation from B&M for the park. With still more projects in the pipeline, the company continues to serve the demand for big, crowd-pleasing roller coasters that have enormous spectator appeal. Collecting awards along the way and with rides topping the lists of enthusiast favorites, B&M's worldwide reputation has made it one of the amusement industry's most in-demand manufacturers.

For its success and dedication to excellence, as well as achieving 100 roller coaster projects during more than a quarter-century of quality business practices, *Amusement Today* honors **Bolliger & Mabilard** with the Publisher's Pick for **Supplier of the Year**.



**B&M's first full coaster project was Iron Wolf, shown here under construction in 1990 at Six Flags Great America.** AT FILE



**Batman the Ride (left) made its debut at Six Flags Great America in 1992 and took the industry by storm. B&M's latest creation, Valravn at Cedar Point, is the firm's 100th landmark project.** AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT



## Cedar Point scales new heights for the future

Recreation was different in 1870, when **Cedar Point** first opened as a bathing beach with a beer garden and a simple dance floor. Like any amusement park which has had a long lifespan — here approaching a century and a half — Cedar Point saw periods of growth and uncertain times. As amusement rides were developed, the property on the Lake Erie peninsula diversified its entertainment offerings. By the end of the 19th century, Cedar Point had built its first roller coaster, certainly with no inclination of what the resort would one day famously become.

Through changing times, Cedar Point had its ups and downs, and there was the persistent temptation to close the park and develop the peninsula for upscale housing. Thankfully, those plans never materialized and the park continued to hang on, even in times when American hardships were taking their toll. By the mid-20th century, Cedar Point continues to grow with new rides and attractions.

The landmark hypercoaster **Magnum XL-200** thrust the park into a global spotlight in 1989. From there it was no turning back as Cedar Point continued to debut one record-breaking attraction after another, truly earning its tagline: "America's Roller Coast."

Not content to rest on its laurels, **Cedar Fair**, now under the leadership of CEO **Matt Ouimet**, continues to invest in Cedar Point like never before. In the past five years, the park has seen more than \$180 million in improvements, and that number increases to more than \$240 million for the past decade. In 2012, a nighttime show, **Luminosity**, offered summertime visitors something new and special to end their evenings. In 2013, the addition of the sleek wing coaster **GateKeeper** was integrated into a brand new and exciting front gate. Lighthouse Point was expanded in 2014, followed by a majestic refurbishment of historic **Hotel Breakers** last year. This also included a beautiful transformation of the resort's catering venue, **Lake Point Pavilion**. This season, the addition of the dive coaster **Valravn** inspired a total reworking of the **Marina Gate**. On the other side of the park, aggressive initiatives were put in place to re-energize Cedar Point's beach.

With Vice President and General Manager **Jason McClure** overseeing daily operations, Cedar Point's future seems to be climbing higher and higher, just like the giant roller coasters painting the park landscape. One can only imagine what new heights can be reached when the park's 150th anniversary arrives in a few years.

For its commitment to continued excellence, **Cedar Point** is *Amusement Today's* **Park of the Year**.



**Cedar Point has seen more than \$180 million in improvements at the resort property over the last five years. Among the upgrades enjoyed by vacationing guests are the complete makeover and rebuild of the historic Hotel Breakers, shown here.** AT/TIM BALDWIN





**Cheers**

The Coca-Cola Company Salutes

**CedarPoint**

2016 Park of the Year

***Coca-Cola***



# The park experience is honored through various categories

A day at the park is more than simply rides. Several aspects really make a visit become a complete experience. Food, landscaping, friendliness and cleanliness can turn a fun day into a perfect day.

Of these categories, all introduced in the Golden Tickets' original year of 1998, only one has remained undefeated. **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** has taken the award for **BEST LANDSCAPING** once again. The beautiful park takes full advantage of its wooded setting within a river valley.

**Gilroy Gardens**, the family-oriented theme park in Gilroy, California, maintains its No. 2 spot, as does **Efteling** (No. 3). Located in the Netherlands, Efteling is one of Europe's highest attended theme parks.

**Dollywood** bumps up a notch on the list this year, taking the No. 4 position. **Epcot** returns to the charts once again, completing the Top 5.

As all park owners know, friendly staff is never a guarantee. Hiring just the right people can be an extreme challenge in a very limited pool



of applicants. **Dollywood** takes **FRIENDLIEST PARK** for a fifth consecutive year. Like the park's namesake, genuine downhome hospitality seems to come naturally to the employees at the park.

**Holiday World & Splashin' Safari** keeps its No. 2 spot. Unlike Dollywood, Holiday World relies on a younger audience for their staffing and to be recognized in such a fashion demonstrates their dedication for training and values.

Jumping up to No. 3 is **Silver Dollar City**, which also not only boasts a wide range of ages throughout its citizens, but the City is a welcoming place to visit. **Knoebels Amusement Resort** remains a long-running finalist and maintains that status in the No. 4 spot. Last year's discovery, **Adventure Island** in England, continues to stay on the charts with its highly enthusiastic employee team.



**BEST LANDSCAPING: Busch Gardens Williamsburg**  
COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS WILLIAMSBURG

Over the past years, the top two contenders for **BEST FOOD** have gone back and forth and even gave the Golden Tickets its first-ever first place tie a few years ago. Not giving it back, **Knoebels Amusement Resort** hangs on to the gold, and **Dollywood** is a very close second. Both parks illustrate the knack of being a park where people want to eat, and not just be-

cause they have to.

Mimicking last year's chart, Epcot returns in the No. 3 spot, with its world cuisine; Silver Dollar City's country cooking is crowd pleasing at No. 4; and **Europa-Park**, with its enormous selection of restaurants and eateries, completes the finalist list.

**Holiday World & Splashin' Safari** has held on to the **CLEANEST PARK** category

since taking it over in 2000. It takes the Golden Ticket again this year.

The other four finalists repeat from last year, but not necessarily in the same positions. Dollywood hangs on to No. 2, but Europa-Park climbs up to No. 3, Disneyland places No. 4, and Busch Gardens Williamsburg finishes out the category remaining on the charts again in 2016.



**FRIENDLIEST PARK: Dollywood**  
COURTESY DOLLYWOOD



**BEST FOOD: Knoebels Amusement Resort**  
COURTESY KNOEBELS



**CLEANEST PARK: Holiday World & Splashin' Safari** AT/GARY SLADE

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# Halloween, Christmas and shows entertain park guests

Festivals and shows are big crowd pleasers throughout the season. Holiday events are not only bringing in large numbers outside the typical tourist season, but are also extending the operating calendar. As this issue goes to press, numerous 2016 Christmas events have been announced for this December as well as newly created events making their debut in the 2017 season. Could this become a new competitive sought-after award? The years ahead can only tell.

For this year, the category remains unchanged for the top four finalists. **Dollywood** once again takes **BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT** IN 2016. The park has been the sole winner of the Golden Ticket since the category was introduced in 2008. This year, the park is debuting a new production, the beloved classic "It's a Wonderful Life" performed show style in one of the park's theaters. It will be among seven shows and a host of Christmas attractions ranging from characters, lights and festive foods.

Comfortably nestled in their places with care are **Disneyland**, **Silver Dollar City** and **Magic Kingdom** in their respective spots of Nos. 2 – 4, the positions they shared last year.

New for this year is finalist **Kennywood**, who has recently started a Christmas festival and it has found favor with the voters. It dashes onto the chart at No. 5.

How popular Halloween



has become in the theme park industry is nothing short of frightening. The competition for the Golden Ticket for **BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT** was virtually monstrous when AT introduced the category in 2005. However, **Universal Orlando Resort** has had a death grip on the Ticket since 2008.

The rest of the category remains unchanged. **Knott's Berry Farm**, which has claimed the Golden Ticket before, still stands — or lurks — strongly in the No. 2 spot. **Knoebels Amusement Resort** (No. 3), **Kennywood** (No. 4) and **Busch Gardens Tampa** (No. 5) ward off any further evil spirits attempting to knock them off the chart of finalists.

It's showtime! **BEST SHOWS** goes to **Dollywood** for an eighth consecutive year.

"Throughout the year, between Festival of Nations through Smoky Mountain Christmas, we have 26 individual shows we produce," **Wes Ramey**, public relations manager, told *Amusement Today*. "On a typical summer day, we present nearly 40 individual performances."

Ramey notes that performers at the park have come all the way from Africa, Russian, Ecuador, France and Germany this year. He added, "**Dolly (Parton)** is our dream-

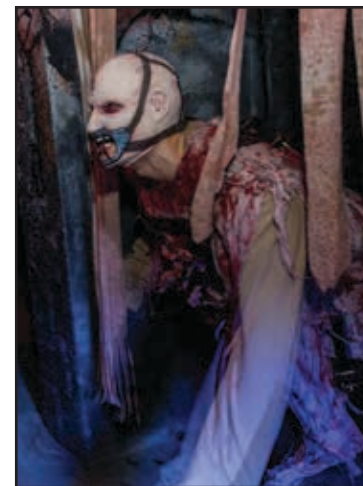


**BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT: Dollywood**  
COURTESY DOLLYWOOD



**BEST SHOWS: Dollywood**  
Performers at Dollywood (left) feel the Dolly Parton influence in giving their best for the audiences.  
AT/GARY SLADE

**BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT: Universal Orlando Resort**  
Halloween is big business in the amusement industry, as huge crowds at Universal Orlando can attest.  
COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT



er-in-chief and has a hand in all of our entertainment offerings."

Prior to Dollywood snagging the Golden Ticket, **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** held them at bay and claimed the award for a consecutive 10 years, a

record in this category — so far. They still rate high in the No. 2. Spot.

Silver Dollar City places third, the same position it held on the charts last year.

The final two parks in this category rounded out the

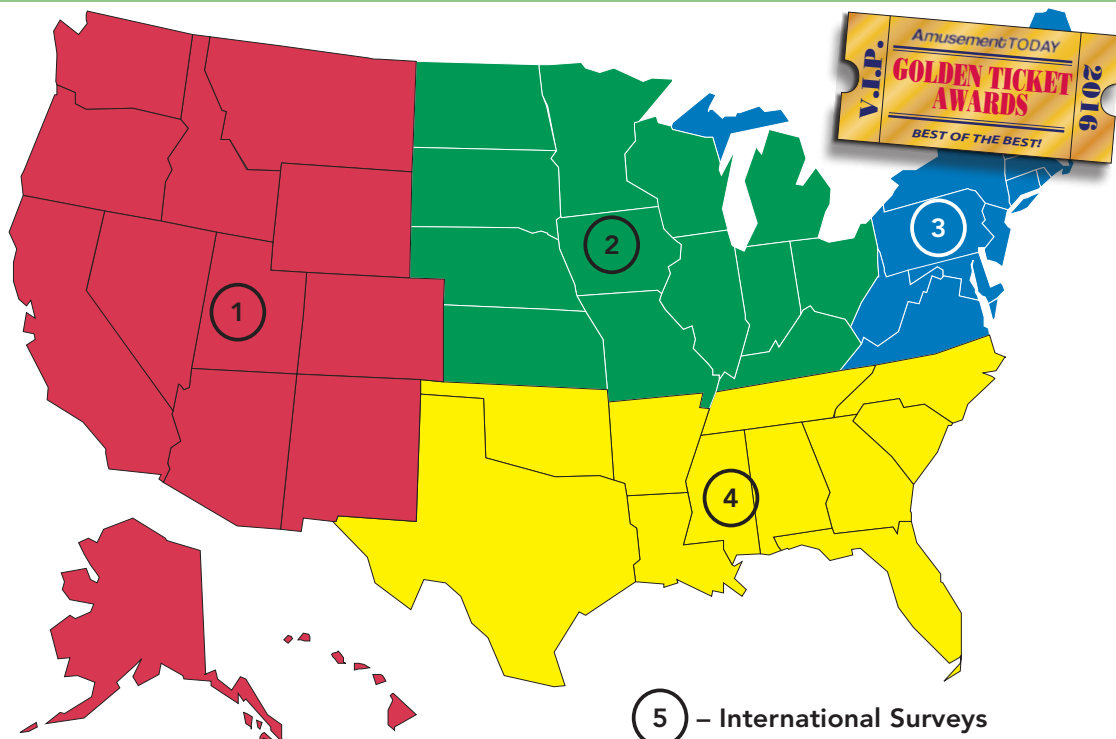
Top 5 last year, but in each other's spots. Coming in at No. 4 is **Disney California Adventure**. **Europa-Park**, which provides close to 24 hours of different shows during the main season closes out the finalists.

## Amusement Today uses balanced regions for voting

Since *Amusement Today* introduced the **Golden Ticket Awards** in 1998, we continue to seek out the most experienced park enthusiasts to participate in our survey. AT follows a fair and balanced protocol of dividing our ballots between four geographical regions (see color map at right) of the United States. In addition to the hundreds of surveys sent to American enthusiasts, international fans are also sought out and we invite such fans to contact us for participation in future years. *Amusement Today* thanks the hundreds of voters who helped form this year's panel of experts and make the 2016 Golden Ticket Awards a reality.

Are you a qualified candidate? Contact Golden Ticket Awards Communications Coordinator Tim Baldwin at [tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com](mailto:tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com) and we'll see if you would make a good representative for your region on next year's new panel.

Of note, park employees, manufacturers, and *Amusement Today* staff are not eligible to be on the 2016 panel.





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BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT

BEST SHOWS

FRIENDLIEST PARK

BEST NEW RIDE

# Dollywood

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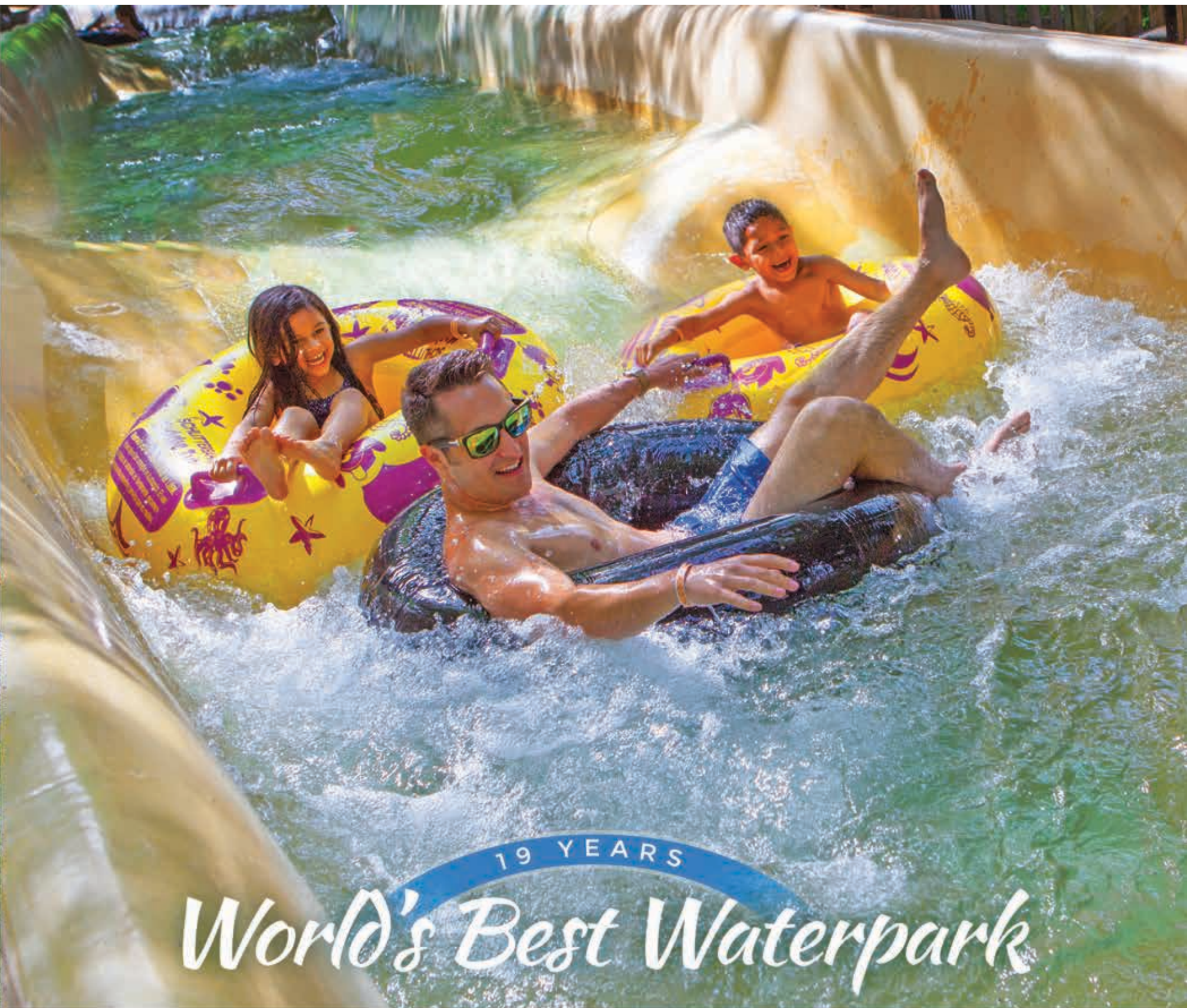
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# Dollywood, Schlitterbahn Galveston Island win Best New Rides



All eyes, be it those who run parks or those who cast votes, are always eager to see how the **BEST NEW RIDES** categories unfold each year. Competition is always very fierce each season, and 2016 was no different.

In the **PARK** category, **Dollywood** takes the Golden Ticket for its innovative new roller coaster, **Lightning Rod**. Boggled down by some opening issues, the ride had coaster fans' full attention and throngs of riders still made it to the Tennessee theme park to experience the world's fastest and first launched wooden coaster. From the beginning, Dollywood management set out to make something extraordinary.

"When our creative team started to design Lightning Rod, there was a focus to include several superlatives that would appeal to our guests and certainly Golden Ticket voters," said **Pete Owens**, director of communications. "We are very proud to have created a ride with new technology and new experiences for riders. Despite the delays, the feedback we are receiving is overwhelmingly positive."

If the coaster charts are any indication, riders agree. Lightning Rod had the strongest placement of any new ride on the charts.



**BEST NEW RIDE (PARK):**  
**Lightning Rod, Dollywood**  
COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

Coming in at No. 2 is **Storm Chaser** at **Kentucky Kingdom**. This previously closed twin wooden-tracked, defunct roller coaster was transformed into a single-track steel twister. The ride's signature moment is a corkscrew barrel roll on the curve coming off the lift and continuing into the first drop. This coaster along with Lightning Rod were both projects of **Rocky Mountain Construction**.

**B&M** delivered the No. 3 and No. 4 Best New Rides as voted on by our panel. **Mako** at **SeaWorld Orlando** is positioned along the edge of the park's lake and is the tallest roller coaster in Orlando. **Valravn** at **Cedar Point** brings back the dive machine coaster to the U.S., this time setting the record for height in this genre, as well as adding a third inversion in contrast to previous



installations.

The category is rounded out with **Switchback** at **ZDTs**, a first-of-its-kind wooden shuttle roller coaster with features never before attempted. It's known for its vertical spike in the middle of the ride that sends passengers backward through the twists and turns of this compact woodie. It is a project of **The Gravity Group**.



**BEST NEW RIDE (WATER PARK):**  
**Massiv, Schlitterbahn Galveston Island**  
COURTESY SCHLITTERBAHN

bahn Galveston Island. "You end the ride with a thrilling triple down. The height, colors, and variety of hills and valleys really stand out as something different and exciting."

Massiv is a product of **WhiteWater West**. "This was WhiteWater's first installation of their Smart Blast system VDF power-saving technology," Sutula said. "It has significantly lowered the cost to operate the ride."

**Blackbeard's Revenge** at **Carowinds** expanded water park **Carolina Harbor** places at No. 2. The slide complex, also from WhiteWater West, features six slides intertwined into three attractions. Three drop capsule slides, two tube slides featuring large drop finales and an enclosed slide with intense spirals comprise the slide complex.

**Cyclone Saucers**, the first of its kind in North America, opened at **Beech Bend** as part of a four-slide attraction. Built by **ProSlide**, it shares the No. 3 spot and is recognizable by its high banking discs along the route. Tying with it is **Tropical Plunge**, another WhiteWater West multi-slide attraction at **Kings Island's** water park, **Soak City**.

Completing the category is **Wonambi** at **Raging Waves** water park. Built by ProSlide, the attraction features enclosed sections, a major drop and a wave wall that gives four riders at a time moments of weightlessness.



**BEST NEW RIDE (PARK), No. 2: Storm Chaser, Kentucky Kingdom** AT/TIM BALDWIN



**BEST NEW RIDE (WATER PARK), No. 2: Blackbeard's Revenge, Carolina Harbor at Carowinds**  
COURTESY CAROWINDS



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# Ride categories: Disney edges out Universal for Dark Ride

The **BEST DARK RIDE** category is among the very favorites for AT's voters to embrace, probably second only to roller coasters. Since the category was introduced in 1999, **Universal Orlando Resort** has dominated the Golden Ticket. **Disney's Hollywood Studios** and **Twilight Zone Tower of Terror** has been a finalist for 13 years, and last year placed an extremely close second. In 2016, the tables are turned. By the narrowest of margins, **Twilight Zone Tower of Terror** has broken through the barrier and taken the Golden Ticket. Since 1994, **Rod Serling** has taken visitors at the end of Sunset Blvd. on one of the strangest journeys of their lives. Tweaked over the years to make the terrifying drop finale even more insane, this fan favorite just might gain an edge on voting as the sister ride in Anaheim has been announced to be re-themed to **Guardians of the Galaxy** in 2017. Is this a statement to



Disney to keep this one as is? Could be.

The next two finalists are the long-running **Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey** (No. 2) and its younger sibling **Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts** (No. 3), both at Universal, one at **Universal's Islands of Adventure** and one at **Universal Studios**.

The old-fashioned **Haunted Mansion** at **Knoebels Amusement Resort** hangs onto the No. 4 position. However, it is joined by newcomer **Radiator Springs Racers** at **Disney California Adventure** (No. 5). Of note, this is the first time since the category debuted that the **Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man**, once the Golden Ticket holder, has not appeared as a final-



**BEST DARK RIDE: Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, Disney's Hollywood Studios**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

ist.

For a second year in a row, **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** holds the Golden Ticket for

**BEST WATER RIDE** with **Valhalla**. Universal's **Islands of Adventure** takes No. 2 with **Dudley Do-Rights' Ripsaw**

**Falls**, which was also a Golden Ticket winner for more than a decade.

Interestingly, the run for third place is a four-way tie! **Chiapas** at **Phantasialand** places on the charts for the first time. The German park opened this intricately themed flume in 2014 creating an entire new plaza within the park. Universal's **Popeye and Bluto's Bilge-rat Barges** makes a return back onto the charts after slipping off last year. **Splash Mountain** at **Magic Kingdom** also makes a return for the first time since 2013. The beloved **Timber Mountain Log Flume** at **Knott's Berry Farm** is included in this tie.

Familiar faces grace the **BEST WATER PARK RIDE**. Taking the Golden Ticket once again is **Wildebeest** at **Splashin' Safari**. The uphill water coaster boasts an even larger margin between it and the second place challenger, which so happens to be **Mammoth** at the same water park. **Master Blaster**, once a Golden Ticket holder, comes in at No. 3, and **The Falls** completes the finalists, both of which are at **Schlitterbahn** in New Braunfels.

Going back indoors, **BEST INDOOR ROLLER COASTER** is championed once again by Universal Studios Orlando's **Revenge of the Mummy**. The highly-themed coaster opened in 2004 and features a story

► See RIDES, page 33



**BEST WATER RIDE: Valhalla, Blackpool Pleasure Beach**  
COURTESY BLACKPOOL PLEASURE BEACH



**BEST INDOOR ROLLER COASTER: Revenge of the Mummy, Universal Studios Orlando**  
COURTESY UNIVERSAL STUDIOS RLANDO



**BEST FUN HOUSE/WALK-THROUGH ATTRACTION: Noah's Ark, Kennywood** COURTESY KENNYWOOD



**BEST CAROUSEL: Grand Carousel, Knoebels Amusement Resort** COURTESY KNOEBELS AMUSEMENT RESORT



## ►RIDES

Continued from page 32

line of the passengers' souls being at stake as they are whipped through immersive sets, LIM launches, fire and video imaging, not to mention a cool fake-out ending. Also resting in their positions from 2015 are **Space Mountain** at **Disneyland** (No. 2) and **Winja's Fear & Force** at **Phantasialand** (No. 3). Joining its sibling, **Space Mountain** at Magic Kingdom hops on the chart at No. 4 and Knoebels' **Black Diamond** still places on the list.

In the category of **BEST FUNHOUSE/WALK-THROUGH ATTRACTION**, **Kennywood** has held the Golden Ticket for several years. However, the park has upped their game with new capital investment in the 1930s attraction, keeping **Noah's Ark** in the top spot.

"The restoration of Noah's Ark back to the retro, classic funhouse was a labor of love for the Kennywood team, many of whom worked in the old Ark and remember it room by room," said Kennywood General Manager **Jerome Gi-**

**bas**. "The Ark symbolizes so much of Kennywood's mystique and we're honored and excited to continue to earn the Golden Ticket Award."

The remaining finalists mirror their places from 2015. **Morey's Piers** labyrinth-like **Ghost Ship** retains its position at No. 2., **Gasten Ghost Hotel** (No. 3) still thrills **Liseberg** visitors, **Frankenstein's Castle** at **Indiana Beach** (once a Golden Ticket holder) is still a fan favorite at No. 4, and **Lustiga Huset**, a wacky and classic funhouse at **Gröna Lund** rounds out the list.

Of all of the Golden Ticket categories, only six have remained unchallenged since being introduced. One is **BEST KIDS' AREA**. **Kings Island** has remained atop, seemingly unable to be dethroned. Today it is known as **Planet Snoopy** and offers a plethora of activities including family and kids' rides, water activities, and three scaled down coasters, one of which is a classic woodie.

The **Fairy Tale Forest** at **Efteling** is an expansive part of the park that allows guests to wander at their leisure, often interacting with



**BEST KID'S AREA:** Planet Snoopy, Kings Island AT/TIM BALDWIN

many of the tales displayed. The park keeps its No. 2 position. A new player in this field is **Paultons Park**. The U.K. property is geared toward families with younger children, but one particular area is full of fun and giggles especially for the youngest. **Peppa Pig World** is based on a popular television show. Who could find an area that is pig-centric anything but

adorable? It leaps onto the charts in third place. Returning after slipping temporarily off the list is Knott's Berry Farm and **Camp Snoopy**. It places No. 4.

The No. 5 position closes out the category with a tie. Regular finalists **Kings Dominion** and **Nickelodeon Universe** leave it a draw, ensuring that both remain on the chart.

Often considered the



**BEST WATER PARK RIDE:** Wildebeest, Splashin' Safari COURTESY SPLASHIN' SAFARI

heart of the midway, **BEST CAROUSEL** is taken once again by **Knoebels**. The park is the sole possessor of this award since it was introduced.

This category remains unchanged. Our finalists find their comfortable positions from 2015: **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** (No. 2), **Six Flags Great America** (No. 3), **Efteling** (No. 4), and **Six Flags Over Georgia** (No. 5).



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A promotional poster for the Valhalla water ride at Blackpool Pleasure Beach. The background is a dynamic blue and white image of the ride's track curving through a tunnel, with a boat full of smiling passengers. The word 'Valhalla' is written in large, metallic, 3D block letters across the center. Below the name is a glowing golden skull with horns. The text 'VOTED THE WORLD'S BEST WATER RIDE' is prominently displayed in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, it says 'with thanks to Amusement Today' and provides the website 'blackpoolpleasurebeach.com'. In the bottom left corner is a graphic of a Golden Ticket Award from Amusement Today 2016, awarded to Valhalla as the Best Water Ride. In the bottom right corner is the 'PLEASURE BEACH' logo, with 'PLEASURE' in a tall, narrow box and 'BEACH' in a smaller box below it.

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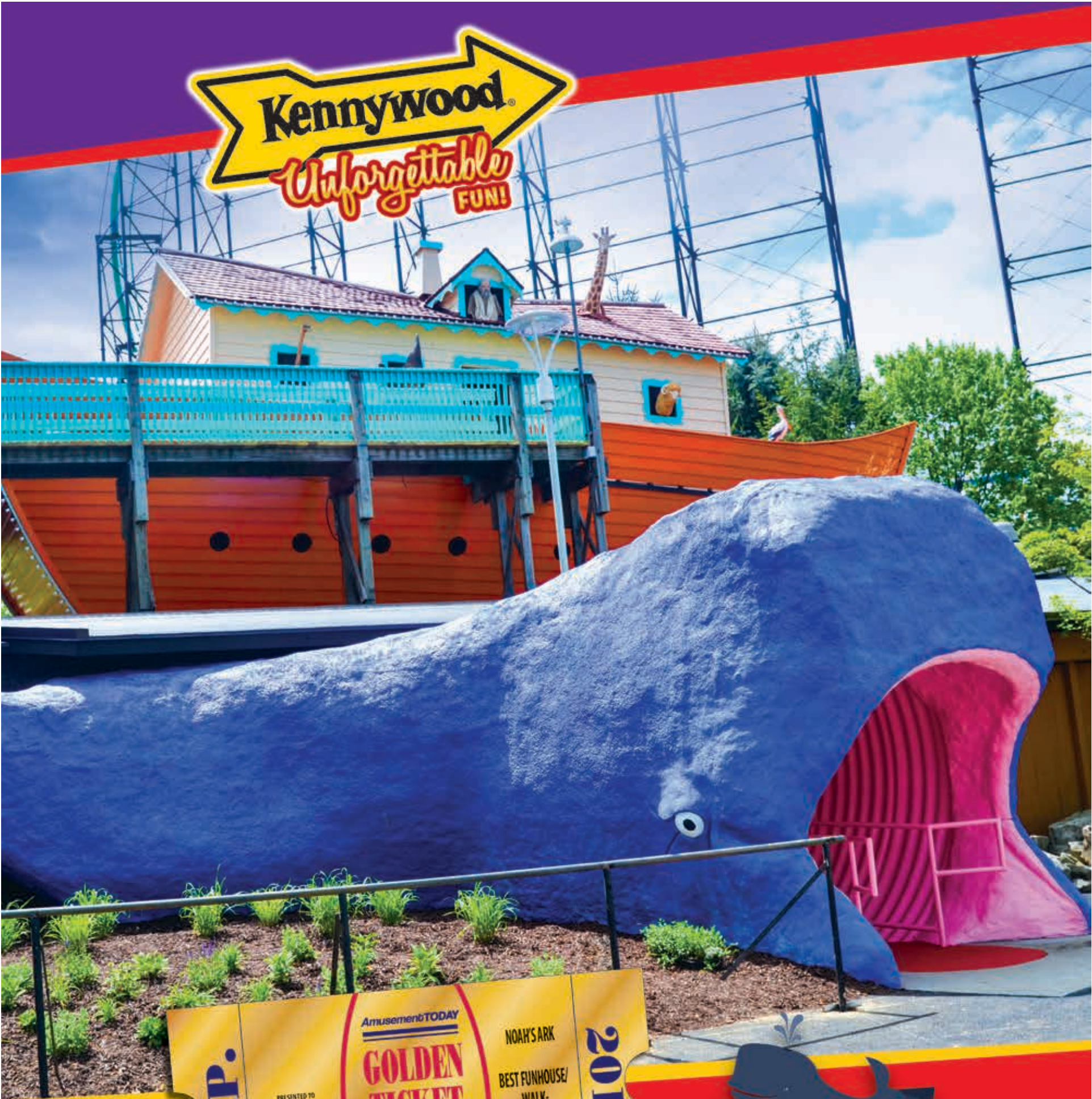
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# Boulder Dash hangs on to Best Wooden Coaster for 4-year ride

Steel coasters have a fierce competition as more new steel coasters are built than wooden coasters. However, wooden coaster fans are a devout following, stemming from the pure thrills of coaster rides that started well more than a century ago.

For a fourth year in a row (and fifth overall), **Boulder Dash** at **Lake Compounce** takes the Golden Ticket for **BEST WOODEN COASTER**. Built in 2000 by **Custom**



**Coasters Inc.**, the massive woodie has received much care. Each season it exhilarates thrill-seekers with its exceptionally long ride of 4,725 feet of track through the trees alongside a mountain. This one-of-a-kind coaster is a true signature attraction.

"It was completely re-tracked in 2008 and 2009 by **Great Coasters International** and they did a fantastic job adding new elements and keeping the old ones," said **Jerry Brick**, general manager for Lake Compounce. "Since then our in-house team has done a great job keeping Boulder Dash running the way it has. They take great pride in their work."

Brick added, "We are thrilled about Golden Ticket Awards guests coming next year to experience Boulder Dash and everything else Lake Compounce has to offer."

In second place is the forcible **Phoenix** at **Knoebels**. Paired with **The Beast** at **Kings Island** (No. 6), these two legends are the only two wooden coasters to be in AT's Top 10 since the Golden Ticket Awards began in 1998. The No. 2 spot is the highest ranking Phoenix has ever charted in Golden Ticket history. Just shortly behind, **El Toro** at **Six Flags Great Adventure** takes third. Of note, the top three challengers are all within 100 points of each other.

Holding strong is **The Voyage** at **Holiday World** at No. 4. Its unmatched power still enthralls legions of fans with its indescribable ride experience. Finally entering the Top 5 for the first time ever is **Ravine Flyer II** at **Waldameer Park**. It flips positions with **Dollywood's Thunderhead** (No. 7) in regard to the 2015 rankings.

"Ravine Flyer II has al-

## BEST WOODEN COASTER No. 39

Celebrating its 40th anniversary this season was this John Allen classic, **Screaming Eagle** at **Six Flags St. Louis**. All three of the park's wooden coasters, including **The Boss** and **American Thunder**, placed in the Top 50.

AT FILE/  
GARY SLADE



ways been a Top 5 coaster to us!" said **Brian Gorman**, vice president of operations at Waldameer. "We're glad our fans are enjoying their rides, too!"

Closing out the Top 10 are coasters keeping their respectful places from 2015: **Outlaw Run** at **Silver Dollar City** (No. 8), **Gold Striker** at **California's Great America** (No. 9) and **Lightning Racer** at **Hersheypark** (No. 10).

Despite some sputters and pit stops getting out of the gate, **Lightning Rod** at **Dollywood** makes the highest debut of any roller coaster (wood or steel) in 2016 just missing out on a Top 10 debut at No. 11. It set records for the fastest wooden coaster on Earth and features an 83-degree, 165-foot drop reaching speeds of 73 mph.

The highest climber on the Wood charts is **The Legend** at **Holiday World**, which jumped from No. 25 last year up to No. 16 on this year's chart.

**Mack Eckert**, general

manager of **Holiday World & Splashin' Safari**, told AT: "Back in 1999 when the late **Will Koch** asked coaster enthusiasts for input while designing **Holiday World's 'Y2K coaster'**, he was able to include many of their ideas. Fast forward to this season, and we incorporated one of Will's remaining ideas in our 'Legend Reborn' project. We are thankful the Golden Ticket Award voters have told us all the retracking and new elements make **The Legend** a Top 20 wooden coaster once again."

**Balder** at **Liseberg** is the highest-rated coaster outside the United States coming in at No. 12. Six of the Top 25 wooden coasters are international installations; that number rises to 13 when looking at the Top 50.

[Note, the Top 25 are printed in this issue. View the full Top 50 online at [GoldenTicketAwards.com](http://GoldenTicketAwards.com)]

**Wildfire** at **Kolmården** is the other new-for-2016 debut. It lands on the charts at No. 28. This spectacular 4,150-foot wooden thriller makes excellent use of the park's unique terrain and has delighted first-year riders and has coaster fans viewing online footage incredibly envious. It is a product of **Rocky Mountain Construction**.

Also of note, **Screamin' Eagle** at **Six Flags St. Louis**, PTC legend **John Allen's** final coaster, re-emerges once again on the Top 50 chart. It is extremely rare for any park to have three wooden coasters in today's day and age, but to have all three — **The Boss** (No. 31), **American Thunder** (No. 33), and **Screamin' Eagle** (No. 39) — is a fine tribute on the ride's 40th anniversary.



**BEST WOODEN COASTER: Boulder Dash, Lake Compounce**  
COURTESY LAKE COMPOUNCE



**BEST WOODEN COASTER No. 2: Phoenix, Knoebel's Amusement Resort**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN



**BEST WOODEN COASTER No. 3: El Toro, Six Flags Great Adventure**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN



**BEST WOODEN COASTER No. 4: The Voyage, Holiday World**  
AT/GARY SLADE



**BEST WOODEN COASTER No. 5: Ravine Flyer II, Waldameer Park**  
AT/GARY SLADE



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THE LIST

2016 TOP 25 WOOD ROLLER COASTERS



RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
1	Boulder Dash	Lake Compounce	Bristol, Conn.	2000	Custom Coasters	1216
2	Phoenix	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Eysburg, Pa.	1985	Dinn - PTC/Schmeck	1144
3	El Toro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2006	Intamin	1121
4	The Voyage	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	2006	Gravity Group	1028
5	Ravine Flyer II	Waldameer	Erie, Pa.	2008	Gravity Group	692
6	The Beast	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	1979	KECO	670
7	Thunderhead	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Pa.	2004	Great Coasters Int.	641
8	Outlaw Run	Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	2013	Rocky Mountain	611
9	Gold Striker	California's Great America	Santa Clara, Calif.	2013	Great Coasters Int.	525
10	Lightning Racer	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	2000	Great Coasters Int.	347
11	Lightning Rod	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	2016	Rocky Mountain	336
12	Balder	Liseberg	Göteborg, Sweden	2003	Intamin	292
13	Goliath	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	2014	Rocky Mountain	267
14	Prowler	Worlds of Fun	Kansas City, Mo.	2009	Great Coasters Int.	256
15	The Raven	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	1995	Custom Coasters	245
16	The Legend	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	2000	Custom Coasters	241
17	Giant Dipper	Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	1924	Prior& Church/Looff	233
18	Colossos	Heide Park	Soltau, Germany	2001	Intamin	222
19	Shivering Timbers	Michigan's Adventure	Muskegon, Mich.	1998	Custom Coasters	213
20	Jack Rabbit	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	1920	PTC/Miller	208
21	Thunderbolt	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	1927	Vettel/Miller	206
22	Cú Chulainn	Tayto Park	Ashbourne, Ireland	2015	Gravity Group	179
23	Wodan	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	2012	Great Coasters Int.	175
24	Troy	Toverland	Sevenum, the Netherlands	2007	Great Coasters Int.	174
25 (tie)	Comet	The Great Escape	Lake George, N.Y.	1994	PTC/Schmeck	166
25 (tie)	El Toro	Freizeitpark Plohn	Lengenfeld, Germany	2009	Great Coasters Int.	166

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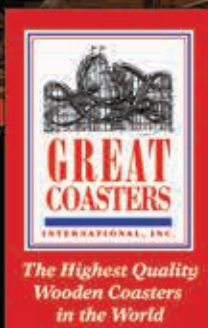
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# Fury 325 soars to the top, taking Best Steel Coaster

If ever there was a nail-biter in the 2016 balloting, the **BEST STEEL COASTER** category would certainly qualify. Like those milliseconds in Olympic competitions, the final results were determined by a single ballot. Taking the Golden Ticket for the first time ever, is **Fury 325** at **Carowinds**. Its impressive 2015 debut in the No. 4 position — not to mention snagging the Golden Ticket for Best New Ride — was an indication that this coaster was a rising star.

"The Carowinds team is impressed and excited for our newest thriller now holding the title of Best Steel coaster in the World," said **Pat Jones**, Carowinds vice president and general manager. "Fury 325 had done everything we wanted it to do — speed, beauty, thrills — which sets a standard for the new Carowinds."

Jones also praises the people involved as well. "Something powerful happens when talented people work together toward a common goal: to provide a best day ever experience. We are thankful for the collaboration with **Bolliger and Mabillard** and our design team at **Cedar Fair**."

Long time champ **Millennium Force** at **Cedar Point** lost hold just by a hair after claiming the title for the past six years — and 10 overall — reluctantly handing over the gold to its sister park.

The newly renamed **Superman The Ride** at **Six Flags New England** and **Holiday Park's Expedition GeForce** slip one notch, but **Nitro** at **Six Flags Great Adventure** continues to hold its place at No. 5, as does **Busch Gardens' Apollo's Chariot** one position behind. **Leviathan** at **Canada's Wonderland** (No. 7) and Carowinds' **Intimidator** (No. 8) flip positions compared to the 2015 rankings. To close out the Top 10, two returnees wriggle their way back onto the upper tier: **Diamondback** at **Kings Island** places No. 9 this year, followed by **Kennywood's Phantom's Revenge** at No. 10.

Last year, **Alton Towers' Nemesis** (No. 11)



broke a seven-year drought of any coaster in the Top 10 featuring inversions. With it dropping just below the boundary, that fact is put back in place once more. Only eight of the Top 25 go upside-down.

Cedar Point's **Maverick** (No. 12), Kings Island's **Banshee** (No. 13) and **Blue Fire** at **Europa-Park** (No. 14) also climbed several notches to higher ground.

Printed in this issue are the Top 25 positions. To see the full Top 50, go to: [www.GoldenTicketAwards.com](http://www.GoldenTicketAwards.com) for bonus coverage.

New-for-2016 coasters had some debuts outside of our Top 25 listing. **Storm Chaser** at **Kentucky Kingdom** debuted at No. 28, **Phantasialand's** magnificent **Taron** reached No. 32 and **SeaWorld Orlando's**



**BEST STEEL COASTER: Fury 325, Carowinds**  
AT/GARY SLADE

**Mako** premiered at No. 35. The latter is the tallest roll-

er coaster in Orlando. Also on the charts is **Cannibal**

at **Lagoon** (No. 42), which had a delayed opening in 2015.

Continuing its stronghold of highest rated coaster in Europe, Expedition GeForce has now held this honor for 15 years, always a Top Ten placeholder. In our Top 25, six roller coasters reside outside of the United States; 13 of the Top 50 are international.

With Fury 325 now holding the Golden Ticket, **B&M** not only has the top spot this year, but also six of the Top Ten coasters. **Intamin** claims Nos. 2, 3 and 4. Other manufacturers on the chart of 50 are (alphabetically) **Arrow**, **Chance**, **Mack**, **Morgan**, **Rocky Mountain Construction**, **Schwarzkopf** and **Vekoma**.

Cedar Point claims more roller coasters on the charts than any other park: four in the Top 25 and six in the full Top 50. This is particularly impressive as only one other park can claim even three.



**BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 2: Millennium Force, Cedar Point** AT/TIM BALDWIN



**BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 3: Superman The Ride, Six Flags New England** COURTESY SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND



**BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 4: Expedition GeForce, Holiday Park** COURTESY STEFAN SCHEER



**BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 5: Nitro, Six Flags Great Adventure** AT/GARY SLADE



THE LIST

2016 TOP 25 STEEL ROLLER COASTERS



RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
1	Fury 325	Carowinds	Charlotte, N.C.	2015	B&M	1126
2	Millennium Force	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2000	Intamin	1122
3	Superman The Ride	Six Flags New England	Agawam, Mass.	2000	Intamin	698
4	Expedition GeForce	Holiday Park	Hassloch, Germany	2001	Intamin	613
5	Nitro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2001	B&M	454
6	Apollo's Chariot	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	1999	B&M	397
7	Leviathan	Canada's Wonderland	Vaughan, Ontario, Canada	2012	B&M	393
8	Intimidator	Carowinds	Charlotte, N.C.	2010	B&M	350
9	Diamondback	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	2009	B&M	330
10	Phantom's Revenge	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	2001	Morgan	329
11	Nemesis	Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	1994	B&M	311
12	Maverick	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2007	Intamin	306
13	Banshee	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	2014	B&M	286
14	Blue Fire Megacoaster	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	2009	Mack	283
15	Magnum XL-200	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	1989	Arrow	279
16	New Texas Giant	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	2011	Rocky Mountain	272
17	Intimidator 305	Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	2010	Intamin	268
18	Wicked Cyclone	Six Flags New England	Agawam, Mass.	2015	Rocky Mountain	265
19	Top Thrill Dragster	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2003	Intamin	258
20	Goliath	Six Flags Over Georgia	Austell, Ga.	2006	B&M	255
21	Iron Rattler	Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	2013	Rocky Mountain	254
22	Montu	Busch Gardens Tampa	Tampa, Fla.	1996	B&M	203
23	X2	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2002	Arrow	202
24	Behemoth	Canada's Wonderland	Vaughan, Ontario, Canada	2008	B&M	198
25	Black Mamba	Phantasialand	Brühl, Germany	2006	B&M	178

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