



## Morgan's Wonderland lifts off with WingZ of Wonder aerial ride

*Zamperla delivers the world's first self-actuated ride*

**AT:** Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO — The message of inclusivity has been at the forefront of Morgan's Wonderland's mission. Today, the campus is a complex of various facilities, including a water park, sports center, multi-assistance center and an upcoming hotel.

Furthering the initiative of providing a place where everyone can play together, the theme park has added something new for 2026. The attraction is

called WingZ of Wonder.

"This is the first of its kind in the world, and we're very happy that it's here at Morgan's Wonderland," said Catherine "Cat" Lorenzo, park president. "We started having this conversation with Zamperla a couple of years ago. I'm sure you can appreciate how much time and effort and intricacy that it took for us to actually build it."

The tower-type ride stands at 39 feet, and the rider is in complete control of the ride experience.

Zamperla showcased this ride at the recent IAAPA Expo in Orlando

▶ See WINGZ, page 8



WingZ of Wonder at Morgan's Wonderland is the latest creation from Zamperla. COURTESY ZAMPERLA

## RES delivers first-of-its-kind family ride to Adventureland N.Y.



Wave Twister is the first ride of its kind in the world. Each of its gondolas seat 10 riders in an outward-facing circle. COURTESY ADVENTURELAND

**AT:** Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

FARMINGDALE, New York — Long Island is close enough to the water, so when picturing people "catching the waves," one would picture surfing spots like Lido Beach or Gilgo. Adventureland is changing that with the first-of-its-kind Wave Twister.

When the park opened during the final weekend of March, enough buzz had been built to bring the curious out to witness a ride never seen before.

"Our Adventureland team is thrilled that the much-anticipated debut of Wave Twister has arrived!" said Adventureland President Steven Gentile. "The RES team designed and delivered an excellent and unique family ride that will be a staple at our park for many years to come. It's definitely something special to say we have the only ride of this type right here at our

park on Long Island! You cannot experience anything like this ride anywhere other than right here at Adventureland, and that's pretty wild to think about."

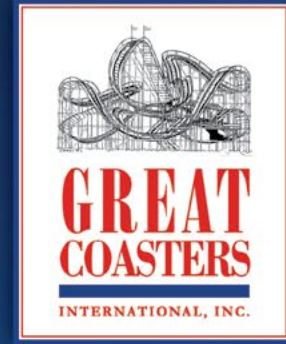
Built by Ride Engineers Switzerland (RES), it is marketed by the manufacturer as Wave Twist L, owing to its L-shaped track layout.

"Every year, we introduce new rides that bring new movements and create new experiences," said Roman Rothe, CEO, RES Rides.

Two round gondolas seating 10 outward-facing passengers each are positioned on a long beam-style platform. As a central motorized carrier traverses the L-shaped track, the platform rotates, changing the riders' view throughout the experience. The blend of motion, rotation and elevation culminates in a unique experience as the

▶ See RES, page 10





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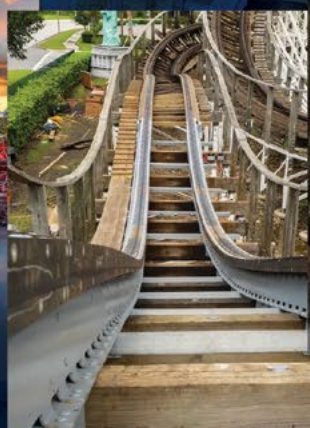
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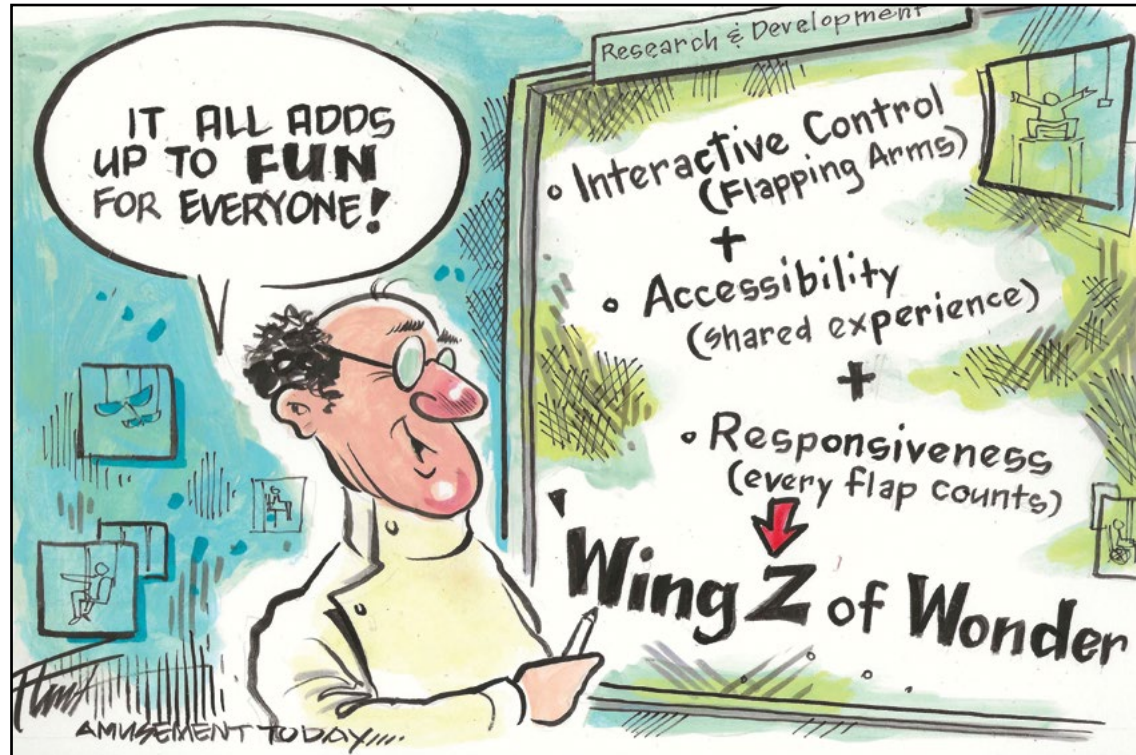
In an age of excessive documentation, cancelled contracts and prolonged legal battles ... more than ever, every single deal and agreement comes down to a level of trust. Put simply, it's a bond born between two people — or two companies — that understand the symbiosis built on their continued coexistence.

In recent weeks, an email came across my desk from the management of a park that was sent to its suppliers. It articulated how recent seasons had not proven as profitable as the owner had hoped, but also detailed its willingness and desire to continue to maintain its current relationship with its suppliers. It asked simply for the trust in future business to come, in exchange for a strategic markdown in pricing so that budgets could be maintained for the coming season. The offer, the promise, the deal ... it's all balanced on the trust between the two parties, and how much good faith has been built in their years working with one another.

I think, at some point, we've all been burned by the kind of trust involved there. A deal that didn't happen, a promise that wasn't kept. Personally, I remember declining to receive commission on a job because I wanted my long-term client to prosper from the savings and continue our long-standing relationship. Sadly, they cancelled their contract the following year.

However, I'm still a firm believer in the strength of that trust. The relationships we've built — person-to-person, company-to-company — is the chain that keeps our industry growing and prospering. Sometimes, we have to reach our hand out to lift up those around us. And, as people and as organizations, we should remember when others did that for us and reach back to lift them up when it's our turn.

Profits may turn downward, weather may cloud a season, but in the end, it's us working together that keep the turnstiles turning and our beloved industry growing.



**INDUSTRY VOICE:** The team and family at Naughton Insurance

## Remembering Kevin Naughton

We want to sincerely thank everyone for the kind messages and condolences following the passing of our leader, Kevin Naughton. The outpouring of love, support and shared memories has meant more to our team and the Naughton family than words can truly express.

Naughton Insurance was built on a foundation of integrity, dedication and genuine care for our customers. Kevin's impact went far beyond insurance — he built lasting relationships and earned the trust of so many over the years. We are incredibly honored to carry on Kevin's legacy in a way that would make him proud.



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While this is a difficult time for all of us, we want to reassure our clients, partners and friends that Naughton Insurance remains strong and committed to the future. Kevin's values will continue to guide us, and our team is here, just as we always have been, to support and serve you.

Thank you again for your kindness, support and for putting your trust in us every day.

*Editor's Note: Amusement Today received the preceding letter from the team at Naughton Insurance. We express our continued condolences at the passing of a true industry friend, Kevin Naughton.*

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columnist(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.



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# 2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Tim Baldwin

## Tony Sanders, Old Tucson

During his career, **Tony Sanders** has worked for numerous big players in the amusement industry, including **Six Flags, Palace Entertainment, Merlin Entertainments, Premier Parks, Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** and more. Growing up in Austell, Georgia, led him to his first job in the world of theme parks. When he isn't working, his way to unwind is to travel, which he admits isn't relaxing for everyone. Keeping him in line at home is his dog Nala, whom he describes as "so innocent."

**Title:** General Manager

**Number of years in the industry:** 34

**Best thing about the industry:** I love the variety of the work we do, and the role we play in creating a memorable and entertaining experience for both our guests and our employees.

**Favorite amusement ride:** Newer: Monsters Unchained at Universal Epic Universe; Classic: Monster Mansion at Six Flags Over Georgia; Coaster: Apollo's Chariot at Busch Gardens Williamsburg

**If I weren't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...** Working as a fly-fishing guide.

**Biggest challenge facing our industry:** This may depend on the attraction and its location. The rising cost of business is always a common challenge, but I also think the ability to stay top of mind and relevant with an ever-increasing world of entertainment, both in-home and location-based.

**The thing I like most about amusement season:** An odd combination of the familiar and the new. The annual process of operation that seems to be the same year to year... comforting. Then there is the brand new. I love implementing and embracing the new, the unexpected and the new traditions.

**A popular food Arizona is famous for:** A Sonoran hot dog or my favorite (so far), rattlesnake!

**In a single word, gas prices are ...** Prices.

**The coldest place I've ever been is ...** Moscow, Russia, in February.

**Growing up, my favorite family vacation was ...** Our family vacation to Jekyll Island, Georgia. My first love of a water park was formed there at Summer Waves.



Tony Sanders's career in the amusement industry has included stints with several major industry players and attractions. COURTESY TONY SANDERS

**The oldest thing in my house is ...** a stuffed ET plush from Universal Studios Florida from 1990.

**Which better describes you — handy-man or cook?** An amateur cook at best. Although, I originally wanted to be a ride mechanic before reality set in about my technical skills.

**A television show that left me hanging when it was cancelled was ...** *The Silo*.

**The household chore I hated as a kid was ...** Washing dishes after dinner.

**On a scale of 1 to 10, my hair is ...** a 5 — It's still there, mostly.

**If I had a time machine, the decade I would want to visit:** The mid-1950s to 1960s. I think I would have loved to see the birth of American tourism. Places like roadside attractions, motels, amusement parks and more.

**The most expensive thing at my desk is ...** Next to my desk, I have a framed 1978 Six Flags Over Georgia souvenir map. That park was my home park, my first employer, and the map was printed the year I was born.

**Pick one: a ride in a sports car or a ride in a hot air balloon?** A hot air balloon so I can watch the sports car whiz by below.

**My favorite collection:** My name tags, from 1993 to today.

**The celebrity that turns me off is ...** Jack Black. He is not that good.

## THE INDUSTRY SEEN

### A European union of inspiration



RUST, Germany — On April 23, 2026, the board and executive committee of Tivoli Gardens — together with the amusement park's CEO, CFO and COO — visited the Europa-Park Resort to seek inspiration. In addition to experiencing the multisensory world of enjoyment at Eatrenalin, they also visited Europa-Park and Mack Rides, the roller coaster manufacturer based in Waldkirch. Opened in 1843, Tivoli Gardens is considered one of the oldest amusement parks in the world and has long been renowned for the combination of entertainment, atmosphere and exceptional guest experiences. It was therefore all the more special for the Mack family, owners of Europa-Park, to welcome representatives of such a long-established and internationally renowned park to Europa-Park. COURTESY EUROPA-PARK

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WingZ riders cause their seat to rise by flapping their arms (above left). Each of the ride's gondolas seats two people, one in front of the other (above middle). The gondolas also sport the park's butterfly motif (above right). COURTESY ZAMPERLA; AT/TIM BALDWIN

## ► WINGZ Continued from page 1

last November. It captivated attendees on the floor as they witnessed people “flying” on the innovative flat ride. Marketed by the manufacturer as WingZ, the attraction lets passengers cause their gondolas to rise into the air by flapping their arms like a bird. Sensors on the ride lift the chair seat upward.

“The amusement/theme park industry is about checking any apprehensions or insecurities at the gate,” said **Michael Coleman**, North American sales manager, Zamperla.

“The motion-activated movement system on the WingZ gives guests of all sizes and abilities the opportunity to do just that. Flap your arms and find the fun in life — we've had a great response to the ride's debut at IAAPA [Expo] 2025, and early season returns at Morgan's are overwhelmingly positive. So, stay tuned for more installations around the world!”

Two of the seating gondolas are platforms that allow wheelchairs to roll right on and be secured. The interactive mechanics work just the same.

“I love how it is a

smooth transition for our wheelchair users from ground to the gondola and up,” said Lorenzo.

While the traditional seats dangle suspended, the wheelchair platforms are stabilized for oncoming wheelchairs to board.

“It's very easy and very secure,” Lorenzo noted. “Safety is our No. 1 priority — always. Of course, Zamperla and Morgan's make sure it is the first priority for every single rider.”

This addition is a continued partnership between Zamperla and Morgan's Wonderland.

“As leaders in inclusion

and accessibility from a design and manufacturing perspective, it makes perfect sense to partner with the leader on the operations side,” Coleman told *Amusement Today*. “Our relationship has been cultivated naturally over the years through a set of shared objectives and core beliefs. When Morgan's announced the Inclusion Institute, it made sense to formalize our partnership, which had already been well established. We continue to support one another and help drive the mission forward.”

“It's been nothing but positive reviews, glowing reviews,” said Lorenzo. “Everybody's excited. I mean, who doesn't want to go up the tower almost 40 feet by flapping their arms and then have that immediate control of the ride.”

WingZ of Wonder features a blue-sky and clouds motif, with the tops of each seat sporting Morgan's trademark butterfly design. While riding, guests have a rotating aerial view of the east side of the park.

Riders must be 48 inches to ride unaccompanied or 36 inches with a supervising companion. The ride can accommodate 16 passengers. Each of the gondolas accommodates two passengers, either of which (or both) can cause the seating to elevate. The camera sensors respond to either rider.

The ride only requires a 44-foot diameter footprint. Safety features include a

locking seatbelt with a third strap between the legs. According to Zamperla, the theoretical capacity is 320 passengers an hour with a 90-second ride cycle and a 90-second load/unload time.

WingZ of Wonder is the most-recent All-Access ride from Zamperla at Morgan's Wonderland. Joy's Happy Swing and Jettee's Wonder Bikes have been added in recent years. A Zamperla Balloon Wheel opened with the park in 2010.

“Inclusivity and accessibility have been a cornerstone of Zamperla's mission for nearly two decades,” said Coleman. “**Alberto [Zamperla]** believed that everyone had a right to ride and share in the enjoyment of Zamperla attractions, and our CEO, **Antonio [Zamperla]** has carried this torch. Under his leadership, our All-Access lineup of attractions has grown from three to over 10, with more currently in development.”

Morgan's Wonderland features a variety of rides, from gentle to thrilling. All of them are available to every guest. In addition, there are playgrounds, gardens, a catch-and-release fishing lake, a special-event center and an amphitheater that features live entertainment.

The adjacent **Morgan's Inspiration Island** water park opened in 2017 with the same mission of everyone playing together. That facility took a Leading Edge Award that year from the **World Waterpark Association**.

●[zamperla.com](http://zamperla.com)



Park President Cat Jackson (above left) is excited to offer the first-of-its-kind attraction. AT's Tim Baldwin (above right) enjoyed a spin, happily flapping his arms to control his flight. AT/TIM BALDWIN; COURTESY MORGAN'S



# Morgan's



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► RES

Continued from page 1

20 passengers travel back and forth on the 280-foot track.

Wave Twister is designed and constructed directly above the existing railroad that runs through the park. To accommodate both attractions, a tunnel-like support structure was created to lift the entire ride over the railway and maintain the required clearance envelope for the passing train. Because it is elevated at 60 feet, the attraction becomes more captivating with a higher structure and dynamic visibility.

Once passengers have boarded, the loading platform separates and pulls down, allowing for the flow of the vehicle across that section of track.

“The Wave Twister showcases exactly what RES stands for — innovation, creativity and unforgettable ride experiences,” says **Deborah Eicher**, sales and marketing director at RES. “Adventureland



Cantilevered over the track, the rotating beam offers riders continuously changing views. COURTESY ADVENTURELAND

has been a fantastic partner, and we’re proud to deliver an attraction that not only introduces a brand-new ride sensation but also becomes a visual icon within the park.”

Gentile felt comfortable working with RES once again: “RES has an impeccable safety record. We have worked with RES in the past; they brought FireBall to Adventureland

in 2022. When they presented this new ride to us, it just seemed like a great fit for our park. While yes, it’s unique and the first of its kind, it’s also able to accommodate a variety of ages, which is important to us when selecting new rides for the park. Wave Twister allows guests at 36 inches to ride with an adult, that’s an average 4-year-old. After just the

first few weekends of being open at our park, it’s pretty awesome seeing guests of all ages going on and enjoying this ride.”

The park announced in 2024 that an area of the park would be redeveloped into Legacy Corner. This redevelopment included the removal of two rides — Adventure Falls and the Pirat Ship. Following that was a whole transformation of this area of the park, from new landscaping to new

restrooms, games, tables and, of course, new rides.

“Our guests have been loving Wave Twister since the first weekend of operation,” Gentile told *Amusement Today*. “We hear them screaming throughout the ride, which is a great sign; screams = fun. They come off laughing, smiling and overall super excited! We have seen many riders come off the ride

► See RES, page 11

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Wave Twister was the second attraction supplied by RES for Adventureland. COURTESY ADVENTURELAND



The raised ends offer a boomerang-style ride back and forth over the track. COURTESY ADVENTURELAND

► **RES**  
Continued from page 10

and jump right back in line to ride again. It's one of those rides that leaves you wanting to ride again and again."

According to RES, the Wave Twist is available in three sizes, in addition to being customizable.

Additionally, the geometric L-shaped angle makes for an ideal fit for any corner of a park or area. According to its website, RES states the theoretical hourly capacity is 480 riders.

Children measuring 36 inches or taller can ride with an adult; those 48 inches and older do not require supervision. The

ride time is more than two minutes long.

If asked if anything surprised Gentile, he responded: "I was most surprised by the unique design of the ride. The footprint of this ride fits perfectly in our space. It has allowed us to maximize the space we have and really utilize all areas

of the park."

RES also provided a vertically stacked coaster, Fireball, at the park in 2022. Wave Twister is a follow-up project between the two parties.

"Overall, we are excited for Wave Twister to officially join the Adventureland ride lineup," said Gentile. "It is

going to be a great addition to our park that we know our guests will enjoy for years to come."

Adventureland opened in 1962. The park is family-owned and operated, and Gentile is a second-generation owner. Its operating season is from mid-March through Halloween weekend.

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# FACILITIES & ATTRACTIONS

► Area15 debuts unique Chance carousel — page 31 / Rulantica celebrates the Nordic Festival of Lights — page 35

## Utah's Lagoon opens gigantic S&S Screamin' Swing: Nutcracker

50-foot-tall sculpt from 3dx Scenic themes ride, towers above park midway

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

FARMINGTON, Utah — With a history of 140 years, Lagoon opens its 2026 season with yet again an iconic attraction that helps define the character and charm of the family-owned park. The Nutcracker is the park's newest thriller.

"We had absolutely fabulous weather opening weekend," said Julie Freed, director of special events, Lagoon. "Snow caused us to postpone opening day the last couple of years, but this year was in the 70s. The response to Nutcracker was overwhelmingly positive. I was in the station for the majority of the day on Saturday, and I did not see a single person without a giant smile on their face. Guests were



The thrill of weightlessness and dynamic G-forces make a ride on The Nutcracker a must-do. The towering attraction dramatically changes the skyline on the southern end of the park. COURTESY LAGOON

thrilled that the line moved so quickly (with 40 riders each cycle), and they loved the nutcracker theme. Many guests clapped and cheered as they exited the ride, and I even heard a few saying, "This is my new favorite ride at Lagoon!"

The Nutcracker was supplied by S&S Worldwide, with headquarters just north of the park in North Logan. The two had partnered on

the park's towering drop ride, The Rocket, in 1999.

"Lagoon and S&S working together just makes a lot of sense," said Trevor Dyer, executive director sales and marketing, S&S. "They are a great partner that builds world-class attractions on a local scale; S&S is a world-class roller coaster and attraction manufacturer with local Utah roots. We're both very proud to be from the state of Utah and to show the world what can be accomplished in our home state."

"I am so excited about this ride," said Steve Johnson, project manager, S&S. "Being able to build a ride so close to home that we can share with our friends and families is so rewarding."

The ride is nothing short of a rush. Standing 105 feet and soaring to a height of 135 feet, the boom arms swing riders 120 degrees at 68 mph, propelled by compressed air.

"Nutcracker has changed the skyline here at Lagoon!"

Freed told *Amusement Today*. "Riders soar [close to] 150 feet high, which is the same height as our Sky Coaster, making it a great focal point from the park and from the freeway."

One of the things that makes the ride particularly iconic is a sculpted nutcracker figure overlooking the midway. It was created by 3dx Scenic.

"We get lots of unorthodox requests from our clients, including a design-build of a 50-foot-tall German Nutcracker sculpt to clad around an air tank of a Screamin' Swing attraction!" said Mark Rosenzweig, chief business officer, 3dx. "The successful integration between the sculpt and the ride system took a full collaboration between our team and the folks at Lagoon. Once we knew where the various pipes running to and from the air tank were to be located, we were able to design in locations for openings in the fiberglass panels and hatches for maintenance personnel

to have easy access to strategic locations as well."

He adds that the placement of the figure on an elevated platform made for an even stronger presence than if it had been placed at ground level.

Lagoon has established a reputation for aesthetic artistry and theming in recent years. The Nutcracker continues that tradition of elevating its attractions and architecture.

"Riders exit the ride directly into the Lagoon Biergarten, which is why Hans — our 50-foot Nutcracker icon — is holding a Lagoon-A-Bier," said Freed. "The ride speech is narrated by a woman with a German accent — which is a very fun change. Next to the Nutcracker, we have opened Liesl's Pretzel Haus, which is also German themed."

Liesl's Pretzel Haus is a new food-and-beverage location that wonderfully

► See LAGOON, page 14



Liesl's Pretzel Haus is a new addition in the Biergarten area. COURTESY LAGOON

 <p>Deggler Attractions Preston &amp; Barbieri Flying Swinger</p>	 <p>Preston &amp; Barbieri Junior Coaster</p>	 <p>RES Rides Oracle</p>	 <p>Water Jumble</p>	 <p>IRG Intermark Ride Group TEL 615.370.9625 www.intermarkridegroup.com Fabri Group Gosetto Preston &amp; Barbieri RES Rides Moser Rides</p>
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## LAGOON Continued from page 12

complements the lush thematic environment that Lagoon has created in that area of the park.

"It is a Bavarian-style building featuring a glockenspiel-style clock with rotating animals that perform at the quarter hour," said Adam Leishman, park spokesperson. "Each animal is an icon from The Nutcracker loading area, where we assign seating before loading. The animals are a bear, a stag, an owl and a squirrel."

The new outlet offers easy comfort food good for sharing or a substantial snack.

"Liesl's features fresh pretzel from Ben's Soft Pretzels as well as The Nutty Bavarian roasted/candied nuts. It's a great addition to the park that ties in thematically with our Biergarten and new ride."

"Lagoon has a long history of taking theming to the next level on their attractions, ranging from custom rides like Primordial and Cannibal to flat rides like last year's Steampunk-inspired

'District' area," Rosenzweig said. "Adding 'Hans' as an iconic figure truly raised the impact of the ride that much more and helped it to blend into the Lagoon Biergarten area in a seamless fashion. It is a truly special installation that the park, our team and S&S are all very proud of."

Completely cohesive thematically, the area offers areas of relaxation, food and drink, and now high-level thrills.

A Screamin' Swing features two large arms, each containing back-to-back seating for 20. As the ride begins, it quickly rushes into the sky for dramatic exhilaration. Because of the nature of the seating, facing different directions makes it worthy of a re-ride, in addition to the fun, of course.

The G-forces range from -0.42 to 4.67 during the ride experience.

"On my first ride, I was blown away — no pun intended," smiled Freed.

"The Nutcracker attraction has been a huge success from an operations and installation standpoint, as well as with all of Lagoon's wonderful patrons," Dyer



"Hans," a sculpted thematic piece elevates the attraction and looks huge as it overlooks Lagoon's midway. COURTESY 3DX SCENIC

told AT. "I do feel that this is one of the best themed Screamin' Swings in the world. Lagoon went all out, and it was fun to work with them through their creative process. Their operation and engineering teams are fantastic to work with. We couldn't be more excited to continue our partnership in the years to come."

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# Six Flags Great Adventure unveils all-new Shoreline Pier section

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

JACKSON, N.J. — This season, **Six Flags Great Adventure** is bringing the charm, nostalgia and vibe of New Jersey's coastal piers to its property as Shoreline Pier at The Boardwalk. This project rejuvenates an area of the park that has needed a makeover. The boardwalk has been in place since 1995, prior it was Goodtime Alley, which was created in 1982. Originally, the section was known as Fortune Festival.

The area being reimagined starts near the carousel in the interior of the park all the way to the flying coaster, Superman: Ultimate Flight, manufactured by **Bolliger & Mabillard** at the other end, toward the parking lot. The area being worked on this year is 2.5 acres in size.

"Shoreline Pier celebrates everything people love about New Jersey's legendary boardwalks — the motion, the magic, the tastes, the thrills and the timeless sense of adventure," said **Michael Fehnel**, park president of Six Flags Great Adventure, in a release. "This new area blends the alluring vibe of shore towns with classic midway fun, creating a destination that feels both nostalgic and brand-new."

That vibe will capture the spirit of a summer night down the shore — salt in the air, lights dancing off the water, music drifting across the midway and rides whirling against a glowing sky. The area will offer five attractions, with four new to the park.

"The plan to restore and transform the boardwalk has been something we have talked about for quite some time. I was in an advisory role in 2024, and in 2025, there was already a plan to construct Project Purple, the new roller coaster," said **Ryan Eldredge**, PR manager for Six Flags Great Adventure. "That plan was already in place and going to be put on the boardwalk. This is part of a multi-year investment that we foresee all coming to fruition through 2028. As you know, there always is conversations even before you start the process."

First teased earlier this year as part of the park's multiyear

boardwalk transformation, the refurb honors beloved New Jersey shore destinations while delivering new thrills and storytelling. This investment continues the park's broader growth strategy, which also includes a major new roller coaster slated for 2027, currently known as "2027 Project Purple."

"This year, for the most part, is going to be a hard refresh of the Shoreline Pier area and the Boardwalk area, all told," said Eldredge. Games facades are being refreshed with many favorites returning. A new game, miniature bumper cars is being added and housed in an existing structure. Three Point Basketball has been moved down into that area. "(The park is) just trying to add different experiences. Everything as we move forward in and around the boardwalk is being set up so that when the purple coaster finally opens in 2027, it looks like the entire area fits."

The updated boardwalk material is stamped concrete, light brown in color, which creates the feel of a seaside pier.

Shoreline Pier's ride collection will deliver a mix of spinning excitement, family adventure and classic amusement pier whimsy — each attraction infused with themes inspired by New Jersey's coastal playgrounds.

There are five rides for this area, four from the now-defunct **Six Flags America** (SFA), Upper Marlboro, Maryland, and one moved from elsewhere in the New Jersey park.

**Barrels O' Fun** is a **Reverchon** spinning mouse roller coaster. Guests will

board wooden barrel-inspired cars that dip and twist like bobbing buoys on the surf. It was named **Ragin' Cajun** when it was in the Mardi Gras section of SFA.

A **Zamperla Rides** Wave Swinger brings back the nostalgic spirit of the Flying Wave, which thrilled park attendees from 1974 to 2007. (The ride was known as Flying Carousel at SFA.)

Flying Scooters is a **Larson International** Flying Scooters ride that puts guests in control of their own flight around the boardwalk. Riders soar on winged scooters, using the sails to swing, dip and glide — choosing between a gentle breeze or a more thrilling ride with each push and pull. Each flight becomes uniquely its own, shaped by its movements and the wind. (It was known as French Quarter Flyer at SFA.)

**Hypno Twister** is a **Zamperla** Nebulaz. This spinning ride whirls guests through hypnotic rotations with four interlocking, rotating arms that perform a mesmerizing dance with pops of weightlessness. (It was known as Steam Whirler at SFA in the Steam Punk section.)

The fifth ride in the lineup is a **Hrubetz & Company** Super Roundup that has been in three different locations throughout the park, most recently near the Buccaneer and behind the Big Wheel. The attraction was part of the original ride lineup when Great Adventure opened in 1974, being replaced by a newer model in 1980. It has also been by Fantasy Fling, The Tornado and Swashbuckler, over the years.



**Barrels O' Fun** is the new name and theme of the former **Ragin' Cajun**, when it ran at **Six Flags America**. COURTESY SIX FLAGS GREAT ADVENTURE



The **Wave Swinger** thrilled park attendees from 1974 to 2007 and returns this season. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Also acquired from the defunct Maryland property were theming elements from the Harley Quinn Spinsanity giant pendulum ride.

The Shoreline Pier ride collection is being promoted as "Nostalgic Amusement Pier Charm with Modern Thrills."

Any seaside pier is not complete without numerous selections and places to eat. Shoreline Pier will offer a lineup of boardwalk-inspired bites, featuring a mix of both savory favorites and sweet treats. The park is busy building out and improving some existing food offerings in that section.

The selections include fresh-cut fries, hand-prepared and served hot with a variety of bold dipping sauces, including sriracha, curry and bay ketchup.

Jersey-style "disco fries" are topped with melted mozzarella and brown gravy, a Garden State classic — born in a diner but raised on the shore.

Classic corn dogs, with the signature "Gabagool On-a-Stick" — capicola dipped in corn batter and finished with a hot honey drizzle.

Then there are over-the-top, Jersey-inspired funnel cake sundae creations such as Triple Blueberry "Roundup," "Holey Cannoli" and chocolate-dipped fruit perfect for a grab-and-go treat along the pier.

**Rita's Italian Ice**, also part of that area, features at least eight flavors of Italian ice and custard made fresh in the park.

New retail offerings nearby give guests even more ways to commemorate their visit with pier-inspired merchandise and coastal keepsakes.

Live entertainment will transform the area into a

constantly moving, high-energy experience from day to night. On select dates and times, guests will enjoy towering stilt walkers, acrobats and other roaming acts, along with live musicians bringing the sounds of the shore to life with upbeat, summer-inspired sets.

"There will be a stage component to Boardwalk Nights. We're just trying to figure out what it will look like and where it will be," Eldredge said.

It is expected to be an immersive show that will engage and excite parkgoers. Electrifying stage performances will feature powerhouse vocalists, high-energy dancers and gravity-defying acrobats in a fast-paced, visually stunning showcase.

Elsewhere in the park, Main Street Pub in the main plaza (by the fountain) received a new exterior and interior refresh with aesthetics, along with menu items. Shepherd's Pie and Fish and Chips are now signature items.

Best of the West has been flipped into a smokehouse with a menu overhaul by Executive Chef **Jeremey Hacker**. Paradise Grill in Hurricane Harbor was also overhauled in the off-season, with an update to the menu as well.

"It's a massive investment in the park, and it's a massive investment in the area. It's not every year that you add five new rides," said Eldredge. "Those are just the cake, and the icing is the big coaster that comes the year after it. We're really excited about the rides we are getting, so we can open them this year. It's a really great time to be at Great Adventure."

The area opens in late spring.

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 **STREICHER Group**

# ART Engineering supplies first roller coaster for Holland-Park

AT: Tim Baldwin  
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PANKETAL, Germany — Germany is notable for some world-class theme parks, as is the Netherlands. Interestingly, a newer, less-known park called **Holland-Park** is actually found in Germany. It should welcome new fans now with the addition of its first roller coaster.

The Roelofs family were gardeners by trade, and park owner **Theo Roelofs** had a new idea. Beginning in the mid-1990s, he founded the **Holland Garden Center** in Berlin Tegel, followed by a second in 1999 and a third in 2006. The idea for an adventure park originated in 2002 during a visit to Amsterdam, drawing inspiration from the sights the family experienced. For such a family, it is quite appropriate to say the “seed was planted.”

The process began in



Riders experience a dual launch on Klompi, the first roller coaster at Holland-Park. COURTESY HOLLAND-PARK

2013, and all permits needed took seven years. Following 15 months of construction, Holland-Park opened in the spring of 2022.

The park features an indoor play area with everything from slides to ninja courses, ball pits to go-karts. A handful of family rides offer experiences outdoors.



In 2026, the park has introduced Klompi, a roller coaster themed to the typical Dutch wooden shoe. Children only need to be 90 centimeters tall to ride.

“It was very important for us to create a ride that includes the whole family, which is why we aimed for the lowest possible height

requirement,” said **Rik Roelofs**, managing director. “At the same time, we wanted something unique that you don’t find on every family coaster. That’s why we chose a multi-launch coaster. It offers excitement for children while remaining family-friendly, with a fun but not overly intense layout.”

The coaster was manufactured by **ART Engineering**.

“We chose ART for several reasons,” Roelofs told *Amusement Today*. “Their coasters are reliable and smooth, and they also allow for a very low height requirement. Other parks spoke highly of their build quality and their friendly, trustworthy team, which ultimately led to our decision.”

Similar coasters to Klompi in North America can be found at **Carowinds** and **Canada’s Wonderland**.

“Our guests love the coaster,” Roelofs said. “It is very popular with all age groups. For many, it’s their very first roller coaster, but older guests enjoy it just as much. Since there are not many amusement parks nearby, many visitors don’t get to ride roller coasters often. As a result, the experience is often more exciting than expected, especially due to the multiple launches.”



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# Steel Pier planning June rollout of new Crazy Crab attraction

AT: Pam Sherborne  
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ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Atlantic City's Steel Pier's latest offering in the ride category is the Crazy Crab, a Premier Rides coaster that opened last year but will have a full operating season this year, along with a Crazy Crab party to showcase it, planned for June.

The Crazy Crab is a steel spinning wild mouse coaster, with a height of 65 feet and a capacity of 1,200 riders an hour.

"It went in last year and we are still tweaking it," said Anthony Catanoso, Steel Pier owner. "We think this year it will be at its max operation and speed. It is a beautiful ride. We are hoping and expecting it to be at the top of our 24 rides."

Catanoso said Steel

Manufactured by Premier Rides, the Crazy Crab arrived at the Steel Pier in 2025. COURTESY STEEL PIER



Pier begins its regular daily operations on June 15, even though gates opened for weekends earlier. The rollout party will be scheduled for later that month.

"We plan to have Premier here for that big

event," he said.

The ride has five vehicles that hold four riders across in a single row. When the vehicle hits the second level, it starts to spin, adding another action to the thrill. It includes a

chain lift hill.

The Crazy Crab is replacing the park's previous Wild Mouse ride, which was manufactured by Reverchon.

"We were the first in the world to have that ride," Catanoso said. "We bought the prototype. We installed that in Wildwood (New Jersey) in 1996 and then

moved it up here. We had it in operation for a very long time. We took very good care of it. We plan to have this one for a very long time, too."

Catanoso said he is very pleased with the park's ride package this year.

"I think we have a very nice blend of rides to offer guests," he said. "Included with the Crazy Crab, we have the Sling Shot, Tropical Storm, helicopter rides and our drop tower, which we call the Diving Horse," he said. "We also have a nice blend of kiddie rides, along with 14 games of chance, 12 food locations and retail."

There are event spaces as well, with the ability to accommodate 150 to 250 visitors.

"We also have our Observation Wheel, which is 227 feet high with 40 climate-controlled gondolas," he said. "We have an area surrounding

▶ See CRAB, page 22

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The park is planning on a big rollout of the ride sometime in June after daily operations begin for the season. The chain lift hill is 65 feet tall. COURTESY STEEL PIER

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The ride has five vehicles that hold four riders each in a single row. When the vehicle hits the second level it begins to spin. COURTESY STEEL PIER

► **CRAB**  
Continued from page 20

the base of the Wheel where we can hold events as well.”

Each gondola can hold six people comfortably. It also has a 14,500-light package.

A new addition to the food line-up for this season is a new Tiki Bar. The park already has one near the front of the park. This one will allow beachgoers to come off the beach and visit the bar for a drink.

“We should be rolling that out by Memorial Day weekend,” Catanoso said.

The park also has a Crab House, an eat-all-you-want seafood restaurant that is very popular.

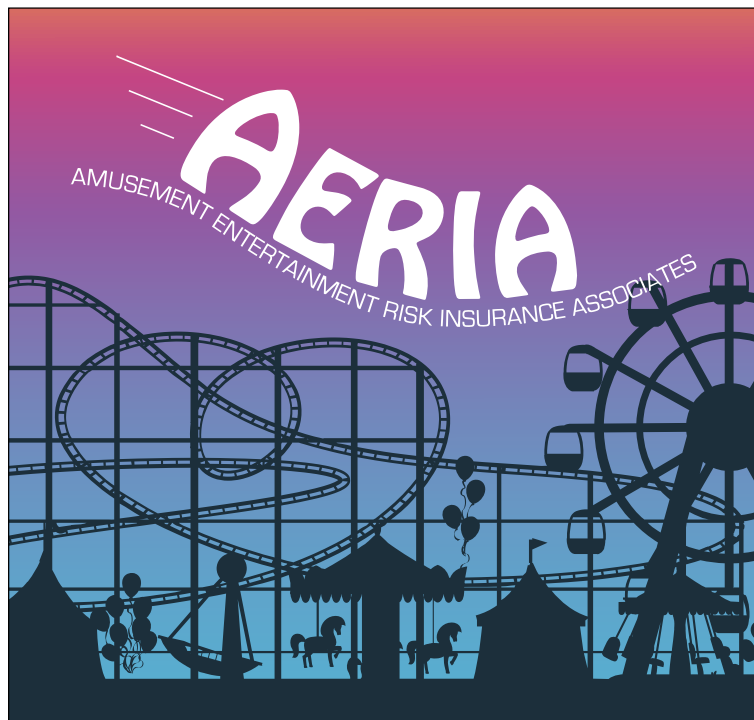
Catanoso said this area of Atlantic City is definitely a vacation destination. Across the street from Steel Pier is the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, as well as other restaurants and resorts up and down the street.

“This whole area is called North Beach Atlantic City,” he said.

“We expect this new ride, Crazy Crab, to be around forever.”

Steel Pier was founded in 1898.

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Officials at **Canada's Wonderland**, Vaughn, Ontario, Canada, recently unveiled what's new for the 2026 season, which begins May 3. Highlights include the transformation of Flight Deck into the DareDeviler, along with a full slate of events and entertainment, featuring the return of Brew and BBQ in June, and three new live shows spanning cirque, acrobatics and musical performance.

The park's flagship candy shop also has undergone renovation to offer an expanded and elevated confectionery experience with a new assortment of handcrafted treats.

The park is also unveiling a bold reimagining of a longtime thrill ride. Originally introduced as Top Gun in 1995, the inverted roller coaster formerly known as Flight Deck will debut early summer as The DareDeviler, re-themed to align with the original vision of the Grande World Expo area.

**Hersheypark**, Hershey, Pennsylvania, has announced plans to celebrate America's 250th with events and activations all summer long. The park will offer multiple dates of fireworks, an all-new, star-spangled show, limited-time food and drink, select Americana-themed rides and Hershey characters dressed in their festive best with more summer surprises to come during its 120th operating year.

Guests entering the 121-acre amusement park this summer will immediately notice patriotic decor, photo opportunities and new red, white and blue ride and light packages as they enjoy the 70 rides and attractions.

Daily operations at Hersheypark begin May 21, with the first of several fireworks displays presented on May 23.

Officials at **Cedar Point**, Sandusky, Ohio, announced ahead of the opening of the 2026 season that its spinning Monster ride is permanently closed, according to a story that ran on *WHIO TV*, a local ABC affiliate. Park Spokesperson **Tony Clark** confirmed that the ride has been removed from the park lineup, having reached the end of its serviceable life as replacement parts are challenging to locate. Clark said the Monster will not be relocated, and as of now, they have no plans for the site.

The ride first opened at Cedar Point in 1970 and was given a facelift as part of

the Gemini Midway overhaul in 2014.

**Steve Gorman** is taking a closer look at the fencing surrounding **Waldameer Park and Water World**, Erie, Pennsylvania.

Gorman, president of the historic amusement park in Millcreek Township, said he's checking for any weak points in the perimeter fencing in the wake of several incidents in which people have entered the property without permission. Some damage has been done and Gorman estimates that about \$10,000 worth of the park's property has been taken, including a golf cart that had not been recovered since early April.

Gates to **Kennywood**, West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, swung open April 18 for the 2026 season, with the park kicking off Celebrate Kennywood, which began April 18 and will close May 10.

This new event combines the love of everyone's favorite Potato Patch fries, thrill rides and good old-fashioned Kennywood nostalgia. Guests were encouraged to grab their best spud, bust out their matching Kennywood outfits and make their way around the lagoon as they try unique potato-themed foods, including loaded cheesesteak fries, rosemary truffle fries, buffalo pierogi flatbread, loaded maple cinnamon sweet potato waffle fries and more.

Kennywood also did a lot this past offseason. Two new food locations are debuting this season. On opening day, visitors could visit the new Centennial Grill. Located in Lost Kennywood, this new food stand offers cheesesteaks, tater tots and other beloved theme park classics.

Those looking for a sweet treat can swing by the all-new Big Dipper ice cream stand, which is offering hand-dipped ice cream and banana splits. This sweet treat location is a tribute to the Dipper roller coaster that called Kennywood home from 1948 until 1984.

An unlikely friendship at **Wild Adventures Theme Park** in Valdosta, Georgia, is capturing the attention and hearts of visitors and animal lovers, according to a story on the local *WSB-TV* news.

Wild Adventures Theme Park officials say Kurtisie, a zebra, and Bakari, a giraffe, have become an inseparable pair after forming a bond in the park's Giraffe Overlook habitat, where multiple species interact.

“From the very beginning, Bakari showed a gentle curiosity toward the zebra herd. Somewhere along the way, he and Kurtisie found each other,” park officials said.

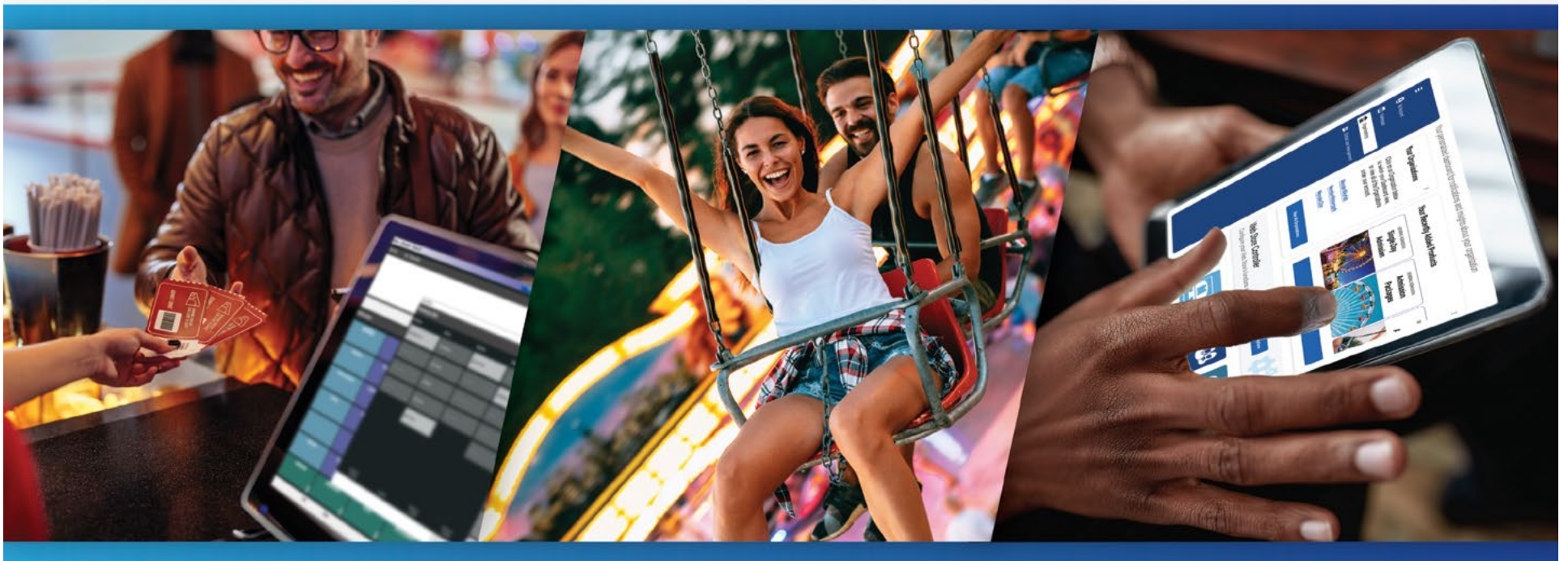
Visitors recently spotted the pair grooming each other, lounging together in the field and sharing snacks inside the giraffe barn.

The park's animal care team says the bond has had a positive impact on both animals. Kurtisie has become more relaxed and confident, while Bakari has grown more social and playful.

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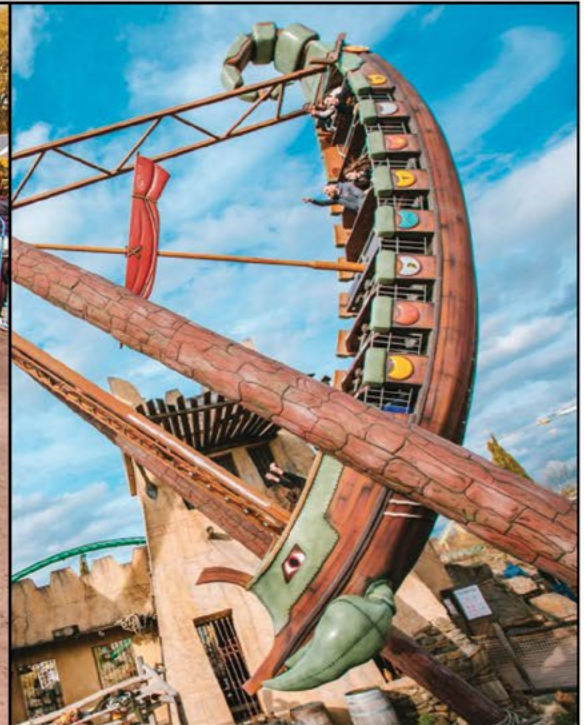
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# Intamin's Quantum Accelerator speeds into Six Flags New England

**AT: Jack Lathrop**  
Special to Amusement Today

AGAWAM, Mass. — For the first time in nearly a decade, **Six Flags New England** has a new roller coaster. Quantum Accelerator, a dual-launch straddle coaster manufactured by **Intamin Amusement Rides**, opened to the public on April 17. Opening as the park's twelfth coaster, it is the first since *The Joker* debuted in 2017 and marks the beginning of the next chapter in the storied park's history.

The addition arrives at a significant moment for the Agawam, Massachusetts, park. **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** completed its merger with **Cedar Fair** in 2024, and the combined company has been navigating a substantial restructuring period since. For Six Flags New England, Quantum Accelerator represents the first major capital investment to come to fruition under the new corporate structure.

**Sydney Snow**, regional manager of public relations for Six Flags, said the timing and location shaped the decision. "The location itself helped drive that decision. It is located in a busy area of the park with a relatively small footprint, so we needed an attraction that could deliver within those constraints. Quantum Accelerator does exactly that, packing more than 2,600 feet of track into a compact space while still delivering



Quantum Accelerator's 48-inch minimum height requirement and straddle seating make it accessible to a wide range of guests. COURTESY SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND.



Quantum Accelerator's sign stands in the foreground as a train crests the ride's 59-foot high point (above).

A hover bike vehicle races through Quantum Accelerator's layout of twists, turns and overbanked elements (right). COURTESY SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND.



a dynamic, memorable experience," Snow said.

Park Manager **Bill Falzone** said the new attraction sets a new standard for what guests can expect. "Quantum Accelerator is an exciting new addition that raises the bar for family thrill rides at Six Flags New England," Falzone said. "Featuring a dual-launch system and an exhilarating straddle seat design, this coaster is sure to become a favorite among guests of all ages."

Quantum Accelerator is positioned as a family thrill coaster, a category that sits between a starter ride and a full-on thrill machine. The ride's 48-inch minimum height requirement and open-straddle seating are designed to bring a wider mix of guests onto the same attraction. Riders board custom hover bike vehicles, grip handlebars and lean into the layout. The concept was developed by the Six Flags creative team around a steampunk adventure and time travel theme. Support columns are finished in

polished brass, with the track running in what the park calls Ruby Rivet red.

Snow said the ride is intended to strengthen what the park calls the sweet spot between thrills and approachability. "The coaster is exciting, but still accessible enough to feel welcoming," she said. "The straddle seating and hover bike theming give the attraction a personality that sets it apart from a more traditional coaster experience."

Idaho's **Northwest Coasters** installed the ride, which begins with a first launch from the station, carrying riders through an opening sequence of twists and turns, before a second launch propels the train to a top speed of 45 mph, courtesy of Intamin's friction wheel launch technology. A 180-degree high-speed turnaround carries the train to its maximum height of 59 feet. A steep descent into a low-to-

the-ground, rapid-fire finale follows this. Over its 2,604 feet of track, the ride delivers 11 airtime moments. Quantum Accelerator achieves this by weaving over and under itself, layering its high and low points to maximize space. Two 16-passenger trains are in service, with a rated capacity of roughly 850 riders per hour.

The trains themselves represent a meaningful engineering step for Intamin's Family Launch Coaster line. Quantum Accelerator debuts a new aluminum-machined chassis — a weld-free design that eliminates the need for non-destructive weld testing and is intended to reduce long-term maintenance requirements. Intamin drew on technology developed for its larger LSM launch coasters, where machined chassis have been standard for years. Loading is handled through a walk-through platform behind the seats, with individual lap bars for each rider.

The coaster anchors a broader reinvestment in Crackaxle Canyon, the themed area where it resides. Surrounding enhancements include new retail at *Screamore Gadgets*, a Coca-Cola beverage station at *Doc Pemberton's Refresh Station*, and updated menu items at *JB's Smokehouse* directly across from the ride. This includes salads and sirloin steak sandwiches, as well as the smokehouse's regular barbecue program.

"A great ride is even better when it's part of an environment that invites guests to linger," Snow said. "When we plan capital investments, we look at how each element improves flow, comfort and storytelling so the experience feels cohesive and immersive."

The Crackaxle Canyon work is part of a broader food-and-beverage push at the park this season. Six Flags New England has renovated its *Riverboat Cafe* and expanded menus at several locations, including house-made mac and cheese, hand-breaded chicken tenders, and a new fish and chips offering. **Chop Six** is adding deep-fried Brussels sprouts and house-made sauces.

On the ticketing side, Gold Season Passes and memberships at Six Flags New England now include regional access to other East Coast properties in the Six Flags portfolio. Included among them are **Six Flags Great Adventure**, **The Great Escape**, **Six Flags Wild Safari**, and **Hurricane Harbor New Jersey**.

Riders have commented on the ride's compact layout, noting how the coaster's layers of high and low elements create a sense of constant motion throughout. The off-axis hills have also drawn particular praise.

"This addition reflects a focus on balance, bringing in something that excites coaster fans while also giving families an experience they can enjoy together," Snow said. "More broadly, it represents our commitment to the park as a complete experience, not just a collection of rides."

Quantum Accelerator is now open at Six Flags New England for the 2026 season.

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**INTAMIN**

## Great Coasters building its first roller coaster in Japan

ARAO, Kumamoto, Japan — **Great Coasters International, Inc.** has made its mark reviving wooden coasters across the globe since entering the industry in 1994 and building its first roller coaster at **Hersheypark** in 1996.

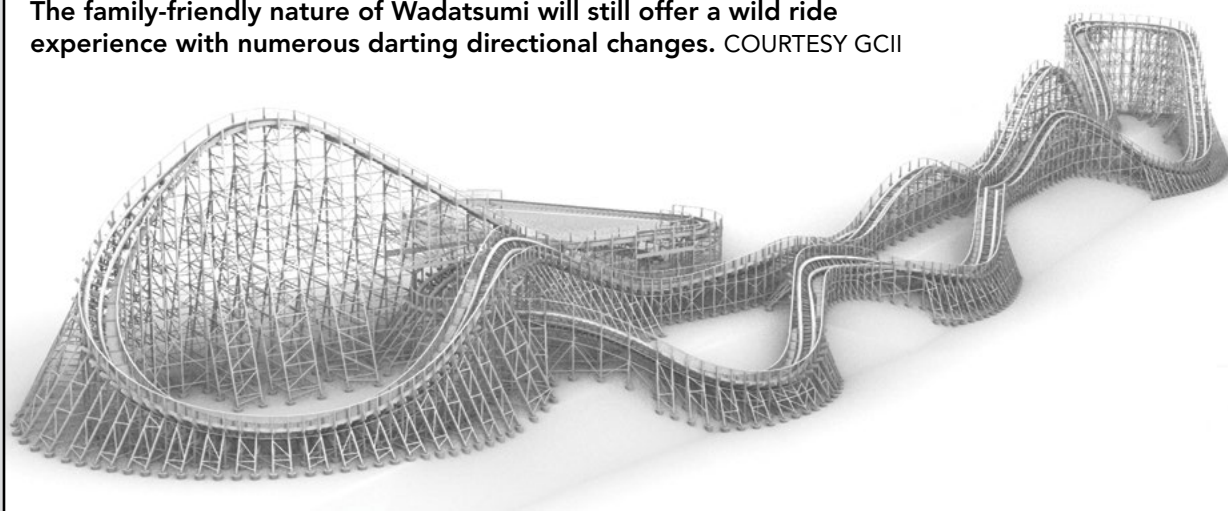
With more than 30 projects thrilling audiences primarily in the U.S., China and various countries in Europe, GCII is entering Japan for the first time. **Greenland Amusement Park** is preparing to unleash **Wadatsumi** in the spring of 2028. The property is one of the largest parks in western Japan.

Named after a water deity in Japanese mythology, **Wadatsumi's** hills and valleys will mimic the ocean waves. The contrasting color scheme of cobalt blue steel support structure and yellow pine wood of the track will give an aesthetic flair to that area of the park.

The layout was designed by **Skyline Attractions**.

"What excites me most for Greenland is that they are getting a solid new ride that will be a high-reliability, high-thrill experience that appeals to a broad range of riders," said **Tyler Mullins**, Skyline project manager for the Greenland project. "It has many similarities to **White Lightning** at **Fun Spot America** in Orlando, which is one of my favorite roller coasters. Having more GCII rides out there that offer

The family-friendly nature of **Wadatsumi** will still offer a wild ride experience with numerous darting directional changes. COURTESY GCII



a similar experience is great for GCII, great for parks and great for riders."

The ride will stand 63 feet/19.3 meters tall and have a length of 2,037 feet/620.8 meters. Top speed is expected to be just over 41 mph. The continuous directional changes should offer a dynamic out-of-control feel.

"From a project management standpoint, **Wadatsumi** is a testament to how far we've come," Mullins told *Amusement Today*. "It's been an exciting journey to continuously evolve our software capabilities and internal processes

at **Skyline** to provide a more refined, seamless product to GCII and Greenland."

**Leisure Labs** serves as sales representative for GCII abroad. **Sanoyas Rides Corporation** will be involved in constructing the ride.

The coaster will operate with two trains, each seating 16. Riders must be 120 centimeters to ride.

The reported investment is ¥3,000,000,000. **Wadatsumi** at **Greenland Amusement Park** will be Japan's first GCII coaster when it welcomes riders in 2028.

—Tim Baldwin

## GCII continues to provide Titan Track to aid in park maintenance

AT: Tim Baldwin  
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SUNBURY, Pa. — Wooden roller coasters are immensely popular with park goers, owing to their sense of nostalgia and providing an exhilarating yet family-friendly experience. However, the regular wear-and-tear with wooden track can sometimes produce problem spots.

Various methods of addressing such concerns are available to park operators. In 2019, **Great Coasters International, Inc.** (GCII) introduced **Titan Track**, a weld-free system that allows for a seamless transition between steel sections and wood sections of track. The first "testing ground" was **Fun Spot America** in Orlando in 2020. Since then, GCII has found global interest from parks wanting to look at long-term options.

In the 2025/2026 off-season, GCII has returned to previous clients for additional care of their wooden coasters.

**Europa-Park** has added another 225 feet of **Titan Track** on **Wodan**. **Darien Lake** has installed approximately 501 feet of new **Titan**



**Kingdom Coaster** at **Dutch Wonderland** is seen here with new **Titan Track** installed (above left). The departure from the station heading to the lift on **Europa-Park's Wodan** is now traveled on **Titan Track** (above right). **Titan Track** can be beneficial in tight turns and high-speed maneuvers, such as this stretch on **Prowler** at **Worlds of Fun** (below). COURTESY GCII

**Track** for its **Predator**, and **Lake Compounce** has added 550 feet to its **Boulder Dash** coaster. Approximately 235 feet of the steel solution have been installed on **Worlds of Fun's Prowler**. The **Kingdom Coaster** at **Dutch Wonderland** has also seen approximately 330 feet of **Titan Track** put in place. An unspecified length was added to **PortAventura's Stampida** as well.

"It's an awesome feeling, knowing that the product is being successful and in demand," said **Clair Hain, Jr.**, president, GCII.

In addition to alleviating trouble spots, the steel track allows for new ride elements not typically seen on wooden coasters — inversions, launch applications and high-stress elements not possible with wood.

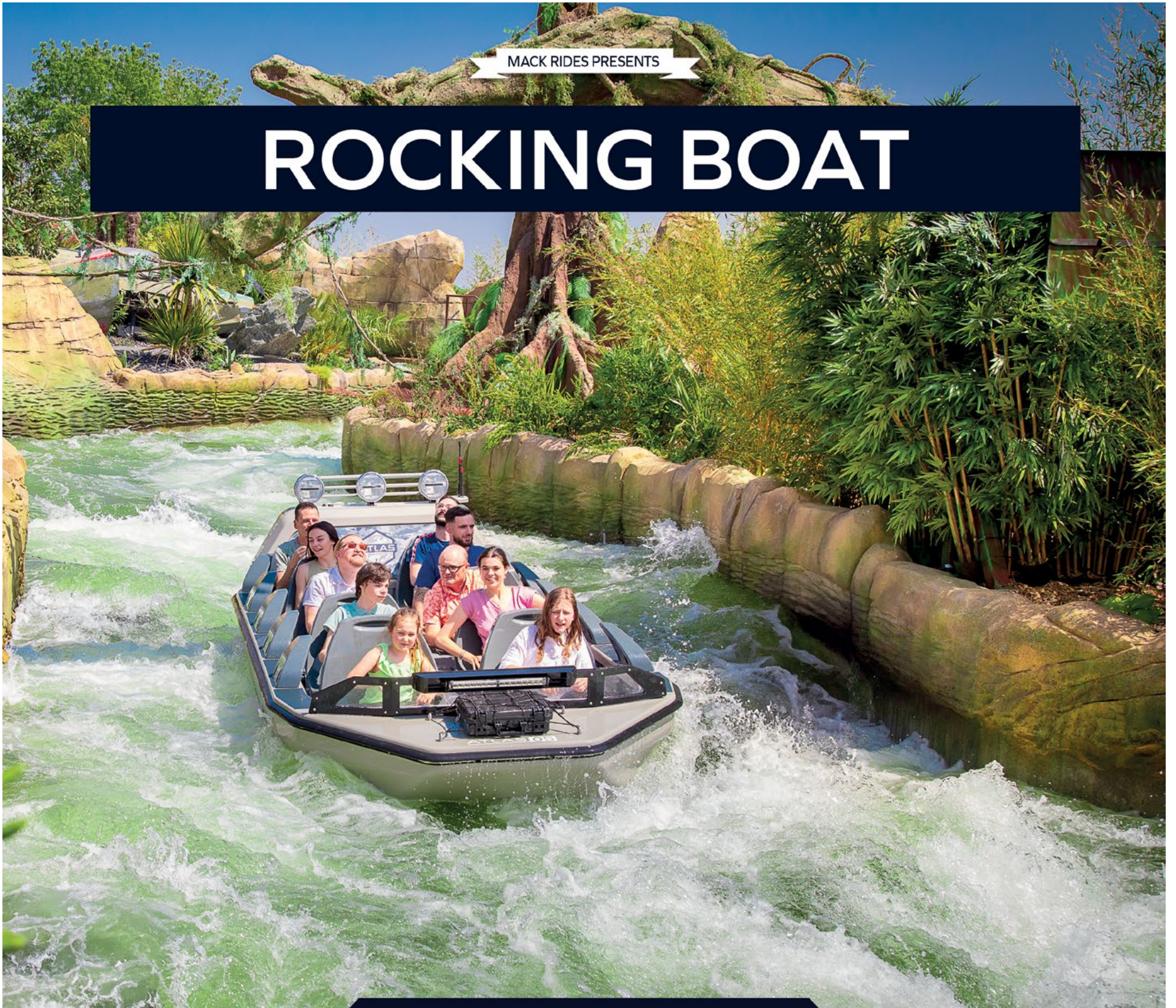
"There is no more unscheduled maintenance; [it requires] very little upkeep," Hain noted.

The ride system works with GCII's rolling stock: **Millennium Flyer** trains, **Infinity Flyers** and **Millennium** trains. Also, the track can be retrofitted to other manufacturers' trains.



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# Thea Awards a time to celebrate efforts of multiple theme parks

**AT: Susan Storey**  
Special to Amusement Today

BURBANK, Calif. — For the past 32 years, the Thea Awards, presented by the **Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)**, have celebrated excellence, ingenuity and creativity in themed entertainment. Over the years, the program has evolved and the categories for the Awards of Outstanding Achievement have expanded to encompass every line of business-themed entertainment touches. Theme parks and the experiences they provide for guests remain at the center of the industry, and this year, three theme parks earned a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement.

“The Thea Awards are the highest honor in themed entertainment,” shared **Melissa Oviedo**, chief executive officer, TEA. “The Thea Awards recognize the boundless creativity and innovation that span attractions, museums, theme parks, breathtaking spectacles and everything in between. This year’s Thea Award winners for Outstanding Achievement honored new imaginative

lands, outstanding rides and attractions, technological design applications and immersive experiences that inspire guests of all ages. **Efteling, Legoland Shanghai Resort and Universal Epic Universe** are incredible theme parks that are truly delivering tomorrow’s experiences today.”

“A Thea awarded to a theme park is akin to earning an Oscar for Best Picture,” said **Marc Zachary**, Thea Awards Judging Committee chair. “It represents the recognition of the work of thousands of talented people across a huge range of disciplines and companies who collaborated to create something extraordinary. It is not about the scale or the budget, but rather what each park has done with its resources to create a beautifully themed, immersive world that guests will want to visit multiple times.”

With **Danse Macabre**, Efteling created a next-generation experience that seamlessly integrates storytelling, innovative technology and inclusion. **Danse Macabre** features a rotating ride system that seats guests on six independently moving



**Legoland Shanghai Resort is the next generation for the family-focused theme park brand.** COURTESY LEGOLAND SHANGHAI

stages. Lifelike animatronics, projections and scenic elements drive the visual senses and a custom score recorded by a 75-piece orchestra ensures the sound of music surrounds every moment. Intentional design includes the “Cabinet of the Missing” option for guests with varying abilities through the use of sign language, braille and sound effects to effectively tell the story. These intentional design and show execution elements, along with upcycling construction practice and

application, all came together to earn Efteling a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement in the attraction category.

Legoland Shanghai Resort marks a new chapter for **Merlin Entertainments** in theme park design and earned a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement — Theme Park.

Since the first Legoland park opened in 1968, the parks have seamlessly blended the beloved toy brick with family-focused fun within a theme park setting. From the unique Miniland exhibits which recreate famous cities, landmarks and moments in history, to the rides and attractions that parents can experience alongside their children, Legoland has established itself as the first theme park visit for young families. The largest Legoland to date, the theme park combines play and creativity with Chinese culture and heritage, 75 interactive rides, shows and attractions, and thousands of intricate Lego models.

Legoland Shanghai’s intentional focus on incorporating sustainable practices into its design and operating procedures reflects the company’s commitment to the environment and its future guests. From state-of-the-art green roofs that provide cooling and reduce stormwater runoff, to rain gardens and green landscaping and the use of rooftop solar panels, Legoland applied future-focused practices into its infrastructure and operations. Inside the park, there is plenty

of shaded space, manageable walking distances and an inclusive design that supports guests of all ages and abilities.

Universal Epic Universe earned several Thea Awards for Outstanding Achievement, including Attraction for **Monsters Unchained: The Frankenstein Experiment**; for Ride Experience for **Harry Potter and the Battle at the Ministry**; and for Theme Park Land for **How to Train Your Dragon — Isle of Berk**. The park also earned a fourth Thea Award for Theme Park, honoring and celebrating the complete Epic Universe experience.

The Thea Award for Theme Park honors excellence in master planning, world-building, scenic and landscape design, ride design, immersive experiences, live shows and entertainment, technology use, story detailing and sheer size and scope. Never-before-seen technology, which led to 161 associated patents, puts Epic Universe in a class all its own.

Through the unique concept of portals that guests use to travel between each themed land, Epic created a “park within the park” experience that leaves guests feeling as though they visited multiple parks during their singular visit. Each themed land fully surrounds guests with storytelling, exclusive food and beverage, awe-inspiring rides and attractions and entertainment. Epic Universe’s intentional focus on creating individually diverse experiences within the confines of one location creates a new global standard that will inspire and influence future park design while raising guest expectations.

“Epic Universe is impressive because Universal used scale and innovation to create a park that dazzles fans and makes them feel like they are in worlds that they had only read about or seen on screens,” Zachary added. “Legoland Shanghai stands out because Merlin took an established concept and made it feel tailored, fresh and locally meaningful. That’s what makes these parks feel special, and that’s what makes them both worthy of Thea recognition this year.”

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SCAN ME

# Chance thinks outside the box for Area15 carousel in Las Vegas

AT: Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LAS VEGAS — Celebrating a 65th anniversary later this year, **Chance Rides** has been making numerous rides for decades. Among them are carousels. The familiar amusement park attraction has long been loved by parents riding with children atop elegant horses or other animal figures.

**Area15** in Vegas has given the industry staple a bizarre twist. In recent months, the Loper Carousel has opened and nudged Chance to create something a far cry from their standard artistry.

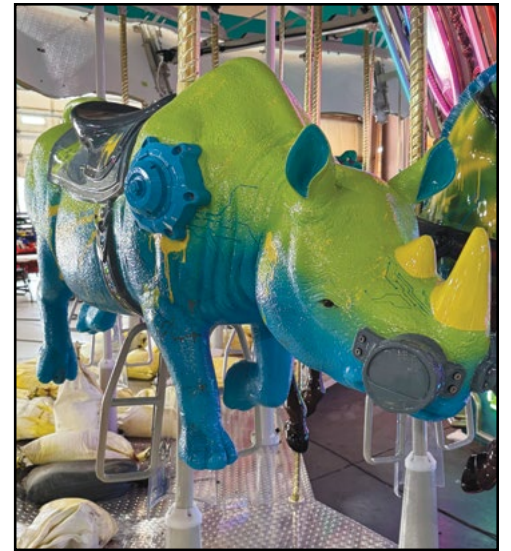
"It has a futuristic, post-apocalyptic feel," said **Jay Aguilar**, vice president, sales and marketing, Chance. "They [envisioned] these hybrid carousel figures. Picture a turtle with goggles and a shark with a kind of mechanism on the inside of its body. A mix of wildlife and half-robots."

The minds behind the carousel were Area15 employees who had previous experience with **Universal**. Meetings began as far back as 2022.

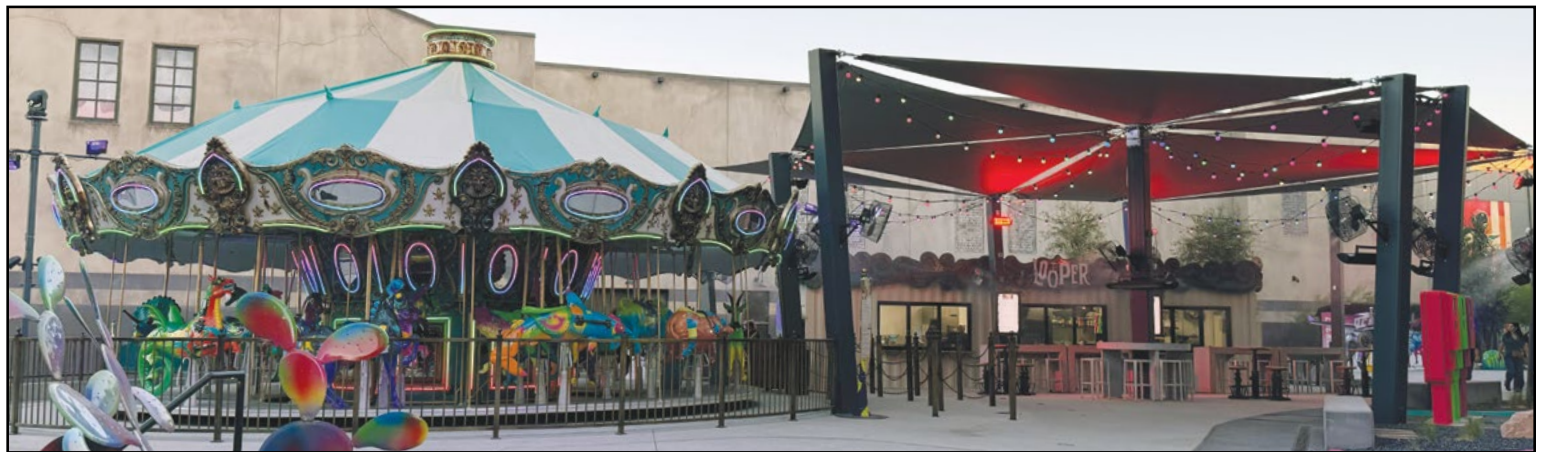
"The type of colors isn't traditional," Aguilar told *Amusement Today*. "They are almost shocking. And the lighting is very unique."

The carousel features 30 horses and two chariots.

When asked if Chance had done anything like this before, Aguilar said, "They requested this. This is perhaps the most unique carousel that we have ever done.



Area15 chose figures from Chance's catalog and added elements to further a post-apocalyptic storyline (above). Area15 visitors can purchase individual tickets for the carousel (below), or rides are included in attraction bundle packages. COURTESY CHANCE RIDES; AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



We have done 100% customized carousels before, but with Area15, they literally picked out figures from the catalog we have, and we did the add-ons — the goggles, the structure, the mechanical elements."

"The challenge was working within the constraints of the medium," said **AJ Annunziata**, VP of creative, Area15. "While our team explored many ideas for original characters, pursuing them would have pushed the launch far

beyond our timeline. Instead, we focused on finding smart ways to adapt what already existed. We started with traditional character forms and selectively tweaked them to achieve something new. With that approach in mind, we applied Area15 story points to ground the concept. The narrative is that this was once a normal carousel, but prolonged exposure to Particle A15 caused the forms to grow and distort. On top of that mutation, we layered faux wear and tear, graffiti and physical modifications to reinforce the story."

"The technical team, the engineering team, they were like holy holy," laughed Aguilar. "It was very good from the point of view that it's something that we didn't do in the past. It was exciting for Chance. In the past, we had never done anything so — I'm going to use the term — outside-the-box."

The Loper Carousel takes on a different aesthetic at night.

"The lighting shifts into vibrant neon and LED col-

ors, and the whole carousel starts to glow. It becomes just as much of a visual experience as it is a ride," said **Julian De Arcos**, senior operations manager of attractions, Area15.

Music is another key component.

"The music leans more ambient and electronic rather than traditional carousel sounds," said De Arcos. "It's designed to match the psychedelic feel and pull you into the experience without overpowering it."

The Loper Carousel is part of numerous bundle packages, but visitors can take single rides for \$5. It is open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.

"It brings a really fun, playful energy to Zone 2," De Arcos told AT. "It's something anyone can enjoy, but it still fits into the overall immersive, artistic vibe. It also adds movement and life to the space, making it feel more dynamic. Guest feedback has been incredibly positive. The outer ring of the carousel is consistently a favorite, and the three

figures that guests gravitate toward most are Mojam the Hippo, Fizlix the Sea Dragon and Snorb the Goat."

"Each one is packed with expressive story details," Annunziata noted. "For example, the hippo features a playful take on a WWII fighter plane kill count, replacing enemy insignias with cheeseburgers and martinis. There are many hidden elements like this throughout. We felt this depth was important because choosing a ride character is the most expressive and interactive moment for the guest, and we wanted that choice to feel personal, dynamic and rewarding."

"We welcome doing something unique," said Aguilar. "The industry has seen the level of customization we can do, the level of Universal, but nothing as unique as this carousel. You can change it up. I received phone calls from the day it opened. People told me: 'It looks like Chance, but I don't believe you guys do anything crazy like that.' It's Chance; it's ours."



Lighting at night adds to the eerie appearance of the Loper Carousel. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

# Maui's Indoor Theme Park poised to open this summer in Kentucky

Laser tag, minigolf, spinning coaster highlight attractions

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

OWENSBORO, Ky. — The community of Owensboro, Kentucky, has embraced the idea of having a new, 130,000-square-foot family entertainment center (FEC) opening in their back yards. Comments on the new **Maui's Indoor Theme Park** Facebook page express that sentiment, and management is seeing it in person.

"The community has been really excited about this," said **Tom Cardiff**, regional manager, **Jester FEC**, owner of the new venue. "We have had some delays in opening. We wanted to open about a month ago, but we are almost there."

Cardiff expects the Maui's to be open by May 1, first with a soft opening and then a grand opening set for May 29. Owensboro is not a massive market, he said, but developments have been springing up.

"There are about 300,000 people in a 45-minute radius," Cardiff said.

Maui's is located within the center corridor of the **Towne Square Mall**. The only other business inside the mall is a **Planet Fitness**.

Jester FEC is owned by the Hattan brothers, **Terry Hatton**, **Steve Hatton** and **Jeff Hatton**. They founded



the **Malibu Jack's** brand in 2013, which was sold in 2022 to **Five Star Parks and Attractions**. Jester FEC, based in Lexington, Kentucky, still operates some of the Malibu Jack's brand.

Maui's came about in Owensboro, said Cardiff, when a group of local investors that grew up in the area approached the Hattans to help them revive the mall.

Maui's has something for everyone, he said. The one ride is the **SBF/Visa** spinning coaster. In addition, there are go-karts, a miniature golf course and a glow-in-the-dark miniature golf course, laser tag, duckpin bowling, a motion theater, bumper cars, an arcade and a large children's area with climbing structures, inflatables, a pedal kart track and a toddler's area.

A concession stand offers pizza, burgers, hot dogs and other casual fare, and a small bar area serves alcohol to adults.

There are five or six cabana-style party rooms and one VIP room that can accommodate 50 or 60



The SBF/Visa spinning coaster (above) will take families spinning around the tracks and laser tag will test players skills. The FEC will also feature a a pedal cart track (below). COURTESY MAUI'S OWENSBORO

people.

"We will do the catering for the special events unless it just gets too big and we feel like we can't accommodate them," Cardiff said.

The Maui's Indoor Theme Park is stocked with many of the same attractions as a Malibu Jack's, but for the Owensboro project, the owners have envisioned the FEC as the first phase of a regional entertainment center. That is why they decided on the Maui's brand.

"This is the first time we have taken the center of a mall," Cardiff said. "Normally, we will take one of the empty anchor stores to build the FEC. Our plan here is to expand into each of the three anchor stores



in this mall. We are looking at attractions like skating. These may not be our attractions. We are talking to other people."

The owners hope to make this more of a resort-style destination.

Cardiff said they have had success in their hiring procedures.

"We are hiring about 70 people, and we had about 200 applicants for these positions," he said. "We have our GM in place and our other management in place."

Maui's Indoor Theme Park will be open seven days a week. While schools are still in session, the center will be open from 1 to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 1 to 11 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, and 12 to 9 p.m. Sunday.

"During the summer when schools are out, we will back up our opening times a couple of hours or so," Cardiff said.

•mauiowensboro.com



Maui's has duckpin bowling (above left), miniature golf courses and a motion theater. There are cabanas (above right) for parties and a larger VIP room, which can hold 50 to 60 people. COURTESY MAUI'S OWENSBORO

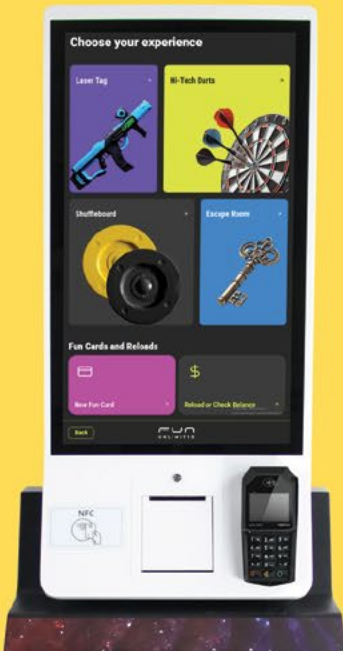
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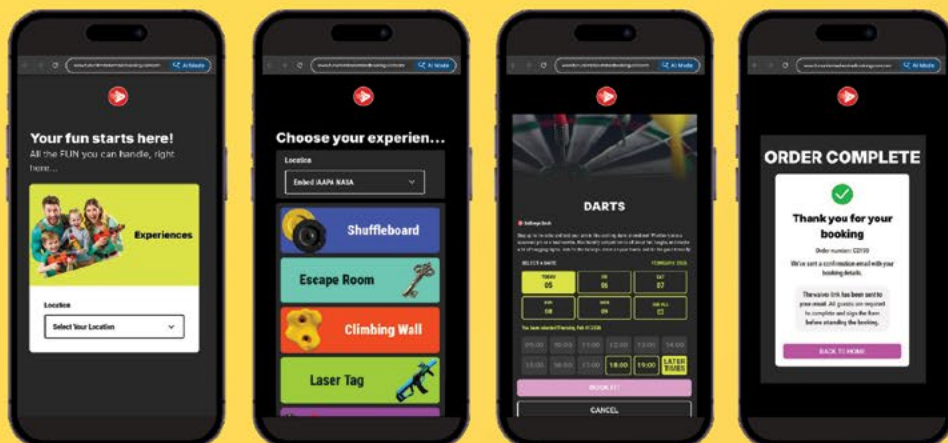
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## Power Tee automation drives growth for Go USA Fun Park



MURFREESBORO, Tenn. — Power Tee announced that Go USA Fun Park has realized a 25% increase in driving range revenue following the installation of the Power Tee system across its hitting bays. The upgrade has enhanced the guest experience. The move was designed to appeal to a broader audience, from serious golfers seeking quality practice to families and groups looking for a fun, interactive activity. The resulting surge in both foot traffic and revenue has exceeded all expectations. "We are constantly looking for ways to innovate and provide the best possible experience for our guests," said Alex Abdo, COO of Go USA Fun Park. "Integrating Power Tee was a strategic decision to differentiate our driving range. We're not just a place to hit balls anymore; we're a high-tech golf entertainment experience. The positive feedback has been overwhelming." COURTESY POWER TEE





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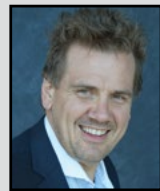




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## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT CENTRAL

AT: John W.C. Robinson  
jrobinson@amusementtoday.com

**Sacoa Cashless System** has announced the successful installation of its full cashless ecosystem at **Radical Play Park**, one of Brazil's newest outdoor amusement destinations and the first permanent dry park in the city of Olímpia, a tourism hub traditionally known for its major water parks. The venue recently opened, integrated with Sacoa's technology.

Inaugurated in mid-2025, Radical Play Park has quickly become a new entertainment landmark in Olímpia, offering around 17 attractions for families and thrill seekers alike, including a 20-meter Ferris wheel, a children's roller coaster, and a diverse lineup of rides designed for all ages. The park has introduced a new dimension to the city's leisure offering by creating a fixed, outdoor amusement experience beyond water-based attractions.

To support operations, Sacoa deployed a complete integrated solution including Spark card readers, POS system, self-service kiosks, CRM tools, the Sacoa App and the Online Sales Module, enabling a fully connected guest journey from ticket purchase to ride access and customer engagement.

**Dave & Buster's** is targeting its next location at **Columbia Center Mall** in Kennewick, Washington, inside retail spaces formerly occupied by **Joann** and **Sears**.

Plans indicate the entertainment venue would occupy more than 29,000 square feet, with demolition and remodeling anticipated to cost \$6.85 million. Dave & Buster's has not yet filed any building permit applications.

The company filed a formal application for a change of use for the vacant retail storefronts at 1321 Columbia Center Blvd. on April 17, 2026, with public comment on the proposal accepted through May 5, a city spokeswoman confirmed.

**EVO Entertainment** has announced it will construct an 83,000-square-foot family fun venue in downtown Clearwater, Florida. The \$50 million private funding brings a seven-screen cinema anchored by the biggest movie screen on Earth, measuring over 130 feet wide.

This will be the first theater worldwide with both **Dolby** Vision projection and Dolby Atmos sound in every room. Guests can expect an immersive film experience at a size never before seen in this market. Bowling will fill part of the space.

Arcade games, laser tag, food service and hands-on activities round out the offerings. Planners hope to draw big crowds across the area and create a central gathering spot.

"We are thrilled to bring EVO Entertainment to Clearwater and be part of this once-in-a-lifetime transformation taking shape in downtown Clearwater," said **Mitch Roberts**, founder and CEO of Elevate Entertainment Group. "From a cinema worthy of the global stage to a world-class family entertainment center, EVO Entertainment Clearwater will set a new standard for out-of-home entertainment — serving as a social destination for millions of guests across the region."

In its first expansion in a decade, **Wahooz Family Fun Zone** of Meridian, Idaho, announced it's adding a new 52,000-square-foot indoor electric go-karting arena. That's three times the size of its last expansion, and almost the size of a football field.

The building "will feature two high-performance tracks with exciting elevation changes, sweeping turns, and dramatic LED lighting," according to a news release from Wahooz. "A third junior track will ensure a safe, exciting introduction to karting for younger drivers."

The attraction "will give families, thrill-seekers, and serious drivers their own tailored racing experience," Wahooz CEO **Pat Morandi** said in the release. The FEC plans to break ground on the new go-kart center in July and open it roughly 14 months later, around October 2027.

**Urban Air Adventure Park** is set to expand its presence with a new 30,000-square-foot facility in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This expansion is part of the company's ongoing nationwide growth strategy, driven by strong demand for experiential entertainment.

The Philadelphia location will be managed by franchise partners **Swapnil Patel**, **Jatin Patel**, **Meghal Patel**, **Ritesh Patel** and **Hemali Jain**. These entrepreneurs are dedicated to providing high-quality family entertainment to the local community.

"This new Philadelphia location represents an exciting opportunity to bring a dynamic, high-energy destination to families and visitors in the city," said **Ryan Slemons**, chief development officer at **Unleashed Brands**.

# Europa-Park's Rulantica celebrates the Nordic Festival of Lights

AT: Jeffrey Seifert  
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RUST, Germany — The Nordic Festival of Lights wrapped up its second season at Europa-Park's Rulantica water park earlier this year. Celebrated from January 19 through March 27, the water park took on a magical glow as special lighting and numerous LED candles gave the facility a mystical, luminous atmosphere.

The festival was reminiscent of several Scandinavian traditions and festivals that involved dispelling the darkness of the long winter nights with Yule logs, bonfires, candle- or torch-lit processions, along with feasts to celebrate the sun's return after the solstice as the days grew longer.

After seeing how much guests loved the winter festivities at Europa-Park, the Mack family decided to tackle the slower months of January through March with something brand new. Since the sun sets early during this time, it was the perfect excuse to lean into a light-themed event. The Rulantica team conceived a decorative and entertainment concept, which became the Nordic Festival of Lights.

With the theme park closed during those months, the Rulantica team was able to borrow quite a bit of equipment from Europa-Park, particularly in the first year. But feedback from guests indicated they wanted more lights, more decoration and more entertainment. For this year, Rulantica invested in some specialized equipment capable of doing projection mapping. The park also put a lot of effort into the costumes of the artists.

As twilight descended upon Rust, a mystical transformation took hold at the water park. Guests were greeted by a warm, ethereal glow as illuminated trees and shimmering accents paved a path into a literal sea of lights. The evening atmosphere turned the Rulantica water world into a radiant sanctuary, blending Nordic charm with modern brilliance, as several of the park's signature attractions



The Nordlys show took place above the park's Surf Fjord wave pool with lights, projection mapping and aerial acrobatics. COURTESY RULANTICA/EUROPA-PARK

were reimagined through a lens of light.

The Skog Lagune indoor pool was bathed in Nordic shades of emerald green and sapphire blue. Adorned with delicate fairy lights, it offered a "cozy float" experience where guests could drift in glowing tubes.

For those willing to brave the night air, Frigg Tempel, the heated outdoor pool, was encircled by blazing beacons, creating a striking contrast to the evening chill.

The relaxation quarters of Rulantica were included in the festival too. In the Hyggedal sauna and wellness area, the traditional lighting was replaced by the soft flicker of countless LED candles. This tranquil setting provided the backdrop for specialized infusions designed to enhance guests' well-being.

A special entertainment program included Magisk Retur, a video projection mapping show that animated the Vinterhal rock façade every evening.

Nordlys — Polar Illumination combined a light show and special effects with aerial acrobatics as the Surf Fjord wave pool was transformed into an entertainment venue. Guests were welcome to find a comfortable spot within the shallow end of the pool or along the edges, as acrobats dangled precariously above the deep end.

Rulantica Magic Bubbles kept families entertained as

bubble artist Hammou dazzled guests with soap bubbles, light and imagination. With great skill, he shaped bubbles large enough to encapsulate a person, shimmering bubbles filled with smoke, glittering chains and huge, floating bubbles that danced through the air.

Marina Lumina featured international puppeteers performing several scenes utilizing marionette puppets on the stage at Skip Strand to tell tales and stories.

During the festival, special nights kept the park open even later. On Saturday, February 7, the park stayed open until midnight and featured additional shows and party elements, including a deejay. On February 14, Valentine's Day, special sauna infusions were available.

In celebration of Scandinavian Sauna Week, February 21 to March 1, Hyggedal sauna masters provided guests with information on the subject of natural saunas and wellness during a special Nordic pampering program. Themed sauna rituals, Nordic-inspired infusions, and distinctive treatments were featured at Sauna 'stor'. The KOTA Sauna Chalet offered, among other things, an authentic beer infusion for a unique sweat. Also included were the Viking infusion with mead and the Wenik infusion with pickled birch branches.

In the Damp Huset steam

bath, guests could improve their health with cold water and hot air treatments. In addition, various scrubs ranging from salt to sugar and refreshing algae and chocolate face masks were available as a special pampering program for the skin.

In Sauna 'lille', a relaxation program with incense and sound bowl ceremonies put guests into a state of tranquility before they relaxed with a view over the water world on a lounge or cozy hygge sofa.

Most of the effects for the festival were handled

in-house by Europa-Park's remarkably talented team. The park did reach out to external partners for assistance with the Nordlys — Polar Illumination show and the Vinterhal mapping show.

Evening was when the festival really unfolded, but there was plenty to see in the daytime as well. Walking acts, decorations, and special foods and beverages were available all day long. During the festival, there were special fish dishes, glowing ice cubes and glasses, and glow-in-the-dark items for sale in the shops.

Guests had the option to purchase a one-day ticket that allowed them to stay all day. There were evening and moonlight tickets available, as well as hotel packages that combined a stay with admission to the waterpark.

Driven by increased attendance and exceptional guest feedback, the Nordic Festival of Lights is likely to continue for many years. This year's visitors were particularly moved by the Nordlys show, citing it as a unique, first-of-its-kind experience for a water park. Along with the show's success, the event's signature lighting and decorative displays were a major hit with the park's audience.



Magisk Retur, a video projection mapping show, animated the Vinterhal rock façade every evening (above).

Characters in colorful, lighted costumes were present throughout the festival (right).

COURTESY RULANTICA/EUROPA-PARK



# World's Largest Swimming Lesson set to return on June 17

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — The 17th Annual **World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL)** — a global water safety event uniting water parks, aquatic facilities and community organizations across six continents — takes place on Thursday, June 25, 2026, over the course of 24 hours. Coordinated by the **World Waterpark Association (WWA)**, the event happens just one week before the July 4th holiday. Its singular purpose: teaching life-saving water competency skills to help prevent drowning and building awareness about the vital importance of teaching children to swim.

"Every child deserves the safety that basic swimming skills and layers of protection provide," said **Rick Root**, president of WWA. "What started as a bold idea 17 years ago has become a shared mission that spans the globe. When facilities from dozens of countries come together on the same day for the same cause, it sends a powerful message to families everywhere that learning to swim saves lives."

The human toll of drowning is staggering. The **American Academy of Pediatrics** reports drowning as the leading cause of death for children ages one through four, and the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages five through 14.

Research shows that participation in formal swimming lessons can significantly reduce the risk of drowning among young children, yet millions of kids worldwide still do not receive formal swimming or water safety training. Last year's event drew participation from facilities across the globe. Since its inception, the WLSL's message has generated more than \$37 million in earned media in the U.S. alone.

Registration starts at \$99 per facility, with discounts available for operators hosting the event at multiple locations.

•wlsl.org



The World's Largest Swimming Lesson has grown in success over the years, educating thousands in its time. Dollywood's Splash Country had 942 participants in 2025. International partners in Dubai, Mexico and Vietnam (right) all held successful events as part of 2026's global effort. COURTESY WWA



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## WhiteWater to be the exclusive supplier for Mattel water parks

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — American Resort Management, LLC, the official licensor of the five recently announced **Mattel Wonder Indoor Waterparks**, has solidified its development team for future Mattel water parks rollout by selecting **WhiteWater** as its exclusive global attraction partner. WhiteWater, of Richmond, British Columbia, has an extensive portfolio and history with major IPs; the collaboration aims to set a new standard for indoor location-based entertainment (LBE).



Mattel will be bringing its iconic characters and massive portfolio of brands to life through immersive aquatic destinations together with these partners. Guests can expect to see theming that will include Barbie, Hot Wheels, Fisher-Price, American Girl, UNO, MEGA, Matchbox and Thomas & Friends.

WhiteWater is expected to integrate its portfolio of waterslides, aquatic play, waves, surf and guest engagement software. With a history of world-class, record-setting installations, the company is experienced with translating major intellectual properties into immersive guest experiences through themed attractions.

“With a history of successful projects with both **Martin Aquatic** and American Resort Management, we’re thrilled to be collaborating with them again, together with new partners, to create location-based entertainment that is both familiar and novel,” said **Onno Meeter**, WhiteWater’s president, water parks. “It is indeed very special to be working with a client to design a never-before-seen slide with new ride experiences exclusive to their parks.”

The project, which also features design expertise from Martin Aquatic, will integrate Mattel’s powerhouse brands into custom-themed aquatic environments. “Having worked with WhiteWater on numerous projects that have set records for water park innovation, our team looks forward to the design process with a partner that understands how to deliver the best guest experience,” said **Josh Martin**, president and creative director for Martin Aquatic.

“We are excited to collaborate with WhiteWater on the development of these parks, where guests will experience unique attractions together with their favorite brands,” said **Rick Coleman**, CEO of American Resort Management. “Bringing the leading waterslide manufacturer to the team means that fans of the Mattel brand can expect the same high-quality experience from location to location.”

Last November, Mattel announced its intention to delve into the water park arena. To date, only three projects have been confirmed: Orlando, Florida; Bellevue, Nebraska; and Bradley, Illinois. The Bellevue project started construction last May, before its involvement with Mattel was revealed. The Bradley location will likely break ground in a few months. Plans for the Orlando location have been submitted, and that project is expected to start later this year.

The synergy between American Resorts Management, Martin Aquatic and WhiteWater ensures that upcoming and future Mattel water park destinations will benefit from proven operational excellence and cutting-edge ride engineering.

—Jeffrey Seifert



## NEWS SPLASH

AT: Jeffrey L. Seifert  
jseifert@amusementtoday.com

**Sandcastle Waterpark at Blackpool Pleasure Beach** is investing £500,000 (US\$661,000) in refurbishment as it prepares for its 40th anniversary.

Guests this year will be welcomed with a complete redevelopment of the changing facilities that will create a brighter and more modern space.

Slides will be recoated and repainted and a brand-new park-wide audio system will be installed.

**Kyle Woodcock**, general manager said, “This is a landmark year for us, and we wanted to mark our 40th birthday with improvements that our guests will really feel.

“We were able to open the first half of the new changing village for the February school holidays and we received fantastic feedback on the new facilities. Every element — from floor to ceiling — has been replaced and it looks fantastic.

“We can’t wait to welcome visitors old and new to see the transformation and join in our 40th birthday celebrations.”

The former **Tangamanga Splash** water park in San Luis Potosí, Mexico, located within **Parque Tangamanga I**, is undergoing a major rehabilitation to return as a revitalized family attraction. Renovations on the 7.5-hectare site include replacing old infrastructure and enhancing environmental sustainability.

With the loss of the “Splash” brand, the park will be renamed **Dinoasis** and transformed into a Jurassic-themed water park, equipped with dinosaur figures. In keeping with the theme, many of the buildings and slides will feature a green palette, and most of the park’s mature trees and plant life were kept intact. Of the 729 trees inventoried, only 14 dead trees had to be removed.

Throughout the park, palapas with palm roofs were installed to provide shade and to integrate the regional identity. These rustic, open-air shelters are common throughout the Huasteca Potisina region and are often used for relaxing, picnicking, or camping.

Located just a few minutes from the border between Uruguay and Brazil, the **Atlantic Splash Park** will be a transformative new tourist hub designed to revitalize the Chuí and Barra do Chuí region. Spearheaded by entrepreneurs **Juan Saurina** and **Nicolás Gandini**, the project aims to fill a gap in high-level hospitality by offering a year-round destination, moving beyond seasonal beach tourism and providing a consistent attraction for visitors 365 days a year.

The development is designed as a “four-in-one” complex spanning five acres, integrating the **Atlantic Resort**, the climate-controlled **Atlantic Ocean Park**, the **Atlantic Shopping Center**, and the **Plaza Atlântico** restaurant space. The water park, specifically designed with weather-resistant infrastructure, serves as the anchor of the project to ensure activity continues regardless of the season.

Construction is divided into three stages with a final completion date projected for 2031. The initial phase focuses on the water park, the first hotel tower, and the restaurant plaza, while subsequent phases will introduce the shopping center and a second themed hotel tower.

The project is currently in its early infrastructure stages, including road paving and site preparation, backed by private capital, the Rio Grande do Sul government agency and the **National Development Bank of Brazil**.

**Splashville**, in Stephenville, Texas’ will be closed this coming year for a major renovation. The project will take nearly a full year to complete and includes the addition of four covered Pickleball courts, a climbing course, obstacle course, and an expanded splash pad with additional interactive play features.

The new, 1,800-square-foot pad will be able to accommodate 80 kids at a time and will require no city staff to operate the system.

Residents won’t be left high and dry all summer as second splash pad already under construction is expected to open this summer. The city has three playgrounds at the **Optimest-Jaycee Park** and one of those is being converted into a splash pad.

The **Beach Waterpark** on South Padre Island in Texas, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. It opened in 2001 as **Schitterbahn Waterpark South Padre**.

To honor this landmark year, the park is enhancing the guest experience with new attractions.

The park is diversifying its attractions with the introduction of go-karts — a high-speed alternative to its classic water rides — along with a new lagoon area. This new lagoon will feature a custom man-made wave element to enhance the guest experience.

“This year is finally the year we’re adding more attractions,” said Admissions Manager **David Pizana**. “We want people to create more memories out here and have as much fun as possible.”



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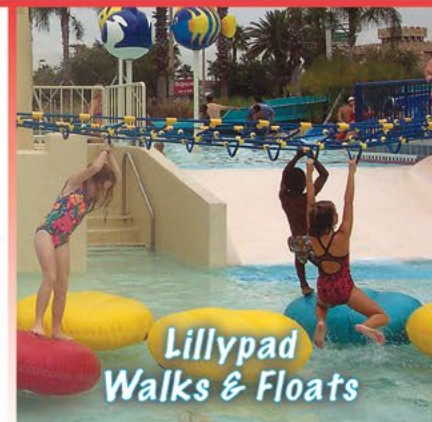
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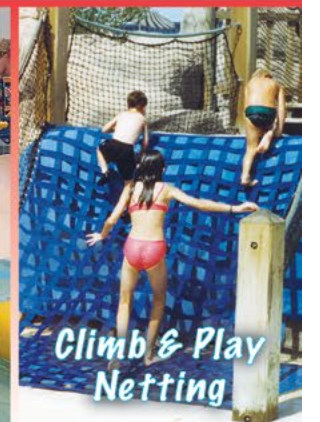
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# BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► Focus On The Horizon: Monai Rooney — 43 / New owner guiding EWorks Pro Lighting — page 46

## New headquarters reflects Ripley's diverse collection, global reach

AT: Susan Storey  
Special to Amusement Today

ORLANDO — The phrase “Believe It or Not!” was first stated by American cartoonist and entrepreneur **Robert Ripley**. More than 100 years later, those words live on in 100+ attractions across nine countries, including Odditoriums, world-class aquariums, mini golf, moving theaters, water parks and more. Owned and operated by **Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment**, these attractions welcome 15 million guests annually.

**Jim Pattison, Jr.**, president of Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment and nearly 70 Orlando-area-based team members recently moved into the company's first-ever, wholly owned and custom-designed global headquarters.

“We do not view this space as a new office,” Pattison shared, “This is a reflection of who we are as a brand and as a company.”

Clients, vendors and partners who enter the headquarters are immediately greeted by a massive casting of the famous “Burning Tree Mastodon.” It's a massive model — and statement.

“The lobby is a representative sample of the collection of items from our warehouse and in our museums,” explained **John Corcoran**, director of exhibits for Ripley's Believe It or Not! World Entertainment. “We didn't need to buy anything new. We have an amazing collection that we can showcase



A giant mastodon stands at the center of the lobby of the new Ripley's Believe It or Not! Entertainment world headquarters (above left). The warehouse at the facility (above right) is constantly welcoming new artifacts and sending them to Ripley's more than 100 locations around the world. COURTESY RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT! ENTERTAINMENT



in so many ways. The items we have around the office are as diverse as our company.”

The mastodon shares the lobby with a pair of the world's largest water skis, a Princess Leia model made entirely out of rope, and a life-size horse made out of toothpicks, among other things. “Unique items are always coming and going from our warehouse,” Corcoran continued.

Moving beyond the lobby, Corcoran shared, “We created a comfortable workspace that embraces and showcases our company and culture. The desks are modular and on wheels. This gives us the opportunity to easily flex the space and reset the entire area for a large meeting, special event or reception.”

A large circular couch features hand-crocheted, life-size versions of animals

from *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, *The Town Musicians of Bremen*, providing a whimsical space for casual conversations and colleague catch-ups.

Ripley's new headquarters both show and tell the company's story, which began with famed cartoonist Robert Ripley. An interactive display wall depicts photos and fun facts from his life; all told with the spin of an oversized toy Viewmaster reel. It also includes one of the company's most special original pieces. In 1918, Ripley published a sports cartoon with unusual facts that he called *Champs and Chumps*. The concept grew in popularity and eventually evolved into the famous *Believe It or Not!* column. That first *Champs and Chumps* panel is proudly on display on the wall.

“That cartoon led to all of this,” Corcoran said.

Ripley's Believe It or Not!

World Entertainment is part of the **Jim Pattison Group**, the largest private company in Canada. Another wall lists each company and brand within that group to convey the size and scope of the massive business family tree of which Ripley's is a part. As the company continues to enhance and decorate the new space, the Ripley's team is also highlighting these global businesses and locations. There's a space themed to look like the lobby of **Great Wolf Lodge Niagara Falls**, which is owned by Ripley's. One of the first completed vignette spaces, the Great Wolf Lodge area provides a nice backdrop for a meeting, as well as encourages conversation about the diversity of Ripley's portfolio.

Further down the hall is the vibrantly colored and

creatively decorated “W.O.W. Boardroom.” An acronym for “Windows on the Warehouse,” the name also hints at the meeting magic that happens with the simple click of a button. Along with creative décor and state-of-the-art meeting technology, the room features an entire wall of opaque smart glass windows that can instantly become transparent to provide an incredible view into the massive warehouse. It's both a conversation piece and a window into the greater world of Ripley's.

The warehouse is both functional and aspirational. “The layout of this facility sets the stage for our story,” said Corcoran. “Everything is done with intention. We will not have a meeting with someone unless they have

► See RIPLEY'S, page 42

“It doesn't feel like a vendor, it feels  
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► **RIPLEY'S**

Continued from page 41

taken a tour and seen this space. We want potential business partners to understand who we are and all that we represent."

The Ripley's warehouse is a menagerie of the weird and wonderful and features rows of the awesome and the odd. Just beyond the warehouse doors is a massive interactive diorama from the *Back to the Future* films, complete with a light-up DeLorean, all made from more than 700,000 matchsticks. Around the corner is a 1932 Studebaker that was converted into a hearse for jockeys, and just behind that are massive slabs of concrete. Ripley's owns the largest collection of pieces of the Berlin Wall outside of Germany.

"When you look at our entire collection of artifacts and objects, we have approximately 31,000 unique pieces," Corcoran said. "Approximately two-thirds of the collection is on display at our attractions around the

world. The rest are right here." "Stuff comes in and out every day," he continued, pointing to the large bay doors that allow all pieces, big and small, to be easily transported to or from the warehouse.

Along with Ripley's Believe It or Not!, Ripley's owns and operates **Louis Tussaud's Waxworks** locations. Louis was the great-grandson of the famous **Madame Tussaud** and the first person to exhibit wax in the United States.

"We make our own wax figures as well as synthetic figures for the attractions here in the art department," Corcoran said. "Props for our miniature-golf locations and aquariums are also made here."

At any given time, it's possible to see new wax figures at some stage of production. "It can take three to four months to complete just one wax figure head," Corcoran shared. "Each piece of hair is punched into the wax head, one strand at a time, all by hand. Our team does it right here."

"We also test interactive experiences and conduct



Ripley's has a complete collection of Olympic torches on display. COURTESY RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT! ENTERTAINMENT

R&D in the Lab," Corcoran continued. "When we see new, cool technology, we'll bring it in-house and work to figure out how we can potentially incorporate it into a Ripley's experience. Along with unique artifacts and fascinating history, technology helps us provide the 'wow' factor to our guests."

Like most offices, the new Ripley's headquarters has a backroom filled with an assortment of items.

"Our backroom is unlike any other," Corcoran said. "I don't know many backrooms that have this many two-headed animals."

The unusual collection

of barnyard beings shares the space with unique pieces of history, including **Ernest Hemingway's** typewriter, alleged Victorian vampire defense kits from the 1800s, Darth Maul's lightsaber and even two "grass" costumes from the 2026 Super Bowl Halftime Show.

There's a reason that artifacts are everywhere all at once.

"One of the things we tell prospective franchise partners is the importance of variety," Corcoran explained. "Our success comes from creating attractions and traveling shows that appeal to different genres, areas of

interest, demographics and age groups."

"We believe in displaying a little something for everybody. That's what's really important."

Housing such a collection requires space, and the headquarters stretch across 78,000 square feet.

"Creating the new location also allows us to more easily curate our complete collection," Corcoran concluded. "The Believe It or Not! business is what we are most famous for, and now we have the space to properly care for showcase, and protect our many pieces."

While shrunken heads, a toilet made out of gold, and a complete collection of Olympic torches help make the Ripley's headquarters memorable, they are also an important part of the Ripley's legacy and future.

"When people come through here, they learn about the depth of the full collection as well as the breadth of our business," Corcoran concluded. "We have a compelling story to share, one that is uniquely and memorably Ripley's."

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# Focus on the HORIZON

## Authenticity, learning as well as service to others drive Rooney

KISSIMMEE, Fla. — When speaking with Monai Rooney about her career path, the first thing she says is that it wasn't planned or mapped out.

"Sometimes I envy those people who know what they want to do, because they know the steps they need to take and they can see how they are heading toward the goal," she said. "My objective has always been people-focused. I knew I wanted to work with and support others. Simply put, I want to bring joy to people. That was not an easy 'job' to find."

Today, as the senior manager of development and culture for B Morrow Productions (BMP), Monai has the best of both worlds, supporting the growing internal team and partnering with the company's global clients. It is where she continues to lead with authenticity and heart.

Rooney's career started at Give Kids The World, a nonprofit organization in Kissimmee, Florida.

"I was able to do a great deal while working with Caroline (Schumacher) and kept elevating naturally, taking on more and learning more," she explained. "I am someone who naturally asks, 'why.' I don't do this to push back or challenge, but because I want to learn and understand so I can be better for my team and the people around me."

That natural interest allowed her to move through several roles at the nonprofit, including into Development.

"I was introduced to IAAPA and the [Themed Entertainment Association] while working at Give Kids The World. As I met leaders in the industry, I remember thinking, 'This is a job?' I look back now and think that was a little naïve because I had every opportunity to know there were jobs in this industry; I just didn't ever connect that people really grew up to do

that. It was an incredible first look."

After Give Kids The World, Rooney shifted to the hospitality industry to continue to hone her skills in planning and executing events.

"I still worked with people but not in the traditional guest sense," she said, "I did learn about problem solving and running events and large projects. However, like so many things, the hotel industry changed very drastically in 2020."

She continued, "I was torn. I worked long hours but didn't feel fulfilled. I really believe in 'work hard, play even harder,' and I wasn't doing that. The hotel industry changed, and I no longer felt it was about serving people, and I realized I needed a change. It was around that time that Patrick Kling reached out to me."

Having worked with Kling during her time at Give Kids The World, he reached out to her about a foundation he was creating.

"He knew I had nonprofit experience and that I was connected with the themed and attractions industry, so he invited me to work for the Big Break Foundation," she said.

In that first year, Rooney learned a great deal and ensured Big Break secured its 501 (c) (3) status, organized its vision, mission and values and led grassroots efforts to communicate and connect the industry with potential new talent.

"We were able to give 50 emerging professionals the opportunity to attend IAAPA Expo," she said. "I was fulfilled again — supporting others and leading. We focused on creating a pipeline of talent for people to enter the industry from unique spaces and experiences. We supported people who have the skillset and interest but were not sure how to 'break in.' I was once again supporting people."

## Monai Rooney B Morrow Productions Kissimmee, Florida



While Rooney found her work with Big Break Foundation fulfilling, it was also all-consuming. "Some things were occurring in my personal life, and I was worrying I wasn't giving my work my all," she said.

Timing is everything, though, and a casual call from Brian Morrow led to her next opportunity.

"We knew each other from both my time at Give Kids The World and with his company's partnership with Big Break. I was open with Brian about my need to continue to have a positive impact on my work life that also aligned at home. He came back with an incredible opportunity, and I joined BMP.

"Brian understood my passion for supporting and working with people and created my role for me," Rooney shared. "We are a studio for all. We want everybody to show up as themselves, no matter what their beliefs, where they're from or their background; you are welcome in our organization. I have the best of

both worlds, I'm a development leader, and I get to support the people and talent at BMP."

"I always believe you are always interviewing for your next job," Rooney added. "And while I share that advice with others, it is twofold. I say every opportunity is an interview for your next job. My opportunities are the result of my hard work and my focus on putting relationships and people first. When people feel seen and you are your authentic self, you form a bond. How we treat others matters. The work you do today reflects what you could do for someone in the future. The opportunities will come.

"I also remind others that the way you treat people matters," Rooney finished. "Whether someone is the CEO or they are cleaning the bathroom, I will always treat them with the same respect and authenticity. In this industry, people move a lot and the person in a lower position today may be your leader tomorrow. We're a people-first industry, and that focus begins with each of us."

—Susan Storey

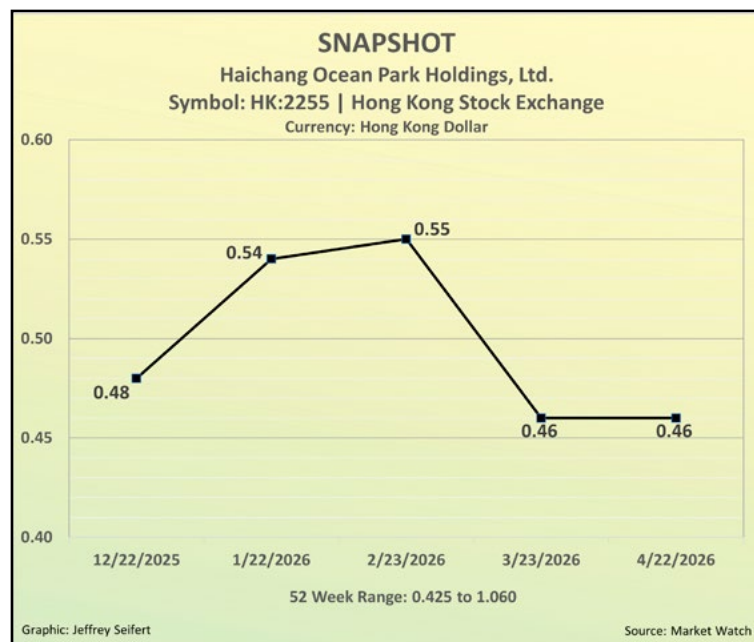
## MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 4/23/26	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
<b>PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS</b>					
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	122.33	190.09	101.73
Carnival Corp.	CCL	NYSE	26.65	34.03	17.33
Comcast Corp./ NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	31.64	34.34	24.12
Dave & Busters Entertainment, LLC	PLAY	NASDAQ	12.70	35.53	9.61
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	56.41	62.08	48.11
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	JP:9010	TYO	2.286	2,704	1,908
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	0.475	1.060	0.425
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	16.75	19.30	15.50
Lucky Strike Entertainment Corp	LUCK	NYSE	7.53	11.61	5.71
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	38.94	40.46	29.19
Parks America, Inc.	PRKA	OTCQX	35.50	69.99	30.01
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	260.43	366.50	203.85
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	FUN	NYSE	18.40	38.47	12.51
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	652.00	656.00	584.00
United Parks & Resorts Inc.	PRKS	NYSE	34.99	56.95	28.77
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	103.65	124.69	88.56
Warner Bros Discovery Inc.	WBD	NASDAQ	26.90	30.00	8.06
<b>SUPPLIERS/OTHERS</b>					
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	TW:5263	TSEC	92.50	130.00	82.66
Callaway Golf Co.	CALY	NYSE	15.14	16.65	5.87
Falcon's Beyond	FBYD	NASDAQ	15.69	29.02	3.71
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	TYO:6357	TYO	2,129	2,739	1,226

Daily industry stock information available at [amusementtoday.com](http://amusementtoday.com)!

**Worldwide Markets** — CSE/DK: Copenhagen Stock Exchange; JP: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; NASDAQ: National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; NYSE: New York Stock Exchange; OCT: Over-the-counter stocks; SEHK: The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong; TSEC/TAIEX: The Taiwan Capitalization Weighted Stock Index; TYO: The Tokyo Stock Exchange; TW: The Taiwan Stock Exchange.

—SOURCES: Bigcharts.com



## DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S.)	As of 4/20/26	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$5.494	\$1.880
Midwest	\$5.165	\$1.690
Gulf Coast	\$5.069	\$1.874
Mountain	\$5.213	\$1.736
West Coast	\$6.010	\$2.197
California	\$7.325	\$2.570

## CURRENCY

On 4/24/26 \$1 USD =	
0.8549	EURO
0.7413	GBP (British Pound)
159.58	JPY (Japanese Yen)
0.7852	CHF (Swiss Franc)
1.3993	AUD (Australian Dollar)
1.3679	CAD (Canadian Dollar)

## BUSINESS WATCH

## EPR Properties closes on six U.S. parks

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — **EPR Properties** announced the closing of six U.S. parks as part of its previously announced acquisition of a seven-park portfolio from **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation**. The U.S. parks comprise the substantial majority of the \$315 million portfolio investment. The remaining property of **La Ronde**, an iconic park located in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, is expected to close in the second quarter of 2026.

"This closing marks a significant milestone for EPR Properties and sets the tone for what we expect to be a highly productive year," said **Gregory Silvers**, chairman and chief executive officer of EPR Properties. "These are established parks in proven regional markets, and we look forward to working with focused operating partners to drive strong performance at each property."

**Enchanted Parks** will operate the six U.S. properties under a long-term master lease, and **La Ronde Operations, Inc.**, will operate La Ronde. Both are proven operators with existing relationships with the company.

## Accesso acquires Dexibit

ORLANDO — **Accesso Technology Group** has announced the acquisition of **Dexibit Limited**, the only AI and analytics platform purpose-built for the visitor attractions industry.

"I am incredibly proud that Dexibit is joining Accesso, whose unparalleled global reach spans the world's most iconic attractions," said **Angie Judge**, CEO of Dexibit. "As we got to know the team, it genuinely felt like home. Together we can build something genuinely transformative for the industry."

Operators generate vast amounts of data, but it often sits in disconnected systems and takes too long to turn into action. As operators face increasing complexity across systems, data and rising guest expectations, the ability to turn insight into action quickly is becoming critical. The acquisition launches Accesso Intelligence, a new AI-powered, cross-platform capability designed to help operators make smarter, faster decisions across their business, connecting data across Accesso's own solutions, as well as across the third-party systems operators rely on daily.

"Putting operators first is at the core of what we do by helping them optimize their business, and AI is now becoming an important part of how we deliver on that," said **Steve Brown**, CEO at Accesso. "With Accesso intelligence, we are bringing together data across all the systems they use, including Accesso solutions, to create a more complete and connected view of their operation. We are delighted to welcome the Dexibit team to Accesso as we deliver on this vision."

## Nathan's Famous sold for \$450 million

SMITHFIELD, VA. — **Smithfield Foods, Inc.** and **Nathan's Famous, Inc.** announced that it has entered into a definitive merger agreement for Smithfield Foods to acquire all of Nathan's Famous' issued and outstanding shares for \$102.00 per share in cash, which represents an enterprise value of approximately \$450 million.

Since March 2014, Smithfield Foods has held an exclusive license from Nathan's Famous within the United States, Canada and Sam's Clubs in Mexico for Smithfield to manufacture, distribute, market and sell Nathan's Famous-branded hot dogs, sausages, corned beef and certain other ancillary products through the retail channel, and to manufacture and distribute Nathan's Famous-branded hot dog and sausage products for the foodservice channel. The license is scheduled to expire in March 2032.

Successfully closing the acquisition will secure Smithfield's rights to this iconic brand into perpetuity and enable it to maximize the Nathan's Famous brand growth across the retail and foodservice channels.

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# With new owner, future looks bright for EWorks Pro Lighting

**AT: Ron Gustafson**  
Special to Amusement Today

WINTER PARK, Fla. — The future looks bright for **EWorks Pro Lighting**, according to **Anders Johansson**, the company's new owner and CEO.

Having taken over full ownership of the firm in late January, Johansson feels right at home at EWorks, which produces state-of-the-art LED (light-emitting diode) lighting solutions for the amusement industry.

"It was a natural fit, and the timing was good," he said of the acquisition. "I was introduced to EWorks in July of last year through a friend, as I had been doing work and consulting for smaller companies. I was looking for something else to do and became a business developer for EWorks to help bring in new projects. **Lars Koch** (founder) was still with the company and **Peter Gaughn** (president) was retiring. After learning that a previous attempt to sell the company fell through, I felt confident that with my technical background, I could run the company."

His conviction to step into a CEO role was validated up by his master's degree in electrical engineering and technical experience as a designer of wiring technology for more than two decades.

EWorks is best known for the design and manufacture of the first full-color LED system in the world for an observation Ferris wheel, which was installed in 2004 at **Morey's Pier** in Wildwood, New Jersey.

"Morey's has been a long-term customer for us," Johansson noted. "They wanted to try out this new technology with LEDs — more than 20 years ago — and were very happy with the results."

They ordered a second package for the 156-foot wheel (**Vekoma Rides Manufacturing**, The Netherlands), which was installed in 2011. We expect them (LED systems) to last around 10 years, and the second one was still running



Anders Johansson stands with his wife, Sandy, in front of EWorks Pro Lighting facility in Winter Park, Fla. COURTESY EWORKS

after 13 seasons. Operating more than a decade in the harsh salt air was certainly a testament to the durability of our product."

A third order from Morey's for its big wheel was the tipping point in Johansson's decision to buy EWorks.

"When they agreed to purchase the latest light package, I bought the company based on that one big order," he asserted. "We hope to have it functional before Memorial Day. It's a rare 40-spoke wheel, allowing for a highly dynamic light show, so we are very excited about finishing this project. I've been working day and night to complete it."

EWorks is also delivering a new light package for The Great Smoky Mountain Wheel at **The Island** in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. The 200-foot ride made its debut in 2013 and was built by **Chance Rides**, Wichita, Kansas.

## Millions of colors

Johansson was quick to point out that most of the production of EWorks product is done in-house at its 6,000-square-foot facility. The company builds only

RGB (red, green, blue) LEDs, which can produce any desired color within each LED. The process guarantees pure, dazzling, vivid colors. The company's website touts an amazing 11.7 million color variations available through its product.

"We design our printed

circuit boards and have a full assembly line," he noted. "We customize each order based on the customer's needs. We do some subcontracting for waterproofing materials."

Each circuit board in all of the fixtures is encased in a conformal coating that keeps water away from the electronics. Any water that might get into a fixture simply departs at the next drain point, leaving the circuits unharmed.

Wire harnesses, which deliver electricity and digital signals to the LED fixtures, are also of high quality, using gold-plated, three-conductor IP67 (ingress protection) quick connectors. The IP67 rating ensures the product is waterproof and completely resistant to dust.

While EWorks product can be mounted directly on the surface of many attractions, LED fixtures up to 20 feet in length are available and assembled at the factory. The pre-assembled fixtures allow for faster on-site installations of larger projects. The quick connectors also reduce installation time.

While large Ferris wheels have been at the heart of the company's portfolio, EWorks has also provided

LED systems for smaller wheels, drop towers and a variety of other theme park and portable rides.

Other large wheel LED installations include **Pacific Park**, Santa Monica, California; **Nha Trang**, Vietnam; **Capital Wheel**, National Harbor, Maryland; and **Seattle Great Wheel**, Seattle, Washington. The 400-foot wheel in Vietnam was built by **Intamin Amusement Rides**, Liechtenstein.

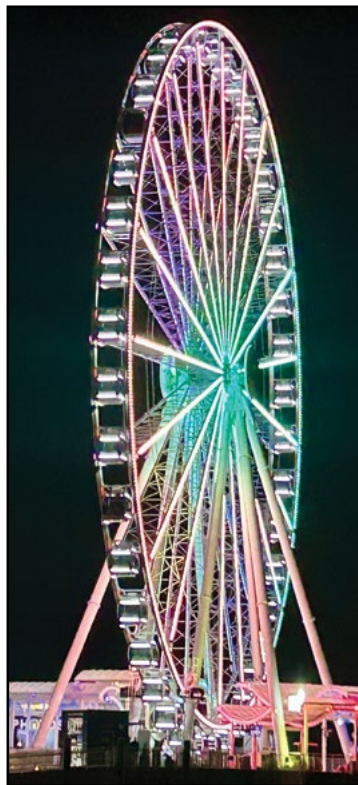
**ARM U.S.A.**, Wintersville, Ohio, has used EWorks lighting on its **Vertigo** and **Rock Star** thrill rides, while **Battech Enterprises**, Salem, Oregon, has installed the product on its **Zero Gravity**. You will also find EWorks LEDs on **Flying Scooters** from **Larson International** of Plainview, Texas.

Spare parts are stocked at the Florida company for prompt shipment worldwide.

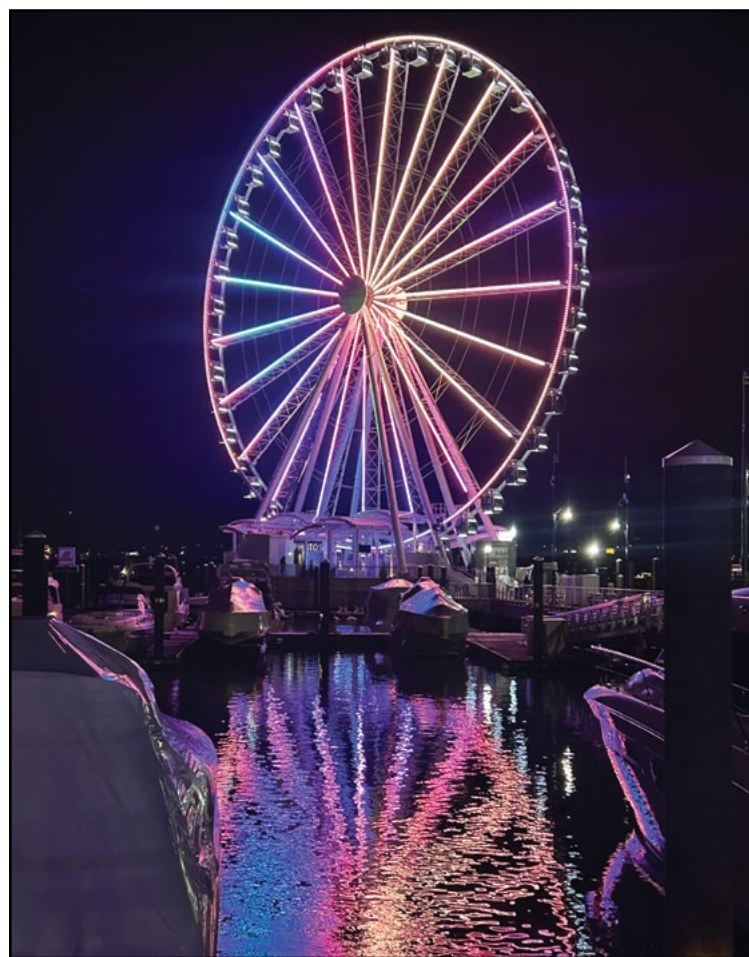
## Committed

"When I bought the company, I made a commitment to our customers," Johansson explained. "The company has existed for more than 20 years, and it works as it is. Yes, we're here, and we will keep supporting you — that was my message."

● [eworkspro.com](http://eworkspro.com)



The **Capital Wheel** at **National Harbor, Maryland**, features a colorful sixth-generation LED display from EWorks Pro Lighting. COURTESY EWORKS



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## OBITUARIES

## Industry safety pioneer, NAARSO co-founder Daniel Dudley passes away at the age of 87

BALTIMORE — On February 6, 2026, Daniel W. Dudley passed away.

He was born on July 17, 1938, to Jesse and Harry Dudley.

Dudley never planned to spend most of his career in the amusement industry. That's just the way it worked out.



Dudley

In the early 1970s, he was hired as an elevator/crane inspector by the Maryland Occupational and Safety Health Administration (MOSHA). After multiple accidents occurred on Maryland amusement rides in 1972, Dudley was told he would be Maryland's first ride inspector.

Dudley enrolled at an inspection school held at Chance Manufacturing in Wichita, Kansas, conducted by Amusement Recreation Equipment Association, later

known as AIMS International. After additional training, he soon became instrumental in helping to write inspection rules and regulations in Maryland.

Dudley later resigned from MOSHA to do ride inspections and ride insurance writing full-time around the country. He performed work for 15 different fairs, including the State Fair of Texas, where he inspected the rides for 31 years. Others included the New York State Fair, Syracuse; Erie County Fair, Hamburg, New York.; San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, California; South Carolina State Fair, Columbia; and Champaign Valley Fair, Essex Junction, Vermont. All told, Dudley inspected rides in more than 40 states.

In the 1980s, Dudley and others were approached about forming their own group. That group grew into the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO). Only

state regulators comprised the organization's membership during the first few years, but others soon joined.

Dudley remained heavily involved with NAARSO into the 2020s, even serving as the organization's second president.

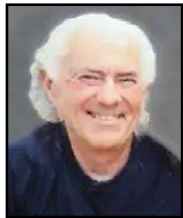
"The amusement ride industry made a good life for my wife and me," Dudley once commented to *Amusement Today*. "I'm proud to have been associated with the industry for 40 years, and I've enjoyed the people I have met."

In 2015, the Outdoor Amusement Business Association presented its Industry Pioneer Award to Dan Dudley, honoring his long career of ride safety contributions to the outdoor mobile amusement industry. In 2010, Dudley received AIMS International's first Red Wood Award, which recognizes the most outstanding contributions to amusement ride inspection and midway safety.

## Former NEAPPA president, ASTM chairman James F. Patten III of Shaheen's Fun Park passes

SEABROOK BEACH, N.H. — James F. Patten, III, passed away at his home on January 30, 2026.

Born on December 22, 1945, in L a c o n i a , N e w Hampshire, Jim was the eldest son of James F. Patten, Jr.



Patten

and Lucile Covey. Jim lived in Springfield, Vermont, until the age of 8, then the Patten family moved to Newbury, Massachusetts, where he continued to live while he attended Babson College. He successfully graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Patten married his sweetheart, Jilda Shaheen, in 1967. They were married for 60 years. Jim and Jilda eventually purchased the Patten family home in Newbury. He joined the

Patten family business in retail at the H. W. Pray Co. in Newburyport, Massachusetts. He was also a member, director and eventually became president of the Newburyport Chamber of Commerce. During his tenure, Patten produced and started the 1st Annual Newburyport Christmas Parade.

Patten later decided to leave family retail and joined the other family business with his father-in-law, Roger J. Shaheen, at the amusement park, Shaheen's Fun Park, located in Salisbury Beach, Massachusetts. He was the general manager of the amusement park for 25 years until the park's closure. Patten was very active in the Northeast Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (NEAPPA), becoming director and eventually the president of the association. Jim was also

active with the International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions (IAAPA), serving on its board of directors. He was the dissector of IAAPA's Water Park Committee and was also the chairman of ASTM Committee F24 on Amusement Rides and Devices. Many of the standards and safety rules are still being followed and used to this day.

In 1984, he received the IAAPA Meritorious Service Award for his work with the ASTM F-24 committee in writing voluntary safety standards for amusement park rides.

Patten traveled extensively for a couple of years, opening various water parks throughout the country. In later years, until his retirement, he opened and operated Patten Pool Services and moved to Seabrook Beach, New Hampshire.

## Eddie Sotto, former Disney Imagineer, passes away at 67

LOS ANGELES — Eddie Sotto, the former senior vice president of concept design at Walt Disney Imagineering, who worked on key parts of Disneyland Paris and Tokyo Disneyland, died on December 17, 2025. He was 67.

Born on March 14, 1958, in Los Angeles, Sotto began his design career just down the street from Walt's original Disneyland at Knott's Berry Farm, contributing designs to Camp Snoopy and the former Wacky Soap Box Racers attraction. From there, he went to work on the intriguing Six Flags Power Plant attraction, a highly themed indoor theme park located in Maryland.



Sotto

He joined Walt Disney Imagineering in 1986, where he really cut his teeth designing Main Street, U.S.A. at Euro Disneyland (now Disneyland Paris), which was originally supposed to take on a 1920s theme instead of the turn-of-the-century.

Other projects Sotto worked on included Disneyland's Space Mountain, Mission: Space, Pooh's Hunny Hunt, and even the Encounter Restaurant located within the Theme Building at LAX.

According to the Walt Disney Family Museum, his portfolio at Disney consisted of about \$500 million in built projects. Those ranged from classically termed E-ticket attractions to retail, restaurants, web and mobile technology, and digital architecture like ABC Times Square Studios.

His voice can still be heard at Disney Parks today as Shrunken Ned at Disneyland and the train conductor on the Walt Disney World and Euro Disneyland Railroads.

He founded his own experiential design firm, Sotto Studios, in 2004. Clients included Ferrari, Virgin Galactic, Porsche, Aston-Martin, Paramount Pictures, Microsoft, Google, Disney, Universal, Wynn Resorts and Irvine Company.

"I will always remember Eddie as a fearless innovator," commented Walt Disney Imagineering President and Chief Creative Officer Bruce Vaughn via LinkedIn. "When I ran R&D, he was one of our great champions — constantly pushing for new ways to incorporate emerging ideas and technologies. Eddie had an endless supply of brilliant concepts and never let convention limit his thinking."

## After five decades of industry service, Carol Ann Wisdom dies

STERLING, Colo. — Carol Ann Wisdom, 68, passed away peacefully on January 5, 2026. She was born May 17, 1957, in Sterling, Colorado, to Gerald and Elaine Wisdom.

She spent her childhood traveling the country with her parents, working on the family carnival until around the age of 14, when the carnival was sold and the family transitioned into full-time manufacturing. She graduated from Sterling High School and later attended college at the University of Northern Colorado.



Wisdom

Following college, she joined the family business, Forsythe & Dowis Rides, manufacturing amusement rides delivered worldwide. She devoted more than 50 years to the amusement ride industry. She was blessed to work alongside her parents and her brother, Victor Wisdom, whom she dearly loved throughout those years. Her love of family was extraordinary and working together as a family was one of the great blessings of her life.

Wisdom will be remembered for her kindness to others, always willing to help in any way she could.

**ON THE MOVE**

**Gateway Ticketing Systems** has announced the promotion of **Chase Mory** to vice president of operations.

Mory has been with Gateway for more than 15 years, most recently serving as director of operations. During his tenure, he strengthened the company's internal processes and operational foundation through disciplined process design, cross-functional collaboration and a focus on scalable systems that support long-term growth.



Mory

"Chase's promotion reflects the leadership and strategic insight he consistently brings to our organization. His organizational and project management insight drives meaningful change in a positive way," said **Michael Andre**, president and CEO of Gateway Ticketing Systems.

The company also announced the appointments of **Eric Fluet** as vice president of marketing and **Chad Wallace** as director of sales.



Fluet

"Eric and Chad bring complementary strengths that will help us better serve attractions around the world and continue delivering long-term value to our clients," said Andre.



Wallace

Fluet brings more than 30 years of experience in the amusement and attractions industry, including senior marketing roles with **Six Flags**

and **Madame Tussauds**. Throughout his career, he has led initiatives focused on attendance growth, brand strategy and revenue performance across destination-driven entertainment organizations.

Wallace also brings more than three decades of sales experience in the attractions industry, including roles at **Nutmeg** and at **Digonex**. He has partnered with attractions across North America and internationally to implement ticketing, pricing and guest-engagement solutions, focusing on practical, revenue-driven strategies that drive attendance, optimize yield and enhance the visitor experience.

**TouchTunes** has appointed **Angela Abbott** as vice president of music licensing and strategy. Abbott will report to General Counsel **Amy Tenbrink** and work closely with executive leadership to oversee the company's music strategy, licensing and operations.



Abbott

In her new role, Abbott will lead TouchTunes' music team and manage relationships with record labels, publishers and performing rights organizations. She will also partner across product, sales, marketing and engineering to support growth through music across the company's nearly 100,000 connected devices.

"Angela brings a rare combination of licensing expertise, operational discipline and deep cultural understanding of how music connects people," said Tenbrink. "She will play a key role

as we continue to evolve our music strategy and deepen our industry partnerships."

**The Walt Disney Company** has announced **Disney Experiences** Chairman **Josh D'Amaro** as its next CEO of the company. He succeeded former CEO **Bob Iger** beginning March 18, 2026. The company's succession process was led by board chair **James Gorman**. In the announcement, Iger said he was "proud to step away at a moment when Disney's future has never been brighter."



D'Amaro

In selecting D'Amaro, Disney has turned to the leader of the part of its business that has delivered the most reliable profits in recent years, as the company works to find its way in the world of streaming. D'Amaro joined the company in 1998 at Disneyland Resort, before rising to his current position as chairman of the Disney Experiences division, which has 185,000 employees and generated \$36 billion in revenue last year.

The company has also hired **Benjamin Swinburne** to lead investor relations and corporate strategy for the entertainment giant. Swinburne is one of the most established research analysts on Wall Street, most recently serving as managing director and head of U.S. media research at **Morgan Stanley**. He will report to Disney senior executive VP and CFO **Hugh Johnston**.



Swinburne

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# SAFETY & OPERATIONS

▶ Belmont updates Giant Dipper — pages 58-59 / Cleveland Metroparks Zoo adds GOPO trams — pages 62-63

## Idlewild's Wild Mouse poised to have its first full year of operation

*IOE reprograms, in-house maintenance team revives ride*

**AT:** Tim Baldwin  
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

LIGONIER, Pa. — Sometimes, rides are fan favorites but not necessarily favorites of the maintenance team.

In 2025, Idlewild set out to bring a popular ride, its Wild Mouse, into a state of more reliable operations.

"Our goal is for 2026 to be one of the strongest seasons this ride has had," said General Manager **Tim Heger**. "While the coaster has operated successfully in the past, recent improvements allow us to deliver a more consistent experience for our guests."

That stay began more than three decades ago. Joining the award-winning family park in 1993, Wild Mouse was manufactured by **Vekoma** in the 1980s. While this genre of coasters is prolific now, it wasn't as prevalent at the time. Several such rides dated back to the 1950s and '60s, created by **Allan Herschell, Miler Manufacturing** and **B. A. Schiff**, but a gap existed before the ride type took hold again in the industry.

Idlewild's Wild Mouse first appeared at **Wiener Prater** as Speedy Gonzales for a short time before being relocated to **Alton Towers**, where it was known as Alton Mouse. After skittering back and forth there for four seasons, the coaster made its



Manufactured in the 1980s, Wild Mouse is the only mouse coaster ever built by Vekoma. Like most mice attractions, the ride is full of snappy turns and sudden dips. COURTESY IDLEWILD

way to the U.S. and its long-time home, Idlewild.

The ride is distinct among its genre with its large layout and curious tilted lift hill. In fact, it was designed for a rotating tunnel when it was first built. While the tunnel may have been removed, the quirky tilt still adds character.

Families loved the ride, and standing at 56 feet, it was still rather imposing, being larger than any others of the breed.

Yet, being a one-off, issues arrived and reliability became a challenge. Thanks

to the maintenance and operations team at the park, Wild Mouse looks to be finding a renewed popularity.

Last year, the park was determined.

"Our maintenance team replaced the lift motor, lift chain, compressor and several other hardware components and installed all the new proximity switches on the coaster," said **Jimmy Boyadjis**, attractions and entertainment manager.

**Irvine-Ondrey Engineering** was brought in to reprogram the ride.

"We started working

hand in hand with them in May of last year on site," Boyadjis said. "IOE delivered us three new control panels, including an operator panel featuring an HMI screen, allowing us far more control and knowledge over the ride's logistics than previously known.

"IOE changed the block system to have a two-block gap procedure and variable lift speed," he continued. "They also worked to reprogram the brakes in the station to allow for a trim/stop approach rather than just hard stops in each of

the station blocks."

The ride didn't reopen until June 30 of last year, but the park is looking forward to a full year of operation, hoping to meet guests' highest expectations.

The revamped ride has eliminated some previous snarls.

"One of the big improvements is that we're now able to cycle empty trains more reliably," Heger told *Amusement Today*. "This helps us avoid some of the issues that could slow

▶ See **MOUSE**, page 52

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RIDE RELOCATION  
PICTURED: DRAKKO: THE FLYING BEAST, SALITRE MÁGICO



Idlewild is looking forward to a full season of Wild Mouse operations in 2026. COURTESY IDLEWILD

## ►MOUSE

Continued from page 51

things down in the past."

"The block brakes are now adjustable, which allowed us to reposition the magnetic brakes at the end of the ride," added Boyadjis.

The physical ride hardware with the actual brakes was not changed at all.

"Our team previously had three working cars and three cars that were in long-term storage," Boyadjis told AT. "Our maintenance crew was able to rebuild two of the three cars we had in long-term storage to take advantage of the new upgraded system. The old system was a bit of a pain to run more cars because of the constant block faults and the difficult reset process."

Each of the five vehicles got hand-painted by Idlewild's maintenance team to a design similar to the older cars the ride ran when it first opened at the park, but with each car getting its own color.

"The Idlewild team rebuilt the station, including new booths, gates, storage bins and fencing to have a more seamless ride experience," he said. "This also included adding auto spiels and a full sound system to the ride."

All signs were rebranded on the ride with brighter and more inviting red signs featuring the ride's sleek logo.

The ride's length is 1,640 feet, long for a mouse-type coaster.

"The ride now runs all five vehicles and is much more reliable than before, as well as much higher capacity," Boyadjis said. "It can even run in light rain, which it was unable to do in the past. IOE is still actively involved with the ride as we continue to work for additional efficiencies."

"Wild Mouse has always been one of Idlewild's most popular rides," said Heger. "We're excited to have it back running smoothly and delivering the experience our guests expect."

Idlewild opens for the 2026 season on May 23.

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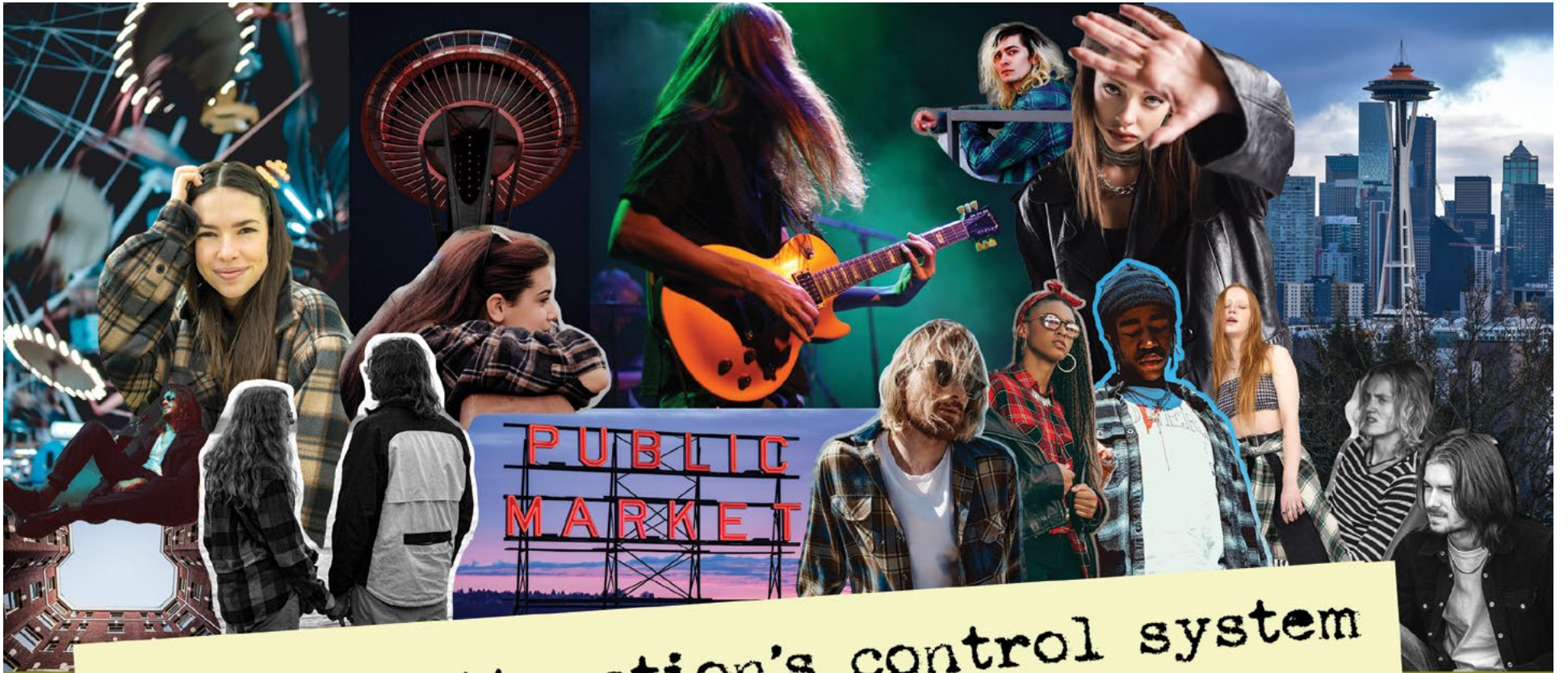
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# Ride audit season is underway for International Ride Training

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — **Patty Beazley** has been branded the “audit guru” by her associates at **International Ride Training (IRT)**.

“I have been doing this for so long,” Beazley said, as she was busy getting the audit schedules set for 2026.

This amusement ride training company is celebrating its 25th year in business this year. It has grown in both the number of staff and clients and has broadened its scope over the years. It offers attractions, operational training, interactive safety education, leadership development, standard operating procedures, safety consulting and auditing and advisory services. It also holds an annual learning seminar called Ride Camp.

While each managing partner — including



**Patty Beazley is known as the audit guru among her associates at International Ride Training. The company, in its 25th year of operation, will conduct 225 audits in 2026.** COURTESY IRT

Beazley, **Cindee Huddy**, and **Erik Beard** — brings a unique area of expertise to the business, all of them remain active in performing audits. Other staff members also share this responsibility, and Beazley noted that the firm recently hired its first employee dedicated exclusively to auditing.

This year, IRT will do 225 audits worldwide. Beazley is the “all things

auditor” partner, which is why she is known as the audit guru. Scheduling the audits is a particularly challenging task, because the audits have to be done during operational days at their client attractions.

“I just got back from a spring break series of audits,” Beazley said. “I did five audits during that time. I have 36 more to do and, of that, 32 will be done

in the summer.”

Beazley said she is easily in a park auditing for a minimum of six hours, but it has taken her as long as 16 hours for one audit.

IRT auditors have had their own training on how to go about a day in the park.

“Really, it is a form that Cindee and I developed 20 years ago. We tweak it every year,” she said. “Park supervisors have been

trained by the park on our protocols. The supervisors train the operators.”

Auditors from IRT arrive at their client’s amusement facilities unannounced. They go in as guests and try to mask their actual intentions. Beazley said each auditor will pre-select 12 rides they plan to audit, making the park trips more

▶ See **AUDIT**, page 56

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## ►AUDIT

Continued from page 54

efficient. Most parks, she said, are divided into zones that have one supervisor each. She said they like to be able to audit at least one ride in each zone.

"No one knows we are there," she said. "We enter the parks dressed as guests. For me, I look like the perfect grandma. I will stand near the entrance and exit of each ride and film an entire ride cycle, from each viewpoint."

Taking the video of each ride is an easy task when the park is crowded. Other people are filming their family members or friends.

"It is when there are not as many people that we have to use some tricks of the trade, so the ride operators don't know we are filming them," she said.

Beazley has set her phone up on a trash bin and aimed it in the direction of the operator, so she is not even holding it. She also

has held it low, aiming it so it takes in the operations.

"We do have to be especially cautious when we go into a children's area," she said. "And we have been called out by parents. I would say 99 percent of the parents, when we tell them what we are doing, appreciate that we are there keeping them safe; that the park is doing this for safety. About one to two percent end up calling security."

Though challenging sometimes, being in the park, watching, observing and filming is the easy part of the audit.

"It is when you get back to your hotel room that the real work begins," she said. "We upload the videos and take a good look at them and then make our reports. The videos and reports are uploaded to the client as well."

For the most part, the observation at the park has already told her what she needs to know, but the videos can bring up other information.



Beazley said one thing she thinks that has made the company so successful is that they have learned how to teach the younger generation. COURTESY IRT

"We then score each of the operators of the 12 rides," Beazley said. "We drop the lowest and the highest scores, so we are giving an overall score based on 10 rides."

Depending on the situation, reports may be three pages or as many as 14 pages long.

"It has taken me anywhere from two hours to write the reports to eight hours," she said.

The next day, the IRT auditors will hold their exit meetings at the park.

Managers will be there and sometimes the young supervisors are pulled in, which Beazley really likes for the educational benefits.

The IRT protocols have been created with the highest standards of safety initiatives. Over the last 25 years, they have found that what has made IRT so successful is that "we not only show them safeguards, but we explain to them why they are important."

"For example, after an operator has made sure riders are successfully

seated with all restraints in place and before they hit that dispatch button, they do a visual confirmation," she said. "We tell them to look and make sure all gates are closed. We tell them to look at the perimeter of the ride and make sure observers are outside of the gates. Then, we tell them why that is important, how people can get hurt being inside the gates."

Beazley said she has seen some things during her time as an auditor, such as safety violations by an operator that have caused her to stop the ride and call management. But that has been a rarity.

All of IRT's clients may send an employee or two to the company's annual Ride Camp. For a fee, they can send more.

One thing Beazley is very excited about this year is the signing of a new client, IRT's first mobile client, **Kissel Entertainment**.

"We will be training all their front-line operators," she said.

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# NEWS & NOTES

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## AIMS International launches new website, member portal

The global attractions industry is built on shared knowledge, practical experience and a collective commitment to safety; values that sit at the core of **AIMS International**. As the industry continues to evolve, so does the need for tools that better support the professionals responsible for manufacturing, operating, maintaining, inspecting and regulating our facilities.

With that in mind, AIMS International has launched a new website and member portal designed to better serve the people who rely on it every day.

The updated platform was developed with a clear goal: to make it easier to access the information, resources and connections that matter most. Whether in the field, at a park or in the office, users can now more efficiently navigate resources through a streamlined, mobile-friendly experience.

A key addition is the new member portal, which brings several practical tools into one place. Members can manage their profiles, connect through a searchable member directory, and access seminar attendee lists — features intended to support stronger communication and col-

laboration. These tools make it easier to connect with peers, share knowledge and strengthen professional networks across the industry.

It's important to note that certification and education records continue to be managed through AIMSConnectED, providing a dedicated and consistent experience for maintaining both professional development and required continuing education and certifications. The member portal complements this by focusing on connection, visibility and access to member-specific benefits.

Another exciting addition is the all-new AIMS job board. Developed in response to ongoing workforce challenges, AIMS has created a platform where members can post job openings at no cost. This benefit not only helps companies attract qualified candidates who already understand the demands of the attractions industry. It also supports professionals seeking new career opportunities within the industry.

These updates reflect a broader shift toward providing more accessible, practical support to the industry. The goal is not just to modernize,

but to create a more useful, day-to-day resource for those responsible for safety, compliance and operations.

For current and prospective members, now is the time to explore what's new. From streamlined access to education and certification to practical tools for recruitment and networking, the new AIMS platform is built to support the people who keep the industry moving safely and successfully forward.

As the industry continues to evolve, supporting the next generation of professionals remains just as important as supporting those currently in the field. In addition to enhancing digital tools for today's workforce, AIMS is also investing in future talent through initiatives like the Ambassador Program. This program invites college students to participate in the annual AIMS Safety Seminar each January, providing valuable exposure to industry practices, professionals and career pathways. Applications are currently open for those interested in getting involved. Deadline to apply is May 8.

Visit the new [aimsintl.org](http://aimsintl.org) website for details.

Space for this AIMS page is provided courtesy of *Amusement Today* as a corporate partner of AIMS Intl. Content is provided by AT & AIMS.



Left to Right: Back Row: Lincoln Martin, Nolan Kurtzer, Brandon Kurecki, Daniel Ulrich, DJ Sanchez, Lydia Wilde; Front Row: Isaiah Henley, Audrey Chen, Sofia Lanzi, Victoria Hernandez, Carys George, Kylie Dryden.



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# Updates to classic Giant Dipper coaster delights Belmont guests

*Ride improvements include lighting, repainting as well as GCII track work*

**AT:** Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

SAN DIEGO, Calif. — Since Belmont Park at Mission Beach, San Diego, California, reopened its iconic Giant Dipper wooden roller coaster, park officials are receiving very positive reactions from guests.

The coaster, which just celebrated 100 years last year, received a \$1.6 million improvement beginning in February, with the primary focus on smoothing out the wooden track to enhance comfort for riders while preserving the coaster's historic charm.

The project, which took six weeks, was done by Great Coasters International Inc.

"During that time, about 250 feet of track was removed and replaced and a significant amount of structural work was also completed," said Maddison Sinclair, park public relations and partnerships manager. "Additional improvements are still underway, including repainting sections of the ride once the wood has fully dried. We are also reinstalling the light spears and lighting elements as part of the finishing touches."

Joyce Stablewski of GCII said the work was done to the high north curve



The Giant Dipper at Belmont Park at Mission Beach, San Diego, California, underwent a renovation this past winter that focused on enhancing the comfort level of the rider. The iconic coaster — which features 2,640 feet of track, a height of 73 feet and maximum speeds of 55 mph — turned 100 years old last year. Great Coasters International was contracted to do the work on the coaster (above). COURTESY BELMONT PARK, TIM COLE

of the coaster.

"It was completely reprofiled and retracked, using a combination of southern yellow pine and IPE lumber, replaced some structural members and reinforced the structure and foundation anchorage," she said.

She added that there weren't any particular challenges for GCII during the rehab.

"Other than working from a small, limited space if you consider that," Stablewski said.

Sinclair said since early March, when the coaster reopened, "guests have been extremely happy."

The Giant Dipper has a track length of 2,640 feet and is 70 feet tall, with a 65-



foot drop. The maximum speed is 55 mph. It has two trains with six cars per train. Riders are arranged two across in two rows for

a total of 24 riders per train.

The coaster was designed by Frank Prior and Frederick Church. The current trains were

built by D.H. Morgan Manufacturing.

Tim Cole, a roller coaster enthusiast and frequent Belmont Park guest, rode the Giant Dipper when he was 14 or 15 years old. It was right before the park closed in 1982 due to bankruptcy.

"My family had just moved here from Hawaii," he said. "We didn't have roller coasters in Hawaii, and after I rode the Giant Dipper, I was a fan."

Of course, not long after that, the park closed and along with it the Giant Dipper.

"I sort of took it



Additional improvements are still underway, including repainting sections of the ride once the wood has fully dried. Belmont Park officials say they are reinstalling the light spears and lighting elements as part of the finishing touches.

COURTESY BELMONT PARK

► See DIPPER, page 59

► **DIPPER**

Continued from page 58

personally," he said.

He was already hooked.

When the park reopened in 1990, he was there riding the Giant Dipper. And, he said, he was the first one in the gates when it reopened this past March after the renovations.

"It is very, very smooth," Cole said. "It is very noticeably smoother. There are no jolts. It is a very good ride."

Cole said there had already been an improvement project to the first drop on the south part of the coaster a couple of years ago.

"That has held up nicely and it is still very smooth," he said.

In addition to the coaster upgrades, Belmont Park has introduced new attractions, including a free-access play structure near Shipwreck Cove designed for younger visitors and families.

Belmont Park is open year-round. And while the Giant Dipper is its anchor, other rides offered include a mix of classic, family-friendly and thrilling amusement rides. Some of those rides include the 67-foot-high spinning ride Beach Blaster, the Liberty Carousel, Tilt-A-Whirl, Wave Jumper, Dip and Dive, Mic Drop, Krazy Kars, Flip Out and Zero Gravity. Other attractions include miniature golf, Sky Ropes obstacle course, laser

tag, arcade, a rock wall, zip line, bumper cars, midway games and an escape room called Escapology.

Food and drink includes all the classic fare, including soft pretzels, pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs and a French fry concession called Fry-Yay. There is a coffee shop, an ice cream shop, sit-down restaurants and the Belmont Draft Park.

Belmont Park was founded by **John Spreckels**.

● [belmontpark.com](http://belmontpark.com)

**The \$1.6 million renovation was done by Great Coasters International Inc. About 250 feet of the track was replaced and a significant amount of structural work was also completed.**  
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# Pennsylvania amusement ride safety advisory board holds meeting

AT: B. Derek Shaw  
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Representatives from the amusement industry, along with community volunteers selected at large, met at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture headquarters in mid-March for a quarterly meeting of the Pennsylvania Ride Safety Advisory Board. Input from this body is used to help the Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards determine its course of action on each piece of equipment in the ride approval process. Typically, the options include approval, conditional approval, or table the vote for a future meeting.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Deputy Secretary, Chris Davis, conducted the meeting.

The newest Quality Assurance inspector, Paul Ondo, was introduced to

those in attendance. Ondo brings the QA staff up to four. His territory includes southwest Pennsylvania up to the State College area in central Pennsylvania.

All approvals/operators are in Pennsylvania, unless noted.

Under old business, an all-accessible climbing tower manufactured by Corporate Challenge was taken off the list for approval, as it is not ready to come before the board. The manufacturer can resubmit it at a later date. It is going to go in Rising Light Ridge, a ministry of the Tim Tebow Foundation in Bear Creek.

Under new business, there were nine ride/equipment approvals to come before the advisory board. Eight were approved and one was conditionally approved. The conditional one was for Drift Karts, manufactured by Dongguan Jinkala, to



The final new ride approved during the Pennsylvania amusement ride safety advisory board meeting was a Soriani Endeavour purchased by Tons of Fun Shows. COURTESY SORIANI

be located at Oxford Valley Mall, Langhorne. There were lots of questions and concerns about the manual that was submitted for this 3-4 mph kiddie attraction.

The Erie Zoo requested modifications to its

Safariland train ride. A wiring diagram was reviewed and approved.

Guven Rides, a Turkish company, manufactures its version of a Crazy Dance. The approval was given for one that Majestic

Midways, based in York, will have on the road for their carnival operation.

Neveplast, S.r.l., an Italian company, manufacturer of Tubby Slides, got approved for use

► See BOARD, page 61

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► **BOARD**

Continued from page 60

at **Corn Cob Acres** on the **Field of Screams** property in Lancaster County. It will be used for the daytime attraction designed for families with younger kids. The track is portable and operates with inner tube-type ride vehicles.

Four of the approvals were for **ProSlide Technology** products being installed at **Waldameer Park and Water World**, Erie. The water park is expanding with the installation of **Mammoth**, a five-person raft; **Racing Rapids**, with two individual tracks; **SwitchBACK**, designed for quick direction changes; and **Tornado**, a two-to-six-seater round tube, where riders drop from inside a tunnel at a 45-degree angle out into the ride's main element, shaped like a funnel.

The final approval went to **Tons of Fun Shows**,



based in Douglassville, who recently purchased a **Soriani Endeavour**. The 60-foot spinning ride was previously located at **Trimpers Rides**, Ocean City, Maryland.

Founded in June 1984, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Ride and Measurement Standards' amusement ride safety inspection program is one of the oldest in the country. They register more than 800 amusement ride owners and 10,000 individual amusement rides and attractions annually. Oversight includes Family Entertainment Centers (FECs), park and portable rides, water parks, inflatables, zip lines, go-kart tracks, haunted attractions and hay rides. The staff currently consists

of four quality assurance inspectors, headed by a division supervisor and a few administrative personnel.

Ride safety seminars are held each spring and fall, training and testing hundreds of amusement ride inspectors in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and other states. They are conducted for the state by a third-party operator, **Slaggert Risk Management**.

Upcoming dates for the quarterly ride safety advisory board meetings for the rest of 2026 include June 9, September 23 and December 8. All meetings start at 10 a.m., lobby conference room, Department of Agriculture, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg.

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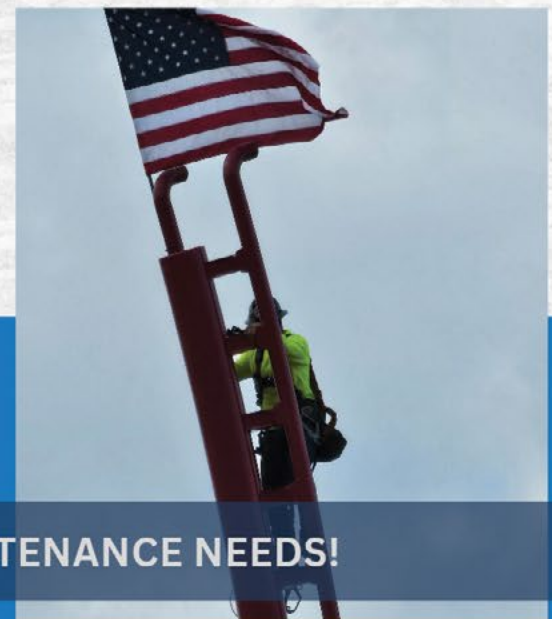
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# Cleveland Metroparks Zoo begins undertaking large capital project

New GOPO trams courtesy of IRG highlight additions

AT: Pam Sherborne  
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio — The Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, located in the city's southwest side, is in the final push of phase one of the largest capital improvement in the Ohio zoo's history.

The zoo unveiled details last year of the project, which includes a transformation of the former RainForest into a dynamic new destination set to open sometime this year. Called the Primate Forest, the reimagined space will offer a multi-sensory, immersive experience designed to connect guests to nature and wildlife like never before.

"In order to do this transformation," said **Jacqueline Gerling**, communications



The Cleveland Metroparks Zoo purchased new GOPO Safari trams in 2025. They readied the zoo for its next phases of improvement projects which began with the new Primate Forest. That phase opens this year. COURTESY CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

director, **Cleveland Metroparks**, "it required us to do a total renovation, modernization and expansion of the former space. We have made

incredible progress." At the heart of the project is the **CrossCountry Mortgage Forest Home**, a new community gathering space that serves as the

entryway into the Primate Forest destination. This experience uses advanced technology to immerse guests in the sights and sounds of the forest, setting the stage for a journey through tropical habitats and into dynamic new

spaces for dining, gathering and play.

Visitors will be welcomed by the Hero Tree, a touch-activated centerpiece that anchors the entry.

► See ZOO, page 63

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Within the Primate Forest will be an outdoor area for the zoo's orangutans, the first outdoor area for these primates at the zoo. COURTESY CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

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Phase one includes the Primate Forest, taking the space of the former Rainforest. The Primate Forest is a part of the CrossCountry Forest Home. COURTESY CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

► **ZOO**  
Continued from page 62

The first floor will include an expansive new food court and retail space, including rentable spaces. The second level of the space will include the Orangutan Adventure Playscape, an imaginative playscape designed to inspire exploration and adventure among the zoo's youngest guests.

"This is an outdoor yard for the Orangutans," Gerling said. "They have always been housed inside here. This is the first time for this type of space for us."

Also on the second level will be a Learning Gallery, with hands-on exploration through dynamic spaces such as the Connections Studio, Forest Theater and Sustainable Future Design Lab.

At the Care and Conservation Center, guests will gain a behind-the-scenes look at the zoo's conservation efforts, including its husbandry and reintroduction work with reptiles and amphibians such as the Puerto Rican crested toad, spotted turtles and Eastern plains garter snakes.

Rain forest species like orangutans, gharial crocodiles and capybaras will return to the newly named Tropical Forest, which is undergoing a

substantial renovation and modernization.

The current construction phase includes the renovation of more than 63,000 square feet of the former RainForest and an additional 33,500 square feet of new construction.

A future phase will include the Gorilla Forest, a new home for the zoo's growing gorilla troop.

In a proactive decision last year, officials decided to purchase four new trams to transport visitors throughout the zoo.

"Our trams had just reached the end of their lives," Gerling said.

The new trams were manufactured by GOPO. Gina Guglielmi, Intermark Ride Group, represented GOPO. She said the four safari trams have two, 32-seat coaches, with seating in the power unit for 16, totaling 80 seats for each tram.

"Cleveland Metroparks Zoo chose to go with the GOPO clean diesel safari trams to accommodate their steep inclines, extended hours of operation and serviceability," Guglielmi commented.

And, of course, not to mention the increased number of visitors officials expect to visit its new Primate Forest inside the new CrossCountry Mortgage Forest Home.

• [clevelandmetroparks.com](http://clevelandmetroparks.com)

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# MOBILE MIDWAYS

► San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo — pages 68-69 / Stinson Band Organ acquired by IISA Museum — page 74

## America 250 Wheel a 'technical feat,' largest mobile unit in nation

*KMG-supplied wheel transported by nine trailers*

**AT: Ron Gustafson**  
Special to Amusement Today

TAMPA, Fla. — America's largest portable observation Ferris wheel, towering a jaw-dropping 230 feet above the midway, made its debut at the **Florida State Fair**, February 5 to 16.

Dubbed the **America 250 Wheel** in honor of the nation's 250th anniversary this year, the mammoth attraction is operated by **Biggest Wheel, LLC**, a partnership between **Frank Zaitshik**, president of **Wade Shows**, Livonia, Michigan, and **Michael Wood**, president of **Wood Entertainment Company**, San Antonio, Texas.

"It is the biggest transportable one here right now," Wood said of the ride, designed and built by **KMG** of the Netherlands. "They had been talking about building it for a while, and during COVID-19, they decided to take a shot at it."

Wood said KMG originally had three sizes in development: 35, 45 and 70 meters.

"They hadn't sold any during that time (development), so they decided to build the biggest one first," he noted.

"For one ride, I don't believe there has been a larger single investment in the portable ride business here — at least I'm not aware of any larger," Zaitshik said of the acquisition. "I believe KMG wanted the proper home

for this ride with the proper people overseeing it. The ride is a technical feat."

Zaitshik and Wood formed **Biggest Wheel LLC** in 2016 after purchasing its first large touring wheel, a 155-foot version from **Lamberink** of the Netherlands. That ride made its debut at the 2017 Florida State Fair and — at the time — was touted as the largest portable wheel in the nation. It continues to perform at major fairs and events across the country.

### More than a giant

From a design perspective, the America 250 Wheel is special in a number of ways.

Four massive towers support the wheel, which rotates without the use of a main axle. The towers, according to Wood, use a similar hydraulic erection system as KMG's huge XXL pendulum ride.

"They are built off that principle, but larger," he said.

The trailers are also incorporated into the attraction's base and support structure uniquely, Wood noted, and the ride's spokes also feature a distinctive design.

"Each spoke has four pieces. The upper member (15 spokes, each 55 feet long) is the same dimension as the lower member, but thicker," he pointed out. "The lower part bands out into three, with the gondolas attached to the end of each of those spokes."

The upper spokes connect to rotating hubs atop both towers, eliminating the need for a main axle.



Poised for opening at the Florida State Fair in Tampa, the 230-foot wheel towers above the midway (above). The gigantic wheel reflects in the lake at night during the event (right). COURTESY WOOD ENTERTAINMENT; AT/RON GUSTAFSON

"Everything is incorporated into nine, 60-foot trailers, all of which require permits to be moved over the road," the operator added. Variable frequency friction drive units rotate the massive wheel.

As with any new attraction, Wood admitted that erecting the ride for the first time was challenging.

"Due to its uniqueness,

it took us five long days to set it up the first time," he said of the process. "Once we get acclimated to it, that time should come down to a manageable 40 hours."

Wood oversees the dedicated crews that tend to the two large wheels the company operates.



► See WHEEL, page 66



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## WHEEL

Continued from page 64

### The theme fit

Up to 270 guests can ride the wheel at once, seated aboard 45 six-passenger enclosed gondolas, each decked out with a theme focused on the nation's 250th anniversary. The ride makes six cycles in an hour.

"The wheel arrived in the U.S. the first of the year, and it seemed fitting that we honor the country's anniversary with an American theme," Wood asserted. "Since we have had 45 different men serve as president and 45 gondolas on the wheel, it was a natural that we put every single president — in numerical order — on the gondolas."

Wood made a point of noting Grover Cleveland (22nd and 24th president) and Donald Trump (45th and 47th president) did not serve consecutive terms, thus there have been 45 sitting presidents, but 47 presidencies.

"It was a combined effort for the artwork through our



The nation's 45 presidents appear on the gondolas on the America 250 Wheel. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

PR firm **Illuminated Events and Amusement Wraps**, and of course, we had the final say," Wood said of the project.

Zaitshik agreed that the theming was highly appropriate for the wheel, saying, "It was Michael's idea for having the presidents on gondolas."

The ride is adorned by a spectacular programmable LED system to light up the night sky. The towers

highlight the names of the U.S. presidents, while the circular tower screen projects their images. The gondolas and spokes alternate in brilliant colors, at times striking patriotic red, white and blue.

### Ticket to ride

The America 250 Wheel is already booked at the state fairs of Minnesota, North Carolina and Wisconsin, with more to follow.



Owing to the ride's uniqueness, its debut appearance required five days of setup. However, Wood Entertainment is confident that time will come down to a manageable 40 hours on future setups. COURTESY WOOD ENTERTAINMENT

"We charge \$7 to ride it," Wood explained. "Our customer base is the family unit, so we need to keep it within range for families to be able to afford to ride. Granted, it's a huge investment for us, but you can make a living if you have an exceptional product at a moderate price."

In addition to Biggest Wheel LLC, Wood

Entertainment owns and operates eight other rides that appear at large events. Wade Shows operates more than 100 rides and attractions, playing numerous state fairs, large county and regional fairs and civic-sponsored events.

Both Wood and Zaitshik are in the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association Hall of Fame**.

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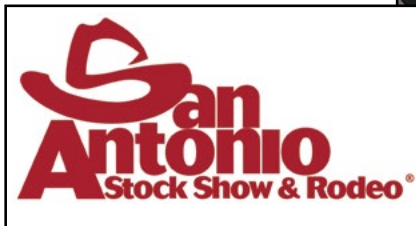
# San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo experiences near perfect weather

AT: B. Derek Shaw

bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — “We were fortunate to be blessed with nearly perfect weather for our entire event. We only experienced one brief rain shower on our opening weekend, which had a negligible effect on our attendance,” said **Sean Williams**, festival director of the **San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo**. “We had an average low temperature of 47 degrees, and an average high temperature of 72 degrees. This was a very welcome weather trend, as it contributed to consistent daily attendance.”

Attendance was consistent with the 2025 edition, as 1.5 million people went through the turnstiles during the 18 days. **Wade Shows** brought in 42 rides, with 14 being family and kiddie ones. As part of that number, Wade booked in a few rides from **Carnival Americana** (**Alan Cockerham**) and **B-Thrilled Attractions** (**Blake McDonough**). Rounding out their operation included 40 games and 15 food stands.



The midway was cashless for food and games.

For the first time, there were two portable roller coasters at that spot, with the **Crazy Mouse Roller Coaster (Zamperla)** appearing for the first time. The most popular rides included **Super Cyclone Roller Coaster — (Interpark)**, **Giant Wheel (Chance Rides)**, and **Crazy Mouse Roller Coaster — (Zamperla)**. Ride midway revenue came in at \$2.15 million.

“Like all fairs, weather is a key factor,” said **Frank Zaitshik**, owner of **Wade Shows**. “When weather is good, there is an increase in revenue too.”

His only concern: “We didn’t have enough help.” **Zaitshik** praised his Texas unit. “Hats off to **Kevin Bossley**, general manager and son-in-law, **Carmine Kellogg**, senior office manager, **Ester Hernandez**, office manager and **Adam West**.”



More than 1.5 million people went through the turnstiles over the 18-day duration of the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo. COURTESY SAN ANTONIO STOCK SHOW & RODEO

This was his first time back. **Wade** also operates a Michigan/East Coast unit and a West Coast one, too.

The amusement operator was also pleased with the San Antonio Stock Show staff: “Communication is at an all-time high with the rodeo (staff). Many times, the rodeo outshines the carnival. With the current leadership, this is the best communication we’ve had. The future looks bright.”

**Williams** had an equally positive experience with the carnival. “**Wade Shows, Inc** continues to be a leader in the carnival

industry. They work closely with our festival staff to ensure that the carnival is meeting the high standards of the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo. Their ability to react quickly to requests and a high level of customer service make them a key driver of the success of our 2026 event.”

Spanning 18 days in the heart of San Antonio, the annual stock show and rodeo provides guests with a truly authentic experience. With over 160 acres of family-friendly entertainment, agriculture education experiences, 400+ live music sets, and eight entertainment

venues, attendees have the opportunity to enjoy every minute that they are on the property.

“We embrace our western culture and are honored to have more than 7,000 volunteers give their time to support our mission. Our 2026 event impacted over 22,000 Texas youth and committed \$12.5 million in scholarships,” said **Williams**.

For the second year, the stock show turned its first Monday into “Retro Rodeo.” This special theme day was a way for our attendees to honor their rodeo history by dressing up like their favorite rodeo character from the 1980s. Organizers had a lot of fun with the idea, and plan on continuing this theme day in the coming years. They even had their first marriage take place on the fairgrounds this year.

Special Promotions included **Thrifty Thursday**; for all three weeks, there was a \$5 gate admission, \$3 carnival rides (select rides) and \$5 foods in the carnival and on the fairgrounds.

“It proved to be extremely effective, as we experienced record daily attendance and daily carnival revenue on all three Thursdays,” said **Williams**.

The media mix included 7.5% print/

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► See RODEO, page 69

MOBILE MIDWAYS



Wade Shows brought in 42 rides, with 14 being family and kiddie ones. A few were booked in from Carnival Americana and B-Thrilled Attractions. COURTESY SAN ANTONIO STOCK SHOW & RODEO

► **RODEO**  
Continued from page 68

online publications, 16.8% radio, 23.35% out-of-home, 22.41% digital, socials and programmatic and 29.94% television.

“No single medium outperformed the others — our success came from how they worked together,” said Williams. “To achieve optimal reach and frequency, it’s critical

to engage audiences across multiple touchpoints and meet them in different ways depending on their habits. That said, a couple of areas stood out this year. We made a modest increase in our digital investment, using a programmatic approach to target specific zip codes where attendance historically lags. This allowed us to be more precise and intentional in reaching new audiences. We complemented that

with some more grassroots, guerrilla-style efforts to create local visibility and buzz.”

Williams continued, “More broadly, by diversifying our media mix and leaning into channels that reflect how people are actually consuming content today, we were able to increase overall impressions by nearly 200%. The real impact came from that

balance — combining broad reach with targeted engagement.”

The total number of food vendors increased from 34 in 2025 to 51 in 2026. It was well received by attendees. This year also featured several nonprofit organizations, along with multiple small restaurants from the surrounding community.

Entertainment included Brad Paisley, Hank Williams

Jr, Hudson Westbrook and Miranda Lambert.

The San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo started in 1950 with a mission to promote agriculture, education and western heritage. Since then, it has grown into one of the largest and most prestigious rodeos in the country. The 78th edition of the stock show returns February 11 to 18, 2027.

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# Strawberry Festival proves it's still the sweetest show in Florida

AT: David Fake  
dfake@amusementtoday.com

PLANT CITY, Fla. — Every spring, Plant City, Florida, earns its title. Known as the Winter Strawberry Capital of the World, the small city east of Tampa transforms into one of the most visited fair and festival destinations in the country, drawing guests from across the nation for 11 days of agricultural heritage, live entertainment and enough strawberry-themed food to make a pastry chef weep with joy. The 91st **Florida Strawberry Festival**, held February 26 through March 8, delivered on every count.

When the gates closed on the final night, the festival had welcomed 573,299 guests to the grounds at 303 BerryFest Place in Plant City, capping a run that featured agricultural exhibits, youth livestock shows, headline entertainment and a midway operation that continues to raise the bar for the carnival, fair and outdoor amusement industry.

For the industry, one of the most compelling storylines of the 2026 event was the show's continued partnership with **Deggeller Attractions**, a proud member of the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association's** Circle of Excellence that services major events, including the

**FLORIDA  
STRAWBERRY  
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Maryland State Fair and the Virginia State Fair. The Deggeller midway brought more than 80 rides, games and attractions to the festival grounds, covering the full spectrum of the guest experience. Thrill seekers found plenty to chase, with headline attractions including Super Nova, Vertigo and the Riptide Roller Coaster. Families gravitated toward the Carousel, Crazy Chopper and Bumper Cars. The dedicated SUN 'n FUN Kiddie Korral gave younger guests their own world to explore, anchored by rides like the Elephants, Plane Train, Teacups and the Dragon Kiddie Coaster. The midway was supplemented by **Arnold Amusements**, Traverse City, Michigan

Deggeller's operational philosophy is baked into every aspect of its midway presence. "We are known for our spectacular assortment of amusement rides and keen sense of quality and detail, with an emphasis on safety," the company states. "Prior to opening, each piece of equipment is carefully inspected by a skilled midway manager



The 91st Florida Strawberry Festival serves up a midway that is a feast for the eyes, A-list concerts and, of course, world-famous shortcake. COURTESY FLORIDA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

and a ride superintendent using a certified inspection checklist, specific to each attraction." For a festival drawing more than half a million guests over 11 days, that commitment to inspection protocol is not a marketing line. It is the foundation on which the whole event is built.

Towering over all of it was the undisputed signature of the Deggeller midway, the Berry Big Wheel, this year celebrating the U.S.A.'s 250th anniversary. The new wheel was described as the largest touring wheel in North America — operated by **Biggest Wheel LLC** — and its silhouette was visible

long before guests arrived at the gates. The massive wheel dominated the Plant City skyline, serving as a festival landmark and offering spectacular views of the fairgrounds and surrounding strawberry fields, especially after dark when the midway lights turned the northeast corner of the property into a skyline of its own. Its patriotic dedication gave the ride a resonance well beyond its sparkling lights.

Then there are the strawberries. No coverage of this festival is complete without them, and rightly so. Three dedicated shortcake booths served guests across the grounds, including the St. Clement Make Your Own Shortcake Booth, the Transforming Life Church booth inside the Entenmann's Strawberry Tent, and the East Historical Society Shortcake Booth near Pioneer Village. Beyond the iconic shortcake, 2026 pushed the culinary envelope with inventive new offerings. New menu items like a Strawberry Dubai funnel cake joined a lineup that already included fresh berries, chocolate-dipped strawberries, strawberry smoothies, strawberry cinnamon buns and strawberry barbecue egg rolls. The fruit that made

Plant City famous showed up in every corner of the grounds, and guests were more than happy to indulge.

The festival's 2026 theme, "Still Growing," felt apt. Chairman of the Board **Pam Warnock** said, "The Florida Strawberry Festival has always been rooted in agriculture and family traditions. Just like the strawberries we celebrate, we are still growing and that growth allows us to provide new experiences while honoring the heritage that makes this festival so loved."

The entertainment lineup blended classic country, punk rock and contemporary Christian music across the full run, with **Alabama** on opening night, **Joan Jett & The Blackhearts** closing out the final evening, and **Dierks Bentley, Riley Green, Lauren Daigle, The Offspring, and Brantley Gilbert** filling the nights in between.

The 92nd Florida Strawberry Festival is already set for March 4 through 14, 2027. If the 91st is any indication, the Berry Big Wheel will once again be the first thing on the horizon, leading guests toward Plant City. And somewhere just below it, the smell of fresh shortcake will keep them coming back.

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## Carnival World Museum adds new items to gift shop



RIVERVIEW, Fla. — The International Independent Showmen's Association (IISA) Museum — also known as Carnival World Museum — in Riverview, Florida, has revamped its gift shop with many new items featuring the museum's logo. Along with T-shirts, caps, tote bags and other merchandise, the shop has amusement industry-related books as well as other collectibles. Museum Executive Director Lee Stevens said sales have increased dramatically since the new products have been on display. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

## SciFair continues mission to preserve history of European showmen

ANTWERP, Belgium — Since 2021, the European-funded research project **Science at the Fair (SciFair)** at the **University of Antwerp** has been working closely with fairground communities across Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands to document, preserve and make visible the history of travelling showpeople. The project focuses on the period 1850 to 1914, a time when fairs were key places where new technologies, scientific demonstrations and popular entertainment reached mass audiences, often long before they entered museums, theaters or schools.

From the outset, SciFair has been conceived as a project about the fairground history, and as a cultural heritage initiative developed together with the community. One of its central outcomes is a public online database that brings together dispersed historical material: photographs, posters, press reports, journals, archival documents and biographical information on showpeople, attractions and events. The platform continues to grow through partnerships with families, collectors, museums and associations. Its goal is simple: to reconnect scattered traces of the past and make the history of the fair visible again, not only for researchers, but also for the community itself.

Over the past years,

this work has led to a series of concrete heritage initiatives carried out in close collaboration with the fairground community and partners in the sector.

In Belgium and France, SciFair contributed historical expertise to the preparation of the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** nomination dossier on fairground culture, helping to document its historical roots, its mobility and the strength of family networks that cross national borders. The recognition of fairground culture as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in December 2024 marked an important milestone and confirmed the significance of this living tradition and the communities that sustain it. This work was only possible thanks to the trust and active involvement of showpeople, associations, researchers and heritage professionals who shared their knowledge, stories and collections.

A central concern of SciFair has been the preservation of fragile and often privately held materials that are at risk of being lost. Over the past years, the organization has digitized and helped safeguard key collections, many of which were previously inaccessible or even unknown. Highlights include the digitization of over 1,300 engravings and 750 postcards from



Exhibition opening and book launch for *Foorwonder* at the Huis van Alijn in Ghent, attended by (l to r) Nele Wynants from the University of Antwerp, the late Belgian showman François Delforge and Astrid De Bruycker, Ghent's alderwoman for culture. COURTESY EUROPEAN SHOWMEN'S UNION/ MICHIEL DEVIJVER

the late **Erich Knocke's** extensive graphic collection in the former Markt- und Schaustellermuseum in Essen, in close collaboration with his relatives. Knocke's library and archival holdings, a collection built up over decades and consisting of thousands of books, prints and documents, were secured and transferred to the Theaterwissenschaftliche Sammlung at the **University of Cologne**, where they can be preserved and made accessible for the future.

Historical professional journals have formed another key focus. These trade papers offer a unique window onto everyday life in the sector: routes, new attractions, suppliers, fairs and family names. They are invaluable sources that allow present-day families to rediscover networks and histories

spanning generations. SciFair has digitized and documented extensive runs of important titles, including *Le Voyageur Forain* in France (1883), which was the very first of its kind, *Le Voyageur Forain Belge* (1885) in Belgium, and *La Bussola* (1889) in Italy, helping to make these rich historical records accessible once again.

A particularly meaningful collaboration began in 2023 during the Interschau in Kassel (DSB Delegiertentag), where SciFair coordinator **Nele Wynants** met **Mr. Knerr**, then editor of *Der Komet*. This meeting opened a constructive dialogue about the possibility of digitizing the journal, founded in 1883. In close exchange with Knerr, SciFair explored practical ways to support the project, including options

for co-financing. While the funds available through the organization's research project could not cover the full costs, SciFair helped map out possible solutions, contacted specialized scanning companies and advised on technical aspects such as handling the material, OCR quality, and long-term accessibility.

Knerr welcomed both **Dr. Sabine Lenk (University of Marburg)** and **Dr. Bart Moens (University of Antwerp)** to Pirmasens, where they were able to examine the collection on site.

During these visits, the material condition and digitization requirements were carefully assessed, and the earliest volumes were partly photographed as preparation for further research and preservation work. Working together with colleagues from the University of Marburg, this collaborative effort helped lay the groundwork for the successful preservation and digitization of this unique journal.

None of this would have been possible without the openness and trust of the fairground community and their constructive collaboration with researchers and the heritage sector. Families, collectors and showpeople across Europe have shared photographs, archives and personal memories, helping to safeguard fragile heritage that might otherwise have been lost.

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## Snapshots from the IISF Trade Show & Extravaganza



Chris Maier, (left), Land of Make Believe, Hope, New Jersey, with Len Soled, president Rides 4 U, Somerville, New Jersey. AT/GARY SLADE



Rides 4 U's Mark Blumhagen (left) at the company's outdoor exhibit with Amusement Today Publisher Gary Slade. AT/GARY SLADE



Bill Watson, sponsorship coordinator at North Georgia State Fair, Marietta, Georgia. AT/GARY SLADE



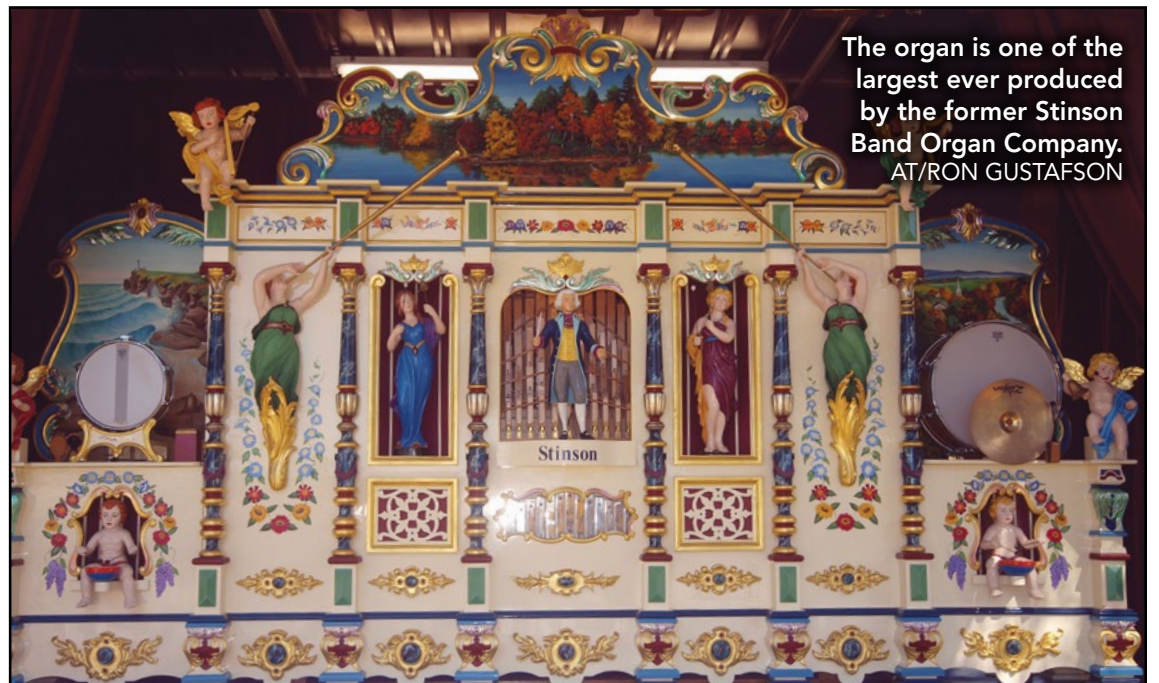
Jimmy Holmes, president of Wonderland Amusement Park Amarillo, Texas, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this season. AT/GARY SLADE



Adam Swika, owner Swika Shows, Scott Township, Pennsylvania. AT/GARY SLADE



Bill Johnson, Fantasy Amusements, Arlington Heights, Illinois. AT/GARY SLADE



The organ is one of the largest ever produced by the former Stinson Band Organ Company. AT/RON GUSTAFSON

## Stinson Band Organ acquired by IISA Museum from Eastern States Exposition

AT: Ron Gustafson  
Special to Amusement Today

RIVERVIEW, Fla. — It seems fitting that “The Happiest Music On Earth” — a phrase coined in 1983 by band organ enthusiast **Ken Smith** — welcomes guests as they approach the front doors of the **International Independent Showmen's Association Museum**.

The uplifting melodies are churned out in the facility's front lawn thanks to the January acquisition of a huge band organ by museum Executive Director **Lee Stevens**.

“I had one before and I've always liked the sound of a band organ,” Stevens said of the personal purchase. “It's really the sound of our industry at carnivals, circuses and fairs.”

The mammoth organ, one of the largest ever built by the former **Stinson Band Organ Company**, Bellefontaine, Ohio, was previously owned by the **Eastern States Exposition (ESE)** in West Springfield, Massachusetts.

“We went back and forth for quite some time,” Stevens recalled of the negotiations, which

transpired over a couple of years. “After I had shown interest, they told me a theme park was also interested in it, then, all of a sudden, I got a call and they said I could buy it.”

I told them I couldn't sell one of my kids for it,” he quipped, adding, “I have a few pennies invested in it.”

The New England Band Organ — its name while at ESE — was custom-built under the direction of former ESE President **Wayne McCary** and delivered to the exposition grounds in 2002. It was exhibited near the main gate during The Big E, the annual fall fair staged by ESE, which showcases the six New England states. The organ is said to be the last to come out of the Stinson facility before the company closed.

“We're very excited that Lee is the recipient of this band organ and that it will live on,” said **Eugene Cassidy**, ESE president and CEO. “It was depreciating here on the fairgrounds as we no longer had the wherewithal to maintain it. It absolutely broke my heart to see it go, but it was not in our best interest to keep it.”

Stevens has renamed the piece the Americana 250 band organ in honor of the country's 250th anniversary this year, and

he will occasionally book it to perform at regional fairs and festivals.

### Hand-crafted instrument

“It has more moving figures than any other Stinson organ,” Stevens said of the trailer-mounted instrument. The organ has hundreds of hand-crafted wooden pipes, including 16-foot trombones, plus a 22-note bell glockenspiel and full percussion section. The organ is 16 feet long, five feet deep and 10 feet high.

All of the music is produced from MIDI files (musical instrument digital interface) with around 500 songs in Stevens' current catalog.

“We have everything from The Beatles, Christmas, Broadway, military and circus,” he asserted. “Wayne Holton from Houston, Texas, will be the one who services it. He travels the country to maintain band organs.”

Stevens further explained, “I'm thrilled and proud to have it. When the time comes, I hope it goes to someone else who has the same passion as I do.”

The organ operates most days, the museum — also known as **Carnival World Museum** — is open to the public.

•[showmensmuseum.org](http://showmensmuseum.org)



Stevens

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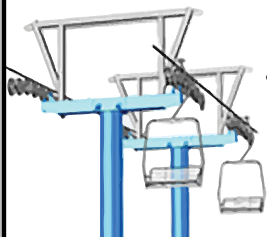
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## MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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**Michael Searle** was recently named the new CEO of the **Orange County Fair & Event Center**, Costa Mesa, California. He will lead fair production, security, event operations, facility operations, planning and production along with food and beverage departments. He brings more than three decades of leadership experience in the fair and event industry, with expertise in operations, strategic planning and infrastructure development. Throughout his career, he has focused on building strong, collaborative teams and fostering a culture of accountability, innovation and shared purpose.

Most recently, Searle served as Deputy Director of the **Arizona State Fair**, where he helped lead operational and financial advancements. As a respected industry leader, Searle has served in executive and board roles with the **Arizona Fairs Association** and **Western Fairs Association**, and on committees within the **International Association of Fairs and Expositions** (IAFE). He was inducted into the Arizona Fairs Association Hall of Fame and has been recognized as fair manager of the year for his contributions to advancing the fair industry. Searle was appointed to serve on the **Arizona Tourism Council** in an effort to share his talents and knowledge with the state.

"I am excited to start this chapter at the OC Fair alongside a team of skilled fair professionals who have warmly welcomed me to their organization. It is an honor to have been selected to lead this team. I am excited to learn from each of them," said Searle on his **LinkedIn** page. "Fairs not only offer incredible entertainment; they celebrate the soul of the communities they serve. To everyone who works in any capacity at a fair, I celebrate you. You are the stewards of tradition, visionaries of the future, and protectors of the community's spirit."

During their mid-April board meeting, the **Del Mar Fairgrounds** board, Del Mar, California, fired CEO **Carlene Moore**. The 22nd district agricultural association board of directors voted 8-1 to remove her after several hours of closed-session discussion. The board of directors did not indicate any reason for firing Moore. The fairgrounds is home to the **San Diego County Fair**.

There was widespread dissatisfaction with Moore among long-time staff members, some citing a stressful workplace environment. Moore previously had a leadership role at the **Napa County Fairgrounds** in Calistoga, California, and was hired as deputy general manager in 2019, being appointed interim CEO in 2020 after longtime CEO **Tim Fennell** retired.

Moore's tenure also saw several high-profile controversies, including ride midway operator contracts.

The San Diego County Fair returns June 10 to July 5.

As part of the 40th anniversary of the **Clay County Agricultural Fair**, Green Cove Springs, Florida, they offered one couple the chance to get married at the fairgrounds. The winning couple, **Maddie Kelley** and **Nate Helmuth, Jr.**, had their wedding ceremony on Sunday, April 12, the last day of the fair.

To enter the contest, participants had to interact with the Clay County Fair social media page. Requirements included being 18 years old or older, following the page, liking the announcement post and commenting with a description of why they want to get married at the fair while tagging their partner. Nate and Maddie have been together for four years, and going to the fair has been a tradition of theirs.

The couple received a full wedding package featuring a ceremony in the Early Florida Village, a \$500 jewelry gift card from **ShIPLEY'S FINE JEWELRY**, and \$100 toward marriage license fees. Also, services from several local vendors, including flowers from **Green Cove Springs Divine Florist** and a cake from **Sweet Sensations**, were part of the package, as well as a pastor, music and photography provided by **The Social Bee**.

While the fair provided the funds for the license, the couple was responsible for the actual application and procurement of the document.

Organizers created the giveaway as a way to commemorate the fair's four decades of serving the community. **Deggeller Attractions** had the ride midway.

The **York State Fair** (Pennsylvania) is less than 100 days away. However, at the time of publication, the concert series had not been announced.

Typically, the fair starts announcing its concert lineup in February and March, for the 10-day fair, July 24 to August 2.

In late March, the fair acknowledged the announcement delay, citing that other regional fairs are experiencing similar delays.

"We're in the same boat — working hard behind the scenes to build a concert lineup that fits the York State Fair while navigating availability, timing and rising costs in the industry," organizers told **WHTM, ABC27**. "We know there's a lot of anticipation, and we're working hard to make it worth the wait, so stay tuned!"

Past fairs' entertainment has included **Foreigner, Good Charlotte, T-Pain, Nelly** and **Breaking Benjamin**.

The York State Fair is promoted as America's 1st Fair, starting in 1765.

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  - ARM G-Force.....\$399,000
- ARM Mega Bounce.....\$499,000
  - Satori Balloon Ferris Wheel.....\$69,000
  - Kilinski Slide.....\$39,000
  - Visa Mini Bumper Cars (6).....\$69,000
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2026 Amusement Today's "What's New" Guide

**COMING IN 2026!**

**Circuit Breaker, COTALand.**  
AT/TIM BALDWIN

**WhiteWater Mini Blaster, Sun World Vung Tau.**  
COURTESY WHITEWATER

**Phantom Theater: Opening Nightmare, Kings Island.**  
COURTESY KINGS ISLAND

**Nutcracker, Lagoon.**  
COURTESY LAGOON

**Bluey the Ride, Alton Towers.**  
COURTESY ZIERER

**FlyingSaucer, Oceania.**  
COURTESY PROSLIDE

**Tormentia, Six Flags Over Texas.**  
COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS

## 2026 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | NORTH AMERICA

Compiled by Jeffrey Seifert

*This is a list of announced and confirmed projects for 2026 as of press time. Some manufacturers may have more projects for this year that have yet to be announced. These projects may open later this year.*

### THE BAHAMAS

**NCL Great Rides Waterpark**, Great Stirrup Cay....New six-acre exclusive destination resort with 19 waterslides

### CANADA Alberta

**Bob Snodgrass Recreational Complex**, High River....Expansion of aquatic facility with WhiteWater pool slider  
**Galaxyland**, Edmonton....Vekoma roller coaster

### British Columbia

**City of Vernon Active Living Center**, Vernon....WhiteWater waterslide  
**Grouse Gravity Coaster**, North Vancouver....ADG mountain coaster

### Ontario

**Bingemans Big Splash**, Kitchener....ProSlide RallyRacer, Twister, FlyingSaucer 8

### Quebec

**Oceania**, Beloeil....ProSlide three-lane RallyRacer, FreeFall, PipeLine, KidzZone, FlyingSaucer  
**Parc Aquatique de Bromont**, Bromont....ProSlide TornadoWave 60, TurboTwister with Skybox

### COSTA RICA

**Parque Diversiones Costa Rica**, San José....Zamperla Air Race

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

**Scream Land**, Santo Domingo....Zamperla Speedway; Zamperla Magic Bikes

### GUATEMALA

**IRTRA Agua Caliente**, Guatemala City....Zamperla Super Flumez; Zamperla Junior Coaster  
**Oakland Mall**, Guatemala City....Zamperla Family Swinger  
**Xocomil**, San Martín Zapotitlán....Huge expansion to water park with multiple WhiteWater attractions



### MEXICO

#### Baja California Sur

**Cabo Real Surf Club**, San José del Cabo....WhiteWater ES48 Endless Surf lagoon in a private luxury community

#### Mexico City

**Six Flags Mexico**, Mexico City....Speedway Stunt Coaster — Vekoma Family Boomerang coaster

#### Nayarit

**VidantaWorld's BON Luxury Theme Park**, Las Jarretaderas....New theme park with multiple rides including Vekoma Switchback Coaster; Vekoma Family Coaster; Vekoma Family Suspended Coaster; Vekoma double-launch coaster; Mack Rides Inverted Powered Coaster; Zamperla Nebulaz, Go Go Bounce 6.4, Demolition Derby, Crazy Bus, Aero Top Jet

#### Quintana Roo

**Moon Palace**, Cancun....ProSlide Custom Ridehouse300, Ridehouse 150, Spray Park

### TURKS AND CAICOS

**Beaches Turks & Caicos**, Bright Settlement....WhiteWater slide additions; Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration

### UNITED STATES

#### Alabama

**4D Farm**, Cullman....E&F Miler family coaster relocated from Spring Park  
**Adventure Island**, Orange Beach....Tidal Wave Spinning Coaster — SBF Visa spinning coaster relocated from Adventure Island

#### Arizona

**Mattel Adventure Park**, Glendale....Hot Wheels Boneshaker — Chance Rides family coaster; Hot Wheels Twin Mill Racer — Chance Rides Hyper GT-X

#### California

**Great Wolf Lodge Southern California**, Garden Grove....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration  
**Legoland California**, Carlsbad....Galacitcoaster — ART Engineering adventure coaster (indoor); Kids Power Tower  
**Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**, Santa Cruz....Zamperla Discovery 360  
**Six Flags Magic Mountain**, Valencia....New Looney Tunes Land; Baynum Solutions ride repainting  
**Universal Studios Hollywood**, Universal City....Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift — Intamin coaster with spinning cars  
**Wild Water Adventures**, Clovis....Lost River Adventure — R&R Creative theming of continuous adventure river

#### Colorado

**Surf Shack**, Colorado Springs....WhiteWater FlowRider double  
**Water World**, Federal Heights....Summit Canyon — new area of the park with multiple attractions including ProSlide TurboTwister, SkyBox, Switchback, Hive 20 Kidz Zone, quiet leisure pool, activity pool and learn-to-swim pool

#### Florida

**Cabo Rio**, Fort Pierce....WhiteWater FlowRider double  
**Legoland Florida**, Winter Haven....Galacticoaster — ART Engineering adventure coaster (indoor)  
**Rapids Waterpark**, Riviera Beach....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration

**2026 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | NORTH AMERICA**

**South Seas Resort**, Captiva....Capitva Island — heated water waterslide complex with lazy river  
**Swampy Jack's Wongo Adventure**, Panama City Beach....Loop Coaster — Pinfari ZL42 relocated from CJ Barrymore's FEC  
**The Point**, Vero Beach....WhiteWater Endless Surf in a standalone surf park  
**Westin Cocoa Beach**, Cocoa Beach....Baynum Solutions Life Floor installation

**Georgia**

**Lake Winnepesaukah**, Rossville....Lookout Safari — Zierer Tivoli coaster relocated from Indianopolis Zoo

**Idaho**

**Roaring Springs Water Park**, Meridian....The Hive - ProSlide Hive 35  
**Splash Canyon Hotel**, Twin Falls....New resort with Two WhiteWater AquaTubes with AquaLucent effects

**Indiana**

**Indiana Beach**, Monticello....SBF/Visa Zero Gravity

**Kentucky**

**Kentucky Kingdom**, Louisville....Flying Fox — Vekoma family suspended coaster  
**Maui's Indoor Theme Park**, Owensboro....Twist-N-Shout — SBF Visa spinning coaster

**Maine**

**Funtown/Splashtown**, Saco....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration, Life Floor installation; new waterslide expansion  
**Palace Playland**, Old Orchard Beach....Gold Rush — Zamperla junior coaster relocated from Edaville

**Massachusetts**

**Conners Farm**, Danvers....Fredericksen Industries Fun Slide  
**Seekonk Grand Prix**, Seekonk....SBF Visa spinning coaster  
**Six Flags New England**, Agawam....Quantum Accelerator — Intamin Family Straddle Coaster

**Michigan**

**CJ Barrymore's Family Entertainment Center**, Clinton Township....SBF Visa Cyclon coaster  
**Kalamazoo Country Club**, Kalamazoo....Slide tower with two WhiteWater body slides

**Minnesota**

**Valleyfair Soak City**, Shakopee....Large waterpark expansion with multiple WhiteWater slides

**Missouri**

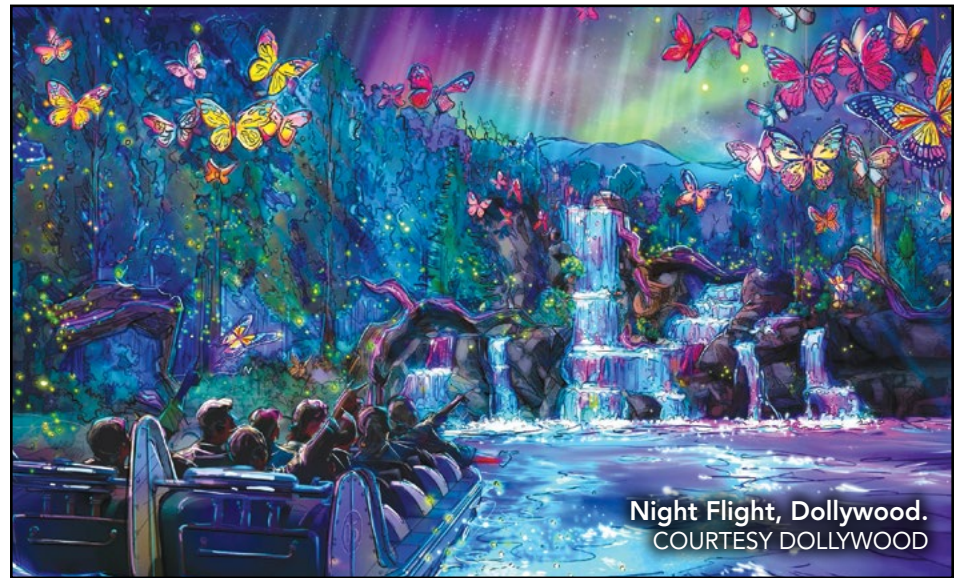
**Oasis at Lakeport**, Osage Beach....Shootout — Vekoma Family Boomerang coaster; Vekoma family suspended coaster  
**Twin Eagle Lakes Estates and Hideout**, Potosi....New campground water park with WhiteWater attractions

**Nebraska**

**Fun Plex**, Omaha....Mammoth — Preston & Barbieri Anaconda 2.0 coaster  
**Vala's Pumpkin Patch & Apple Orchard**, Gretna....Zamperla Galleon

**Nevada**

**Cowabunga Canyon**, Summerlin....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration



**New Hampshire**

**Canobie Lake Park**, Salem....SBF Visa spinning coaster

**New Jersey**

**Jenkinson's Boardwalk**, Point Pleasant Beach....Patriot's Run — SBF Visa Cyclon coaster MX49  
**Six Flags Great Adventure**, Jackson....Shoreline Pier new area with Barrels O'Fun — Reverchon spinning mouse coaster, Flying Scooters — Larson, Wave Swinger — Zamperla Flying Carousel, Hypno Twister — Zamperla Nebulaz all relocated from Six Flags America; Super Roundup — Hrubetz round up relocated from elsewhere in park.  
**Steel Pier**, Atlantic City....Premier Rides Sky Rocket II

**New York**

**Adventureland**, Long Island....Wave Twister — RES Rides Wave Twist L  
**Enchanted Forest Water Safari**, Old Forge....Paul Bunyan's Log Haul — SBF Visa spinning cars coaster  
**Herschell Carousel Factory Museum**, North Tonawanda...."Who Built the Rides?" — Exhibit of historical photographs and objects featuring family stories on the employees who built classic amusement rides  
**Luna Park**, Brooklyn....Baynum Solutions ride repainting  
**Seabreeze**, Rochester....Reef Runners — ProSlide dueling PipeLine with Hive 35 and FlyingSaucer 20  
**Splish Splash**, Calverton....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration

**North Carolina**

**Hawksnet Adventures**, Seven Devils....Wiegand alpine coaster

**Ohio**

**Great Wolf Lodge Mason**, Mason....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration  
**Kings Island**, Mason....Phantom Theater: Opening Nightmare — remake of classic Phantom Theater dark ride attraction with Sally Dark Rides characters and R&R creative consulting and theme design; Gravity Group rebuilding/retracking of The Beast roller coaster

**Pennsylvania**

**Hersheypark**, Hershey....The Inlet and The Island at Bayside Pier WhiteWater splashpad with whimsical elements; Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration, wave pool retheming

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## 2026 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | NORTH AMERICA

**Idlewild & SoakZone**, Ligonier....Parrot's Perch — new dining location in SoakZone; reimagined Tilt-A-Whirl; upgraded cabanas; extended Hallowboo  
**Waldameer & Water World**, Erie....Presque Isle Plunge — ProSlide Mammoth and TornadoWave 60; all new lazy river; return of Paratrooper

### South Carolina

**Family Kingdom Amusement Park**, Myrtle Beach....Rocky Mountain Construction Raptor coaster  
**Frankie's Fun Park**, North Charleston....Spinning Coaster — SBF Visa spinning coaster

### Tennessee

**Dollywood**, Pigeon Forge.... NightFlight Expedition — Mack Rides water/coaster/theater experience; WhiteWater replacement SuperFlume boats for Daredevil Falls; Baynum Solutions Ride Repainting

### Texas

**Aquatica**, San Antonio....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration  
**Cheeky Monkeys**, Arlington....New FEC with play structure and other kid-friendly activities  
**Cotaland**, Austin....New Park with multiple rides including Palindrome — Gerstlauer custom Infinity Coaster; Circuit Breaker — Vekoma Tilt Coaster; S&S Worldwide Screamin' Swing  
**JW Marriott Hill Country Resort & Spa**, San Antonio....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration  
**Kemah Boardwalk**, Kemah....Drop Zone — complete replacement of Larson/Arm 140-foot drop tower  
**Megatel Homes AnaCapri Lagoon**, Anna....New Crystal Lagoon community with WhiteWater slide tower, aquatic play and FlowRider double  
**Morgan's Wonderland**, San Antonio....Zamperla Wingz  
**San Antonio Zoo**, San Antonio....Congo Falls — Two-acre gorilla habitat  
**Schlitterbahn**, New Braunfels....Wasserbahn Racers — WhiteWater three-lane mat racing slide  
**SeaWorld San Antonio**, San Antonio....Barracuda Strike — B&M family inverted coaster  
**Six Flags Hurrance Harbor**, San Antonio....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration  
**Six Flags Over Texas**, Arlington....Tormenta Rampaging Run — record-breaking B&M dive coaster; Baynum Solutions vehicle restoration of LaFiesta de las Tazas  
**Typhoon Texas**, Katy....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration, Life Floor installation  
**Universal Kids Resort**, Frisco....Jurassic World: Cretaceous Coaster — Mack Rides Youngstar coaster; Rhonda's Trollfest Express — Zierer Force 190  
**Waco Surf**, Waco....WhiteWater FloSurf  
**Wonderland Park**, Amarillo....Celebrating its 75th Anniversary with park improvements, paint, new walkways, new restrooms, new pizza concession

### Utah

**Lagoon Amusement Park**, Farmington....The Nutcracker — S&S Worldwide Screamin' Swing

### Virginia

**Kalarahi Resort**, Woodford....Brand new 175,000-square-foot water park with multiple slides from WhiteWater  
**Kalarahi Tom Foolerys Adventure Park**, Woodford....Screaming Centipede — SBF Visa family coaster  
**Massanutten Family Adventure Park**, Massanutten....Mountain Mayhem

Fun Coaster — MND Group Funcoaster (mountain coaster)

### Wisconsin

**Kalarahi Resort**, Wisconsin Dells....75,000-square-foot covered water park expansion with WhiteWater slides including first covered Boomerango  
**Noah's Ark**, Lake Delton....Baynum Solutions waterslide restoration

## 2026 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | TRAVELING SHOWS AND CRUISE SHIPS

Compiled by Jeffrey Seifert and Ron Gustafson

### CRUISE SHIPS

**Norwegian Luna**....Wiegand.Waterrides launched water coaster - dual  
**Royal Caribbean Legend of the Seas**....Largest waterpark at sea. WhiteWater FlowRider; Wiegand.Waterrides category 6 waterpark

### TRAVELING SHOWS

**Alpine Amusements**, Naperville, Illinois....Kolmax Plus Jumbo Elephants  
**Big Rock Amusements**, Dundee, Michigan....Kolmax Plus Spinner themed as Crazy Dance; Tivoli Orbiter themed as Rector  
**Biggest Wheel LLC**, Winter Park, Florida....America 250 Wheel — KMG 230-foot wheel  
**Blue Sky Amusements**, Moriches....Tivoli Orbiter  
**PBJ Happee Day Shows**, Marion, Arkansas....Kolmax Plus Tea Cups  
**Penn Valley Shows**, Middleburg, Pennsylvania....Hitch-Hiker Manufacturing food concession trailers (2)  
**Powers & Thomas Midway Entertainment**, Wilmington, North Carolina....Bertazzon Wave Swinger  
**Powers Great American Midways**, Whiteville, North Carolina....Sartori Rides Twin Twister; Kolmax Plus Spinner themed as Casino  
**Rainbow Amusements**, Sandy Hook, Connecticut....Kolmax Plus Tea Cups  
**TDK Amusements**, Pennsylvania....SBF Visa Mini Tagada  
**Wade Shows**, Livonia, Michigan....Fabbri Group Kamikaze

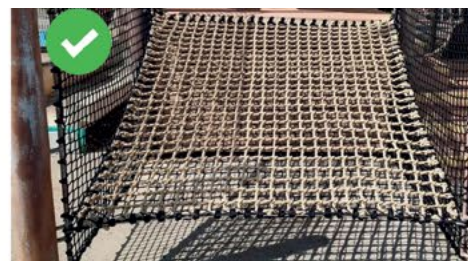


Twin Twister, Powers Great American Midways. COURTESY SARTORI AMUSEMENT RIDES



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## 2026 WHAT'S NEW GUIDE | INTERNATIONAL

Compiled by Jeffrey Seifert

*This is a list of announced and confirmed projects for 2026 as of press time. Some manufacturers may have more projects for this year that have yet to be announced. These projects may open later this year.*

### ALBANIA

**Albania Waterpark**, Tirana....Polin Waterparks five waterslide expansion including aquasphere and bowl

### AUSTRALIA

**Dreamworld**, Coomera....King Claw — Intamin 135-foot Gyro Swing

### AUSTRIA

**Familypark**, Burgenland....Zamperla Disk'O Coaster 40

**Wild & Freizeitpark Ferleiten**, Ferleiten....Human-powered roller coaster

### BAHRAIN

**Janat Dilmun**, Southern Governorate....ProSlide custom RideHouse and Hive 35

### BELGIUM

**Bellewaerde Park**, Ypres.... Seesaw Swing — ART Engineering Wild Swing XL

**Boudewijn Seapark**, Bruges....Angry Octopus — Pinfari RC 40 relocated from Oakwood; Cro-coaster — powered coaster relocated from Oakwood

**Surf Luxembourg**, Arlon....WhiteWater Endless Surf

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

**Grand Sunca Water and Dino Park**, Trebinje....Polin Waterparks 12 waterslides including King Cobra, bowl, body slides, tornado, and themed waterplay structure

**Mostar Waterpark**, Mostar....Polin Waterparks 17 waterslides, endless river, wave pool

### BRAZIL

**Beto Carrero World**, Penha....Zamperla Flying Tigers

**Brasil Surfe Club Aretê Búzios**, Búzios....WhiteWater Endless Surf ES48 with 48 caissons.

**Nações at Thermas dos Laranjais**, Olimpia....WhiteWater waterslide tower with a Family Master Blaster + Orbiter + Anaconda Fusion and a Family Master Blaster + Constrictor + Galaxy Bowl Fusion

**Parque Unipraias**, Balneário Camboriú....Intamin Super Gyro Tower

**Playcenter Parque Center Norte**, São Paulo....Zamperla Nebulaz

**Só Marcas Outlet Guarulhos**, São Paulo....SBF Visa spinning coaster

**Tauá Resort João Pessoa**, João Pessoa....Polin Waterparks six waterslides; Polin themed water attraction; Polin spray action area

**Vila dos Smurfs Park**, São Paulo....SBF Visa spinning coaster

**Wet'n Wild**, Sao Paulo....Polin Waterparks cobra-themed Rift and Navigatour

### CHINA

**Boonie Bears**, Chengyang....Jinma Rides family roller coaster

**Children's Park**, Luohu....Jinma Rides coaster

**Chimelong Paradise**, Panyu....Dive Coaster — B&M Dive Coaster; W Roller Coaster — Jinma Rides shuttle coaster

**Chimelong Qingyuan International Forest Resort**, Qingcheng....Mine Train — mine-themed roller coaster

**China Hin City**, Xiangshan....Family Roller Coaster — Jinma Rides; Monster Hunting Adventure — Nanfang Amusement Rides powered coaster; Running Into The Sky — Zamperla Thunderbolt

**Chishui Dinosaur Island Water Park**, Guizhou....ProSlide RocketBlast Water Coaster

**Chocolate Kingdom**, Yingde....Jinma Rides Super Spinning Coaster

**Fantasy Valley**, Xiangzhou....Mad Racers — GCI wooden coaster

**Fantawild**, Mudan....Vekoma Family Boomerang

**Fantawild**, Xiaonan....New park with multiple rides including Jinma Rides multi-element coaster; Jinma Rides shuttle coaster

**Fengling Children's Park**, Qingxiu....Jungle Mouse; shuttle coaster

**Grand Canal Hangzhou Steel Park**, Hangzhou....Furnace Rush — Hangzhou Hogwood Amusement Equipment coaster; Outer Space Flying Car — Jinma Rides Space Car

**Happy Valley (Beijing)**, Chaoyang....Jungle Racing — Jinma Rides Mine Coaster

**Happy Valley (Shenzhen)**, Nanshan....Nanfang Amusement Rides shuttle coaster

**Heshan Park**, Heshan....Jungle Flying Squirrel — Jungle Mouse coaster; Fruit Worm Coaster — kiddie oval coaster

**Legoland Shenzhen**, Shenzhen....New park with multiple rides including B&M Family Inverted Coaster; Dark ride/coaster; Single helix coaster; wing coaster; Zamperla Magic Bikes 2; Zamperla K2SK; Zamperla Rockin' Tug

**Legoland Sichuan**, Meishan....New park with multiple rides including B&M Family Inverted Coaster; other coasters unconfirmed

**Moku Sphere**, Yubei....New theme park with multiple rides including Maurer Rides Spike Coaster; Intamin Half Pipe; Intamin Spinning Coaster; Intamin Launch Coaster;

**Nanchong Panda Three Kingdoms City**, Shunqing....Soaring Hero Coaster — Jinma Rides shuttle coaster; Jinma Rides Family Roller Coaster

**Nansha Gengshan Village**, Nansha....family roller coaster; human-powered coaster

**Panda Paradise - Panda Planet**, Yucheng....Jinma Rides inverted coaster; family coaster

**Silk Road Paradise**, Qingdu....Inverse Time and Space Roller Coaster — Intamin Zac Spin

**Situ Town**, Zezhou....Beijing Shibaolai vertical lift hill coaster

**Tonglu Senbo Resort**, Hangzhou....ProSlide RocketBlast Water Coaster with FlyingSaucer 30

**Vitality Valley Tourist Resort**, Yanchu....Vekoma Family Boomerang; Jinma Suspended Roller Coaster; Jinma U-Shuttle

**Xiapu Binjiang Park**, Huicheng....Jungle Coaster — twin helix powered coaster

### COLUMBIA

**Parque Acuático Trinitarios Comfenalco**, Betulia....ProSlide Dueling PipeLine, RideHouse 200, RallyRacer, SkyBox

### DENMARK

**Legoland Billund**, Billund....Minifigure Speedway — Zierer Force Dueling Reverse Coaster

### EGYPT

**Aquamania Jungle Park at Rixos Radamis Sharm El Sheikh**, South Sinai Governorate....ProSlide Hive 20 (x2), RocketBlast, SwitchBack, Kidz Zone

**Pyramisa Resort**, Hurghada....Polin Waterparks 12 waterslides including King Cobra, bowl, body slides, tornado, and themed waterplay structure

### ENGLAND

**Adventure Coast Southport**, Southport....Extreme roller coaster

**Alton Towers**, Alton....Bluey the Ride — Zierer Force coaster

**Blackpool Pleasure Beach**, Blackpool....Avitkas — Intamin Gyro Swing

**Chessington World of Adventures**, Chessington....Chase's Mountain Mission — Zierer Force coaster; Zierer Drifter

**Gulliver's Land Resort**, Milton Keynes....Wiggler — SBF Visa wacky worm-style coaster

**Lightwater Valley**, Ripon....Spinning Racer — Maurer Rides Spinning Coaster

**Paultons Park**, Romsey....Drakon — Gerstlauer Euro-Fighter coaster

**Pleasurewood Hills**, Lowestoft....Family Coaster — Wacky Worm-style coaster

**Walton Pier**, Walton on Naze....Dragon — Kolmax Plus indoor coaster

### FINLAND

**Särkänniemi Amusement Park**, Tempere....Konect — Vekoma Junior Coaster with onboard sound

**Tivoli Mokia Finland**, Hauho....Family Ride — DAL Amusement Rides Company

**Tykkimäki**, Kouvola....Pohjolan Express

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### FRANCE

- Au Paradis des Enfants**, Trappes....Gold Mine Train — Big Apple/Wacky Worm-style coaster  
**Fabrikus World**, Vias....Interpark Wild Mouse coaster  
**Fééryland**, Tournehem-sur-la-Hem....SBF Visa Speedy Coaster MX600  
**Festyland**, Bretteville-Sur-Odon....Valkyrie — Vekoma Family Boomerang coaster  
**Fraispertuis City**, Jeanménil....Fireline Redwood — Vekoma Family Boomerang; Zierer Family Freefall Tower  
**Paradisland**, Saint-Martin-aux-Chartrains....Dragon Coaster — Kolmax Plus kidie coaster relocated from Fééryland  
**Parc des Combes**, Le Creusot....Bis2Fly — RES Rides Wave Twist L  
**Parc du Petit Prince**, Ungersheim....Zamperla Magic Bikes 6  
**Parc Spirou Provence**, Montoux....Kyûbi Unchained — Zamperla Thrill Launch coaster; Zamperla Nebulaz  
**Walibi Rhône-Alpes**, Les Avenières....Zamperla Gogo Bounce  
**Walygator Grand Est**, Maizières-les-Metz....Titan — Gerstlauer Euro-Fighter 600; Caicos Expedition — Zierer large tivoli Coaster relocated from Oakwood

### GEORGIA

- Abhazya Waterpark**, Abhazya....Polin Waterparks six waterslides; Polin themed water attraction; Polin spray action area

### GERMANY

- Alpincenter Bottrop**, Bottrop....Wiegand Alpine Coaster  
**Bayern Park**, Reisbach....Hehnahutchn - Wild Swing theming — Lagotronics pre-show including 17 animatronic figures  
**Belantis**, Leipzig....Zamperla Speedway 8; Zamperla Gogo Bounce 6.4; La croisière d'Idefix — Reverchon Mini Flume  
**Elefantenreservat und Erlebnispark Starkenberg**, Starkenberg....Human-powered roller coaster  
**Erlebnisberg Altenberg**, Altenberg....Speed Coaster — Wiegand Alpine Coaster  
**Erlebnispark Tripsdrill**, Cleebron....Zamperla Flying Tiger 8  
**Freizeit-Land Geiselwind**, Geiselwind....Wide Hilde — RES Roller Ball relocated from Schwaben  
**Freizeitpark Plohn**, Lengerfeld....Dønnervind — Mack Rides Water Coaster  
**Hansa-Park**, Sierksdorf....Cornwall Coaster — Gerstlauer Family Coaster  
**Hofis Erenispark**, Dasing....SBF Visa family launch coaster  
**Holland Park**, Pankental....Klompi — Art Engineering family launch coaster  
**Karls Erlebnis-Dorf Döbeln**, Döbeln....Bettys Beerchen Boomerang — Vekoma Family Boomerang  
**Karls Erlebnis-Dorf Elstal**, Wustermark....Bettys Beerchen Boomerang — Vekoma Family Boomerang  
**Karls Erlebnis-Dorf Oberhausen**, Oberhausen....Erdbeer-Raupenbahn — SBF Visa family coaster; human-powered coaster  
**Märchen-Erlebnispark Marquartstein**, Marquartstein....Loren-Flitzer — Inno-Heege human-powered coaster  
**Panorama Park Sauerland**, Kirchlindem....Katta-Kutter Panorama — Inno-Heege human-powered coaster  
**Plopsaland Deutschland**, Hassloch....100% Wolf — Gerstlauer Family Coaster  
**Serengeti-Park**, Hodenhagen....Gozimba — RES Rides Air Loop powered coaster  
**Therme Erding**, Erding....Extensive renovations to spa and pool areas  
**Tier- und Freizeitpark Thüle**, Friesoythe-Thüle....Art Engineering Family Coaster  
**Wildpark Westerwald**, Gackebach....Gackebach — wiegand Alpine Coaster

### INDIA

- MJ Fun City Waterpark and Resort**, Lucknow....Figure eight powered coaster  
**Nicco Park**, Kokata....Jinma Rides Super Spinning Coaster  
**VGP Universal Kingdom**, Chennai....Intamin 10-inversion roller coaster relocated from Chimelong Paradise  
**Water Kingdom**, Mumbai....Polin Waterparks Turbolance and raft slide



Manimi,  
Tobu Zoo.  
COURTESY ZIERER

- Wonderla Amusement Park Bangalore**, Bangalore....Garuda Glide — Vekoma SLC relocated from Kentucky Kingdom

### INDONESIA

- Mikutopia**, Batu....Oyster Coaster — Jinma Rides family coaster

### IRAN

- Opark Waterpark**, Opark....Polin Waterparks three-waterslide expansion

### IRAQ

- Baghdad Island**, Alfahamat....Intamin Half Pipe

### IRELAND

- Funtasia Theme Park**, Drogheda....WhiteWater slide additions to indoor water park

### ITALY

- Cavallino Matto**, Castagneto Carducci....Speedy Mouse — L&T Systems Junior Coaster relocated from within park  
**Leolandia**, Capriate San Gervasio....Mack Rides Spinning Coaster  
**Parco Junior**, Lignano Sabbiadoro....Zamperla Kiddie Flume

### JAPAN

- Benyland**, Sendai....Zamperla Galleon 42  
**Fuji-Q Highland**, Fujiyoshida....Zamperla Samba Balloon 8  
**Ikoma Skyland**, Ikoma....Zamperla Speedway 6  
**Junglia Okinawa**, Okinawa....Zamperla Endeavour 48  
**Nagashima Spa Land**, Kuwana....Zierer Wave Swinger 56  
**Sea Paradise**, Kanazawa....Zamperla Mega Disk'O  
**Tobu Zoo**, Manimi....Zierer Drifter  
**Toy Kingdom**, Tamano....Rainbow Coaster — family coaster

### MALAYSIA

- Skytropolis Indoor Theme Park**, Genting Highlands....Bolt — Beijing Shibaolai indoor family coaster  
**Le Diamant Vert Waterpark**, Fes....Polin Waterparks two waterslide complex with golden loop and bowl slide  
**Smile Park**, Marrakesh....Vermillion Roller Coaster — Hebei Zhongye 3-ring Coaster

### NETHERLANDS

- Billybird Drakenrijk**, Reuver....Drakenrijk Burning Village — Lagotronics interactive water ride  
**De Waarbeek**, Hengelo....Missie 18 — Gosetto Cosmic Spin coaster  
**Drielandenpunt - Vaals**, Vaals....Lagotronics Interactive Walkthrough  
**Drouwenzand Attractiepark**, Drouwen....GJ Mining Co. — SBF Visa family coaster  
**Duinrell**, Wassenaar....Kikker8baan — Zierer Force coaster; Zierer Drifter  
**Efteling**, Kaatsheuvel....Hooghmoed — Zierer Triple Family Freefall Tower



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**Slagharen Themepark & Resort**, Slagharen....Zamperla Discovery Revolution 40  
**Tongelreep National Swimming Centre**, Eindhoven....Polin Waterparks three waterslides

**NIGERIA**

**Firstgate Waterpark**, Firstgate....Polin Waterparks seven waterslide complex, underwater-themed play structure, splashcourse, kids area

**NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Curry's Fun Park Portrush**, Portrush....Spinning Coaster — Zamperla Twister Coaster relocated from Flamingo Park

**PHILIPPINES**

**J Castles**, Batangas....Jinma Rides vertical lift coaster  
**Pradera Adventure Island**, Lubao....ProSlide Tornado 60, Dueling Pipeline, 6-Lane RallyRacer, Kidz Zone, RideHouse 300

**POLAND**

**Canpol Wonderland**, Człuchów....Zierer Tivoli large  
**Mandoria**, Rzgów....Gerstlauer Bobsled coaster  
**Zatorland**, Zator....SBF Visa spinning cars coaster with hamster wheel  
**Zoomarine**, Albufeira....Nautilus — SBF Visa spinning cars coaster

**QATAR**

**Doha Quest**, Doha....Guardians of the Hidden Chamber — Sally Dark Rides interactive dark ride  
**Miraculous Adventure FEC**, Doha....New FEC combining storytelling and physical adventure

**RUSSIA**

**Tula Aquapark**, Tula....Polin Waterparks five waterslides including bowl and drop capsule; Polin water play structure and spray action area  
**Unapark Volgograd**, Volgograd....Zhipao extreme roller coaster

**SAUDI ARABIA**

**Adrena - Red Sea**, The Red Sea....WhiteWater Endless Surf ES36 saltwater wave pool; WhiteWater AquaPlay 1750; WhiteWater HydroLaunch slides (World's first); FlowSurf  
**Aktar Mutah Waterpark**, Mecca....Polin Waterparks eight waterslides, including bowl, racing slides; themed waterplay structure  
**Aquarabia Qiddiya Ciity**, Qiddiya....New Water park with WhiteWater Endless Surf; WhiteWater water-based amusement rides  
**Global City Dammam**, Dammam....Dragon — DAL Amusement Rides coaster powered coaster  
**Othaim Park**, Dammam....Polin Waterparks 13 waterslides including Turbolance, bowl, tornado, body slides, mat racer, loop, themed water play structure, spray action area, aquadisco  
**Seven FEC**, Abhazya....Zamperla Energy Storm 5, Jumping Tower  
**Seven FEC**, Madinah....Zamperla Energy Storm 5, Jumping Tower  
**Seven FEC**, Tabuk....Zamperla Energy Storm 5, Jumping Tower, Samba Balloons 8, Jumping Star  
**Seven FEC**, Yanbou....Zamperla Energy Storm 5, Jumping Tower, Samba Balloons 8, Jumping Star  
**Six Flags Qiddiya**, Riyadh....Zamperla Big Wavez, Nebulaz, Giga Discovery 40, Windstarz 12, Bumper Cars, Aeromax, Water Mania Double, Flying Carousel, Samba Balloons 8  
**Transformers Exit 10**, Yanbu....Transformers — S&S Axis Coaster; Zamperla Sky Tower 15, Speedway 6, Midi Disk'O Coaster, Blendez, Nebulaz

**SLOVAKIA**

**Fantázia Liptov Park**, Liptovský Mikuláš....Vesmír — spinning cars coaster

**Terme 3000**, Moravske Toplice....Polin Waterparks two body slides with natural light effects

**SOUTH KOREA**

**Lotte World**, Seoul....Stone Express — Zamperla Junior Coaster; Zamperla Sky Tower; Zamperla Speedway  
**Lotte World Adventure Busan**, Gijang....Giant Revolution — Zamperla Double Heart coaster; Zamperla Galleon 42

**SPAIN**

**Aquopolis Villanueva de la Cañada**, Madrid....ProSlide RocketBlast Water Coaster with FlyingSaucer 30  
**Parque de la Naturaleza de Cabárceno**, Cantabria....Wiegand Alpine Coaster  
**Port Adventura's Caribe Aquatic Park**, Tarragona....WhiteWater AquaAdrenaline (World's first)  
**Sould Park Málaga**, Málaga....Gosetto spinning cars coaster; suspended family coaster  
**Tobogán de Panticosa**, Panticosa....Tobogán de Panticosa

**SWEDEN**

**Liseberg**, Gothenburg .... Storm Wave — ART Engineering Wild Swing XL  
**Skånes Djurpark**, Höörs Kommun....Zamperla Magic Bikes 6 all access

**SWITZERLAND**

**Atzmännig**, Eschenbach....Sunkid Mountain Coaster

**TAIWAN**

**Chaozhou Railway Park**, Chaozhou....Human-powered roller coaster

**TURKEY**

**Delhin Aqua Serenity Resort Waterpark**, Antalya....Polin Waterparks nine waterslides and spray action area  
**Land of Legends**, Antalya....Europe's tallest water slide tower with WhiteWater Helix Twist Slide (World's first)  
**Nickelodeon Play**, Istanbul....RES Rides JellyFish Jump; Sally Crazy Carnival dark ride

**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES**

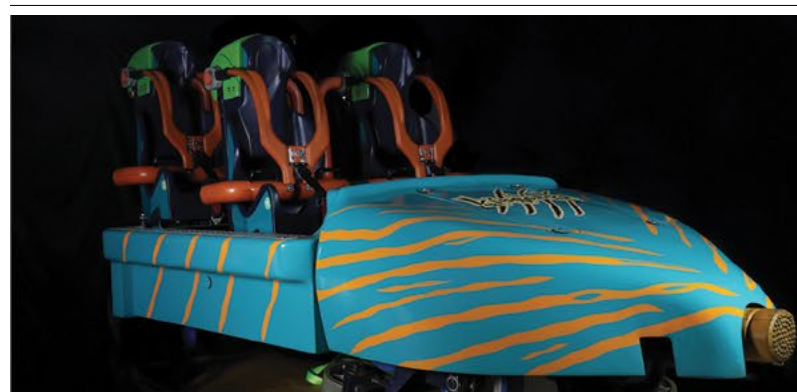
**Al Ain Zoo Kids Waterpark**, Abu Dhabi....Polin Waterparks waterplay structure and spray action area  
**Oasis Bay Waterpark**, Dubai....Polin Waterparks Parrot-themed stingray; Polin double loop slide; waterplay structure with numerous slides  
**Sheikh Zayed Festival**, Abu Dhabi....Spinning cars family coaster; Multi-element steel coaster  
**Yas Waterworld**, Abu Dhabi....11 WhiteWater attractions including UAE's tallest waterslide and the Middle East's first Blasterango Battle

**VIETNAM**

**Aquatopia Water Park**, Phú Quoc....World's first ProSlide PowerRapids, ProSlide's first Kidz Coaster, Kidz Zone,  
**Sun World Vung Tau Aqua Adventure**, Vung Tàu....New water park with ProSlide 10-Lane RallyRacer, Tornado 60, Hive 20, RocketBlast Water Coaster, Spray Park, RideHouse 600 Pro; WhiteWater AquaForms 20; WhiteWater Mini Blaster  
**VinWonders**, Nha Trang....Tilt of Thunder — Vekoma Tilt Coaster; WhiteWater Slide Wheel; Zamperla Nebulaz; Zamperla Air Race 6.4; Zamperla Disk'O 24

**WALES**

**Barry Island Pleasure Park**, Barry Island....Güven Amusement Rides Factory Brucomela  
**Gateway Resort**, Bynea....Nessi — Cavazza Diego Nessi portable coaster relocated from Coney Beach Pleasure Park



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