NEW YORK CITY, N.Y. — “New York, New York...a wonderful town!” Or so the lyrics go from “On the Town.” Or perhaps it is the voice of Frank Sinatra singing, “Start spreading the news...” that helped get attendees energized. Make no mistake, The 2015 Golden Ticket Awards weekend has hit The Big Apple. Hosted by Zamperla, this celebratory and industry-networking event featured the best of New York, including a stop to the revamped and re-electrified Luna Park at Coney Island. Visiting Victorian Gardens in Central Park and taking guided tours on double-decker buses made for an authentic New York experience.

One of the focal points of the weekend was time spent at Coney Island. This area has seen as many ups and downs as a true roller coaster. In the beginning back in the mid 1880s, there was a public outcry to maintain the beach and preserve a natural setting by not building any structures. However, the amusement demand kept afloat the various vendors, barkers, ride operators and amusement facilities.

Those origins continued to evolve. The four miles of real estate took on a life of its own. Coney Island is forever draped in New York history, often noted by the dotted landmark icons that still stand along the peninsula. LaMarcus Thompson solidified his claim to fame by opening the Switch Back Railway in 1884, the first documented successful roller coaster.

The early half of the 20th century found Coney Island in its heyday. Electric lights set the park aglow. Newer, bigger roller coasters were built and all the pleasures of a modern Americana could be found at Coney Island.

Following the wars, times changed and the Coney Island area took on a different character. No longer the playground of the affluent, the famed stretch of shoreline that once housed Dreamland, Luna Park, Steeplechase Park and Astroland survived in its own way. Most of the older parks shuttered their gates due to fires, neglect or changing times. No one would deny that the area needed sprucing up, to put it mildly.

While the city of Brooklyn debated what to do with the area and if the amusement concept even had a future, the minds behind Zamperla had fresh ideas. In an extremely short time frame, efforts were made in mere weeks to open what would be the new Luna Park. Located adjacent to Deno's Wonder Wheel Park, Coney Island's makeover had begun. Today, the Coney Island area has seen a new life and vibrant atmosphere creating the latest chapter for this Brooklyn legend.

It is only fitting that a ceremony that acknowledges the achievements and success of such a famed industry is held in one of America’s most treasured sites. The Golden Ticket Awards and New York City — a great fit.

AT asked Zamperla their thoughts on hosting the Golden Ticket Awards. “We are honored!” says Ramon Rasario, self-appointed “super galactic hero” at Zamperla. “We love the fact we were able to breathe life into an icon that was needing resuscitation.

Looking toward the future, Rosario adds, “Going forward, it’s making us better manufacturers. The Operations side is making us think beyond the factory. We continue to improve.”

When asked what attendees can expect, he says, “We are introducing five new rides at the event. We are looking forward to the response of the audience. It goes back to a time where Coney Island used to be a place to introduce new rides. This landmark event lets us do it again.”

All stories this issue
AT/Tim Baldwin
unless otherwise noted

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Crunch time

To all the amusement industry professionals who attend the Golden Ticket Awards each year, we say “Thank You” for your continued support of what we believe has become a great networking event. Just as any park has its crunch time in the month, week and days that lead up to the new season opening day, the staff of Amusement Today feels the same crunch with the short timeframes involved in both the Golden Ticket print issue and all the details that go into the GTA event and awards ceremony.

The parks have just concluded their 90-day summer season and now have a chance to breathe a bit. Amusement Today’s 90-day crunch season begins with the Golden Ticket Awards. The staff returns from the fun event in New York to face a very short deadline before our October water parks issue is due at the printer.

Next up are three issues (November Pre-IAAPA, November Convention issue and December) that must all complete production and printing prior to our arrival in Orlando for the annual IAAPA Attractions Expo.

So if you catch one of the AT staff members in the next 90 days and we seem a little winded, you will know why. It’s our version of your park’s daily summer operation.

I would like to give a special thank you to Alberto Zamperla, Valerio Farrari and Ramon Rosario and their staffs for all their hard work to make the 2015 Golden Ticket Awards weekend a reality in New York. Team Zamperla showcased their hard work in fine fashion. I hope the amusement industry is as proud of the Coney rebirth as we are. Additional thanks goes to Ryan Stana, RWS Associates for their help with the show entertainment during the GTA ceremony, and to Deno’s Wonder Wheel Park.

Nail biters

Although tabulation has progressed from the manual hand-written calculations of the early years of the Golden Ticket Awards to electronic surveys, a random look here and there lets me keep in touch with how the vote is progressing.

This year I didn’t get a peek until midday on the last day of voting. I was shocked at the number of absolutely down-to-the-wire races. If any voters happen to be reading this column, please know, your vote is indeed very important. It wasn’t until about 18 hours later that I learned the final results. While I don’t own a park that had bragging rights at stake, still, I was riveted. Who would win?

Amusement Today has never utilized the exact same panel each year. Experienced veterans are mixed with new travelers to make up a collection of hundreds of voices. The sheer number of countries that appear in our lists of finalists is astonishing.

Two races in particular — Best Seaside Park and Best Children’s Park — were the most down-to-the-wire this year. Talk about nail biters. The numbers were set, no one could change the vote. But being one who sees the results in their entirety, I get to be the one behind the scenes that silently champions that park that has risen to sixth place, hoping they can nudge their way onto the list in the years ahead.

And for all the parks and rides that are new faces on our lists of finalists, I celebrate you the most. Obviously taking the Golden Ticket is like an Olympian reaching that gold medal. But I find the finalists even more rewarding. These are the parks and attractions trying hard to be better, hoping that their quality of work continues to be noticed. Hopefully it has. Keep up the good work. Over time AT has seen just such parks climb from relative obscurity to world renowned prominence. What can possibly be more rewarding?

A little nail biting keeps everyone on their toes.
Thank You from Zamperla and Amusement Today to all who attended the 2015 event.
Last year, Europa-Park astonished the industry by rising to the top of the charts. Climbing a rung at a time during the past decade, the most attended theme park in all of Germany took the Golden Ticket for **BEST PARK**. Europa-Park’s grasp is strong as it holds the award for a second year.

Long-running champ **Cedar Point** continues to boast top-rated park in America at the No. 2 spot. The park is known for its spectacular collection of roller coasters and resort facilities. It held the prize for an amazing 16 years.

**Knoebels** and **Dollywood** duke it out (as those two parks have been known to do) with a reversal of positions this year. Knoebels slots in at No. 3 with its traditional park atmosphere; Dollywood’s showmanship and extraordinary environment is No. 4.

Completing the top five is the benchmark measurement to all theme parks, Walt Disney’s **Anaheim original, Disneyland**.

The strongest battle for taking the Ticket for **BEST SEA-**

---

**BEST SEASIDE PARK: Morey's Piers**

**COURTESY MOREY'S PIERS**

from nothing with nearly zero experience and in doing so proved that experience can be a negative in rapidly changing environments.” He laughs, “And be sure to watch out for the tram car between piers!”

The only other seaside venue to amount a substantial vote was Sweden’s **Gröna Lund**. This park is full of character and charm, often witnessed by ferry boats that arrive throughout the day right alongside the park.

Our park categories see yet another stiff competition. **BEST CHILDREN’S PARK** is a category in which contenders are not only putting forth a better product and value for families, but are finding more and more exposure to our voters.

**Storybook Land** holds the Golden Ticket once again, for a sixth time. However, another tight race has newcomer **Storybook Land** making an outside run and coming in at a close second place. Events that brought a spotlight to this facility have helped Storybook Land share its strengths.

“That’s fantastic!” exclaims Park Manager Jessica Fricano. “We’ve been pushing to get on the list for years. That’s great.”

When AT asked Fricano what people take with them after a visit to the charming facility, she says, “It’s traditional. We have a lot of people that came as kids. Now they bring their own kids. It takes them back.” She adds, “But we’re a modern park. We have that charm and we’re personal. I think that’s something people notice.”

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No. 2: **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**

**AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT**

**Story Land (not to be confused with Storybook Land)** stays strong on the charts at the No. 3 spot. In 2014, it was the park that shot up to second place.

**Legoland Windsor** is also a newcomer that has found favor with our voters. Within clear view of Windsor Castle, one of the residences of Queen Elizabeth, this Legoland park features an impressive Mini-land of so many worldwide monuments constructed from Legos, but a wide range of fun and unique attractions geared to the younger set. It comes in at No. 4.

In a tie for fifth, we see two other Legoland properties: **Legoland California** (once the Golden Ticket holder) and **Legoland Florida**.

On the watery side of things, **BEST WATER PARK** goes to Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels. The proven formula of producing attractions that are outside the box of any other park continues to perform. Even among its sister properties, this water park makes for a tough one to beat.

Placing at No. 2 is **Splashin’ Safari, Holiday World’s** water park. From its humble beginnings in 1993, the water park has grown in gargantuan proportions, building not only huge rides, but cutting-edge rides. Even the park agrees that Splashin’ Safari is a primary attendance driver.

**Dollywood’s Splash Country** places No. 3. Nestled into its Smoky Mountain setting, the water park combines beauty with family fun.

Differentiating from last year’s finalists, **Aquatica** in Orlando jumps onto the chart, landing at 4th place. Adjacent to SeaWorld, this facility shares its philosophy of combining the love and preservation of animals

> See PARKS, page 8
Thank You
for voting us Best Children’s Park!

BECAUSE YOU LOVE TO SEE THEM

Smile

IDLEWILD.com
The best anniversary gift gets even better in such wonderful company!

Thank you Amusement Today, all the voters, fans, and all our colleagues for making this industry so wonderful! We salute all the Golden Ticket nominees in this category. You’re all winners!

We hope to see you soon again at Europa-Park!

www.europapark.com
CONGRATULATIONS!

With more than 30 attractions from Mack Rides we are proud and honored of our great and strong partnership. Congratulations EUROPA-PARK!

Coaster, water ride or dark ride - we can make your dreams come true.
Visit us online at www.mack-rides.com
The No. 2 spot is still held by Kalahari Resort in Sandusky, Ohio. It is the sister property, Kalahari Wisconsin Dells, that jumps up a notch to overtake it. Keeping its No. 5 spot is Schlitterbahn Galveston Island still taking top prize. Its adjustable roof can be retracted to bring in the sunshine in a matter of minutes, or it can be used for shade and sunshine in a matter of minutes.

The No. 5 position is taken by SeaWorld Orlando, maintaining its heavy lead into its ride attractions. Its adjustable roof retains its No. 5 position. In the category of BEST MARINE LIFE PARK, SeaWorld Orlando takes the No. 1 spot. It’s visual impact is unmistakable. Splash Landing at Alton Towers retains its No. 5 position. In the category of BEST MARINE LIFE PARK, SeaWorld Orlando maintains its heavy lead taking the No. 1 spot. SeaWorld San Diego, last year’s Golden Ticket Awards host, stays in the No. 2 spot.

The interaction with the marine life plays an important role at Discovery Cove, making for a notably unique experience. Located in Orlando, with limited attendance, this swim-with-the-dolphins park comes in at No. 3. Rounding out our finalists is a flip flop of our last two spots. This year, SeaWorld San Antonio comes in at the No. 4 spot. Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, with its mix of rides and marine life close out the park categories at No. 5.

BEST MARINE LIFE PARK: SeaWorld Orlando
AT/TIM BALDWIN
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**BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2015 (Water Park)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Ride</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fury 325</td>
<td>Carowinds</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wicked Cyclone</td>
<td>Six Flags New England</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Twisted Colossus</td>
<td>Six Flags Magic Mountain</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cu Chalain</td>
<td>Tayto Park</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thunderbird</td>
<td>Holiday World</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2015 (Amusement Park)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Ride</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Carowinds</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Six Flags New England</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thunderbird</td>
<td>Holiday World</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BEST PARK**

- **Europa-Park**
  - Rust, Germany 24%
- Cedar Point
  - Sandusky, Ohio 14%
- Knoebels Amusement Resort
  - Elysburg, Pa. 11%
- Dollywood
  - Pigeon Forge, Tenn. 9%
- Disneyland
  - Anaheim, Calif. 7%
- Blackpool Pleasure Beach
  - Blackpool, England 5% (tie)
- Busch Gardens Williamsburg
  - Williamsburg, Va. 5% (tie)
- Universal’s Islands of Adventure
  - Orlando, Fla. 4.5%
- Alton Towers
  - Staffordshire, England 4% (tie)
- Holiday World
  - Santa Claus, Ind. 4% (tie)
- Magic Kingdom
  - Orlando, Fla. 4% (tie)
- Tokyo Disney Sea
  - Tokyo, Japan 4% (tie)

**BEST WATER PARK**

- Schlitterbahn
  - New Braunfels, Texas 52%
- Splashin’ Safari
  - Santa Claus, Ind. 19%
- Dollywood’s Splash Country
  - Pigeon Forge, Tenn. 6%
- Aquatica
  - Orlando, Fla. 5%
- Typhoon Lagoon
  - Orlando, Fla. 4%

**BEST CHILDREN’S PARK**

- Idlewild & SoakZone
  - Ligonier, Pa. 21%
- Storybook Land
  - Egg Harbor Twp., N.J. 20%
- Story Land
  - Glen, N.H. 9%
- Legoland Windsor
  - Windsor, England 8%
- Legoland California
  - Carlsbad, Calif. 7% (tie)
- Legoland Florida
  - Winterhaven, Fla. 7% (tie)

**BEST MARINE LIFE PARK**

- SeaWorld Orlando
  - Orlando, Fla. 55%
- SeaWorld San Diego
  - San Diego, Calif. 10%
- Discovery Cove
  - Orlando, Fla. 9%
- SeaWorld San Antonio
  - San Antonio, Texas 8%
- Six Flags Discovery Kingdom
  - Vallejo, Calif. 7%
# PARK AND RIDE WINNERS

## Best Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knoebels Amusement Resort</td>
<td>Elysburg, Pa.</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollywood</td>
<td>Pigeon Forge, Tenn.</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epcot</td>
<td>Orlando, Fla.</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Dollar City</td>
<td>Branson, Mo.</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europa-Park</td>
<td>Rust, Germany</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Best Water Ride (Park)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ride</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valhalla</td>
<td>Blackpool Pleasure Beach</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley Do-Right’s Ripsaw Falls</td>
<td>Universal’s Islands of Adventure</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splash Mountain</td>
<td>Magic Kingdom</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Sidewinder</td>
<td>Dollywood</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber Mountain Log Ride</td>
<td>Knott’s Berry Farm</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Best Water Park Ride

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ride</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildebeest</td>
<td>Splashin’ Safari</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammoth</td>
<td>Splashin’ Safari</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Blaster</td>
<td>Schitterbahn</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Falls</td>
<td>Schitterbahn</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verrückt</td>
<td>Schitterbahn Kansas City</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Best Indoor Coaster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaster</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenge of the Mummy</td>
<td>Universal Studios Orlando</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space Mountain</td>
<td>Disneyland</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winjas</td>
<td>Phantasialand</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Diamond</td>
<td>Knoebels Amusement Resort</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindbender</td>
<td>Galaxyland</td>
<td>7% (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock ‘n’ Roller Coaster</td>
<td>Disney’s Hollywood Studios</td>
<td>7% (tie)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Best Dark Ride

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ride</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry Potter &amp; the Forbidden Journey</td>
<td>Universal’s Islands of Adventure</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twilight Zone Tower of Terror</td>
<td>Disney’s Hollywood Studios</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haunted Mansion</td>
<td>Universal Studios Orlando</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man</td>
<td>Universal’s Islands of Adventure</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haunted Mansion</td>
<td>Knoebels Amusement Resort</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Best Outdoor Show Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illuminations</td>
<td>Epcot</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World of Color</td>
<td>Disney California Adventure</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasmic!</td>
<td>Disney’s Hollywood Studios</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasmic!</td>
<td>Disneyland</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Star Nights</td>
<td>Six Flags Fiesta Texas</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Rankings

Ranked by percentage of votes cast.
Good Things Come to Those Who Wait!

Morey’s Piers would like to congratulate and share this award with all of our dedicated team members and guests. Congratulations to all of the 2015 Golden Ticket Award winners!

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THANK YOU Amusement Today and Golden Ticket Voters for this honor. For the eighth year in a row, you’ve voted us THE WORLD’S BEST INDOOR WATERPARK!
CONGRATULATIONS to the Nominees and Winners of the Golden Ticket Awards 2015!

Thank you to Amusement Today & Zamperla for hosting this fantastic event!

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TOP Steel Roller Coasters
#1 Millennium Force® • Cedar Point
#4 Fury 325® • Carowinds
#7 Intimidator® • Carowinds
#8 Leviathan® • Canada’s Wonderland
#11 Diamondback • Kings Island
#13 Top Thrill Dragster® • Cedar Point
#15 Magnum XL-200 • Cedar Point
#16 Intimidator® 305 • Kings Dominion
#18 Behemoth® • Canada’s Wonderland
#20 Banshee® • Kings Island
#22 Maverick® • Cedar Point

TOP Wooden Roller Coasters
#6 The Beast® • Kings Island
#9 Gold Striker® • California's Great America
#17 Prowler® • Worlds of Fun
#20 Shivering Timbers® • Michigan’s Adventure

BEST Park
#2 Cedar Point

BEST New Ride
#1 Fury 325® • Carowinds

BEST Halloween Event
#2 Knott’s Berry Farm

BEST Landscaping
#2 Gilroy Gardens

BEST Kids’ Area
#1 Kings Island
#4 Kings Dominion

BEST Water Ride
#5 Timber Mountain Log Ride
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Soak City®
Sandusky, OH • www.soakcitycp.com

Knott’s Berry Farm®
Buena Park, CA • knotts.com

Knott’s Soak City®
Orange County • www.soakcityoc.com

Kings Island®
Cincinnati, OH • visitkingsisland.com

Canada’s Wonderland®
Toronto, ON • canadaswonderland.com

Kings Dominion®
Richmond, VA • kingsdominion.com

Carowinds®
Charlotte, NC • carowinds.com

California’s Great America
Santa Clara, CA • cagreatamerica.com

Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom®
Allentown, PA • dorneypark.com

Valleyfair®
Shakopee, MN • valleyfair.com

Worlds of Fun & Oceans of Fun®
Kansas City, MO • worldsfun.com

Michigan’s Adventure®
Muskegon, MI • madventure.com

Wildwater Kingdom®
Aurora, OH • wildwaterfun.com

Gilroy Gardens
Gilroy, CA • gilroygardens.org

It’s on! The fight for winning BEST FOOD is the latest tug-of-war battle in recent Golden Ticket Awards history.

For years, Knoebels was the perennial favorite in this category. In 2012, Dollywood snagged it. The following year, AT saw its first tie ever for a Golden Ticket with a tie between the two parks. Last year, Dollywood reigned victorious again. This year Knoebels steals it back.

“How lucky are we to have Dollywood in the industry to push us to improve our food?” says Dick Knoebel, president. “When voters informed us that another park had better satisfied their appetites, this was clear indication that we needed to step up our game.”

Aside from the scuffle for the top rung, the other three places on our finalists remain unchanged. Epcot, with its international cuisine remains in the No. 3 spot, Silver Dollar City’s fine home cookin’ takes No. 4, and Europa-Park’s diverse collection of restaurants holds at No. 5.

Among the repeat win for Dollywood in the FRIENDLIEST PARK category, we find familiar faces. Holiday World (No. 2) and Knoebels (No. 3) know their way around this category. New, however, is Adventure Island at England’s Southend-On-Sea. Numerous voters commented on the tremendous enthusiasm for their job displayed by the staff at this seaside facility.

Silver Dollar City’s amazing citizens and town-folk complete the top five. BEST LANDSCAPING had a close finish in 2014, but Busch Gardens Williamsburg regained a comfortable lead once again to take the Golden Ticket. Gilroy Gardens, the big challenger last year, keeps its No. 2 spot. Known for a wide variety of plants and the incredible Circus Trees, Gilroy Gardens is a paradise for horticulture lovers.

Efteling in the Netherlands has long been firmly planted on AT’s charts in this category. The beautiful park takes third place.

A new park to surface for their landscaping is Alton Towers. The manicured bushes and sunken gardens of the massive estate captured many voters. The park takes the No. 4 position.

No stranger to this category, Dollywood keeps its ground lush and beautiful for its guests year round. The Tennessee themer closes out the five finalists.

Of all categories, this next one may be the toughest of all. CLEANEST PARK is something every amusement facility strives to provide each and every day. Most parks do a good job, so to get particular attention by our voters is certainly high praise.

Holiday World & Splashin’ Safari add another Golden Ticket to their collection.

Bragging rights land on Dollywood for being a finalist in all four categories presented on this page. This is a major achievement for a park and one that hopefully every park manager strives to attain. Dollywood rests at the No. 2 spot.

Busch Gardens Williamsburg moves up a notch to take the No. 3 place this year. The Cleanest Park category is regular territory for the beautiful Virginia theme park.

Closing out the category are true originals in their own right. Europa-Park is such a driving force in Germany and continues to grow and evolve by focusing on the industry cornerstones and leading the way in customer service. It holds the No. 4 spot. Disneyland (No. 5) celebrates its Diamond Jubilee this year. For 60 years, it has served as a blueprint of how all parks should be operated and the level of quality each guest deserves.
Nature with a Thrilling Twist

To our landscapers, voters and everyone who help make Busch Gardens™ naturally fun and beautifully wild year after year, Thank you.
Thank you for helping make our upcoming 90th Anniversary a tasty & thrilling celebration!

**BEST FOOD:**
14 Times in the Past 16 Years!

**BEST CAROUSEL:**
20 Years in a Row!

**PHOENIX:**
Voted #3 Wooden Roller Coaster!

In the top 10 again!

America’s Largest Free-Admission Amusement Park!

Knoebels Amusement Resort

Free Admission • Free Parking • Free Entertainment • Free Picnic Facilities
CONGRATULATIONS
GOLDEN TICKET WINNERS

From The Citizens Of
Silver Dollar City

BRANSON, MO  SILVERDOLLARCITY.COM
Perhaps the most eagerly awaited categories are the Best New Rides. This category champions those parks who push boundaries, reach new heights, or just delight with sheer thrills. Never in the history of this Golden Ticket category has the competition been this fierce...and it’s always tough.

Innovations this year saw major new dark ride attractions at the regional theme park level, transformed hybrid coasters (one with an amazing interaction between trains), never-before-done attributes applied to coaster genres and other indoor attractions. It was a great year to be in a theme park.

Taking the Golden Ticket for BEST NEW RIDE in the PARK category is Fury 325 at Carowinds. This is the second time B&M has reached beyond the 300-foot mark and this time around it soared even higher.

The 325-foot mega-coaster graced the Carolina theme park’s new entrance making for a stupendous moment of “wow” on arrival.

“I’ve logged more than 100 rides on this thrill machine, and I’m hoping to ride with my son for the first time if he’s tall enough by the end of the season. Fingers crossed,” jokes Mike Fehnel, vice president and general manager of Carowinds. “Fury 325 is a signature coaster that will forever define the skyline at Carowinds and Charlotte. We’re very proud of what we have achieved together.”

Two hybrid transformations followed to take the No. 2 spot and No. 3 spot: Wicked Cyclone and Twisted Colossus respectively.

Of the two, Wicked Cyclone delivers the out-of-control wilder ride with stunning aero-batic maneuvers on all levels. It’s nonstop action.

Six Flags New England now offers a one-two steel punch with the pairing of this new thriller with top rated Bizarro.

Twisted Colossus at Six Flags Magic Mountain boasts the fact that it is the longest hybrid coaster on the planet. With this transformation, Rocky Mountain Construction has taken a dual track coaster and created a single track masterpiece that laps the coaster’s layout twice. If taking the first drop a second time wasn’t ingenious enough, when timed correctly two trains of riders interact with each other, inverting upside down on two occasions. When it comes to “wow” factors, this one ranks among the best.

Cú Chulainn at Tayto Park makes a remarkable showing by drawing numerous voters to check out this new wooden coaster, despite the ride being located in Ireland. Tremendous

BEST NEW RIDE (WATER PARK): Dive Bomber, Six Flags White Water COURTESY SIX FLAGS WHITE WATER

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Dive Bomber, Six Flags White Water COURTESY SIX FLAGS WHITE WATER

No. 2: SlideZilla, Elitch Gardens COURTESY ELITCH GARDENS

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See NEW RIDES, page 21
speed, heavy banking and ample airtime have helped this newest wooden installation by Gravity Group receive rave reviews.

Completing the top five finalists — and keeping at bay numerous other worthy contenders — Thunderbird at Holiday World sees a new twist on the most recent product in the B&M catalog. It is the first time that B&M has used an LSM launch on one of their coasters; even more amazing, it is a wing coaster.

On the water park flip side of this category, Six Flags White Water near Atlanta unveiled Dive Bomber, which takes the Golden Ticket for BEST NEW RIDE in the WATER PARK sector.

Here, Six Flags has taken the popular trap door style attraction, provided by ProSlide, and created the tallest attraction the park has ever built. Standing at more than 100 feet tall, Dive Bomber drops riders close to 90 degrees straight down allowing them to reach speeds of 44 mph.

“We’re delighted with the reaction from guests who have experienced Dive Bomber,” says Dale Kaetzel, park president. “Its massive drop has provided riders with hours of summertime fun and we look forward to more of those moments for years to come. It’s an honor to have the tallest slide at Six Flags White Water as Best New Ride in a Water Park.”

SlideZilla at Elitch Gardens in Denver takes the No. 2 spot. Also supplied by ProSlide, this six-story tower combines a Behemoth Bowl with a Tornado Wave element that swallows four riders in cloverleaf tubes at a time. This design won an IAAPA award last year.

At No. 3, the finalists have a tie: Aqua Rocket at Raging Waters in San Dimas, California and Slideboarding at Wet ‘n’ Wild Las Vegas.

Aqua Rocket is the newest hydromagnetic uphill water coaster, and the first in California. Slideboarding is the latest venture by WhiteWater West in which the concept of gaming is introduced as riders are challenged to push buttons on their handgrips that correspond with lighted rings in the tubes. The thrill here is to be top score and for season pass holders to try to improve their game over the course of the year.

Completing the five finalists is Anaconda at the new Kalahari Resort in the Poconos of Pennsylvania. This uphill water coaster is one of numerous attractions provided by ProSlide.

BEST NEW RIDE (PARK):
Fury 325, Carowinds
AT/GARY SLADE

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No. 2: Wicked Cyclone, Six Flags New England
AT/TIM BALDWIN

Las Vegas
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One Fury-ous Year!

Congratulations Carowinds

Charlotte, NC
Twisted and Wicked

2015 Best New Ride

#2

#3

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Our panel of experts

Since Amusement Today introduced the Golden Ticket Awards in 1998, we continue to seek out the most experienced park enthusiasts to participate in our survey. AT follows a fair and balanced protocol of dividing our ballots between four geographical regions (see color map at right) of the United States. In addition to the hundreds of surveys sent to American enthusiasts, international fans are also sought out and we invite such fans to contact us for participation in future years. Amusement Today thanks the hundreds of voters who helped form this year’s panel of experts and make the 2015 Golden Ticket Awards a reality.

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

Of note, park employees, manufacturers, and Amusement Today staff are not eligible to be on the panel.
THANKS TO OUR AMAZING STAFF for another award winning season! It wouldn't be possible without you!
On behalf of our entire Schlitterbahn family of Waterparks and Resorts, we appreciate your continued support.

#BAHNLOVE

THANK YOU Amusement Today and Golden Ticket Voters for this honor. For the eighteenth year in a row, you’ve voted us THE WORLD’S BEST WATERPARK!
Lagoon makes amusement a true family affair

In 1886, initially on the shores of Utah’s Great Salt Lake and — 10 years later — a few miles away at its present site in Farmington, north of Salt Lake City, Lagoon established itself as a place for family fun.

Activities such as bowling, dancing and swimming preceded the opening of the amusement park’s first ride, Shoot-the-Chutes, in 1899. A Victorian-era Herschell-Spillman carousel arrived in 1906. And after its still-operating, John Miller-designed roller coaster was built in 1921, Lagoon became a magnet for thrill-seekers.

Hard times befall the park during World War II. To its rescue came brothers David, Dan, Robert and Peter Freed, who, just home from the war, saw potential in the property and signed a long-term lease on it. Led by ride enthusiast Robert Freed, the clan spruced up and reopened Lagoon in 1946 and added nine new attractions for 1947. The Freed’s enterprise was on a roll.

Disaster struck in 1953, when a fire devastated half the park. Bob Freed personally trained water on the carousel to save it. With renewed determination, the Freed’s rebuilt Lagoon rapidly for the 1954 season — commencing several decades of growth and success leading to the family’s 1983 purchase of the property and the richly landscaped, attraction-packed park we know today.

Immortalized by The Beach Boys in their 1965 tune “Salt Lake City,” Lagoon has maintained its family-driven tradition through second and third Freed generations — including Peter’s children David Freed, now in his 22nd year as park president, and Kristen Freed-O’Bagy, vice president. Peter Freed himself, at age 94, the last surviving original brother and Bob’s immediate successor as Lagoon’s president, still reports to work as chairman.

This season, on the eve of Lagoon’s 130th year, the Freed’s again demonstrated their commitment to one of America’s oldest amusement parks by introducing Cannibal, a stunning, state-of-the-art steel diving coaster designed largely in-house and costing in excess $26 million.

“Our philosophy has always been that we try and improve Lagoon,” Dave Freed told AT earlier this summer. “We always felt like we were the keeper of the asset.”

For the longtime dedication of the Freed family and its staff in preserving Utah history and a national treasure, Amusement Today honors Lagoon with its 2015 Park of the Year award.

Huck Finn’s Playland wins Renaissance

Barely more than 60 days. That’s all two brothers had to give new life to a multi-generational keepsake. By definition, Renaissance means a rebirth or revival. In finding a fitting candidate for this new Publisher’s Pick designation, none is more worthy than Huck Finn’s Playland outside Albany, N.Y. After 62 years of operating Hoffman’s Playland, Dave and Ruth Hoffman deservedly retired last September. Talk and proposals from interested parties helped address the community’s desire to keep the property going, but it was the bid of Jeffrey Sperber, along with his brother Reid Sperber, that brought the next chapter of this park into a reality. It was clear that it wasn’t a matter of “someone should do it,” but rather “someone could do it.”

Being owners of Huck Finn’s Warehouse, a well-known family-friendly furniture store six miles away in North Albany, the pair of gentlemen acquired neighboring land. Sperber acknowledges that it was not only the support of the local government, but actually the sheer appreciation from them that made it all click. It was the announcement that the Hoffmans had found no acceptable solution that caused the Sperbers to act, keeping the rides from going to auction. It was important to keep this part of the local community alive and well.

Starting on April 17, they amazingly re-located everything adjacent to their furniture warehouse. But it wasn’t just a matter of setting up rides. A brick midway, landscaping, shade structures and other bits of attention to detail are what truly spoke to the revival of the former Hoffman’s facility. Over the fall and winter, the rides had been lovingly restored, piece by piece, and stored for their new home. Restoring the integrity of the rides was a large hurdle, according to Jeffrey Sperber, along with the difficulty involved in the physical move. Each week presented a new challenge, each one taken on. But in that two-month time period, it all came together.

In addition to saving this family tradition, the park has brought new jobs to the area and has rehired many staff from the original location. Huck’s also continues to push redevelopment of what was once a gritty warehouse district into more of a commercial community. Their website and Facebook pages are testimony to this inspirational work. Bricks can be purchased to line the midway with messages. These funds support Ronald McDonald House and Albany Police Athletic League charities.

Huck Finn’s has always been a business that caters to families. “For over 50 years, we have been filling people’s homes with great values on home furnishings,” says Jeffrey Sperber. “Now we are filling their hearts.” To this, Amusement Today is honored to select Huck Finn’s Playland as the first ever Golden Ticket Renaissance Award.

The former Hoffman’s Playland reopened on June 18, 2015, as the $1.8 million Huck Finn’s Playland. The new four-acre park is just six miles from its previous location. All of the 17 rides were relocated in just 60 days from Hoffman’s to Huck Finn’s and are surrounded by beautiful landscaping and bricked walkways. COURTESY HUCK FINN’S PLAYLAND
Quassy mixes tradition with the new

George Frantzis II and Eric Anderson have both spent most of their lives at Quassy Amusement Park located in Middlebury, Conn. Frantzis grew up at the lakeside facility as a third-generation member of his family-owned business – his grandfather purchasing the park in 1937.

Anderson came to work at the park at age 11 and learned the arcade and games business under the mentorship of Quassy owner John Frantzis.

Today, both George Frantzis II and Anderson oversee daily operations of the park and have been credited with the rebirth of the property and development of its new Splash Away Bay water park.

The two seasoned park owners set the stage in 2002 to rebuild itself as the property was looking old and tired. It needed more than paint, it needed a fresh look and new, modern rides. A $6 million multi-year re-development plan was outlined that would include yearly enhancements as well as two major anchor attractions that the park desperately needed.

In 2003 the park built the first phase of a new water park, Saturation Station with the Tunnel Twisters waterslide complex making its splash in 2006. The two owners have admitted the immediate success of the new water park not only helped save the park, it generated all new interest in the facility and added to park’s bottom line that allowed for the re-development to continue.

The plans included the addition of many new flat rides to keep the guests coming back for repeat visits. Not overlooking their long history, the rebuilding of their 50-foot, four-abreast Grand Carousel became a priority, new trolley themed ticketing and a park entrance was built and an all new train station now greets train riders — successfully mixing the new with the old.

Then in 2011 the park introduced Wooden Warrior, the first junior coaster from The Gravity Group (Cincinnati, Ohio) and the first coaster in North America to run a Timberliner train from Gravitykraft – sister company of The Gravity Group. As a junior coaster, Wooden Warrior appears annually in the Golden Ticket rankings. Attendance and revenues continue to climb.

This season, Quassy added eight new slides to the water park kicking off the second $6 million multi-year redevelopment plan.

Without their vision, Quassy – in operation since 1908 – could have met the fate of many New England parks of yesteryear and ceased to exist. But George Frantzis II and Eric Anderson did not let that happen. They reinvested and rebuilt to bring record revenues to Quassy, thus keeping the turnstile turning. For their vision and dedication, Quassy Amusement & Waterpark takes the Publisher’s Pick for the 2015 Turnstile Award.

Zamperla, Ferrari save historic Coney Island

Coney Island, the birthplace of American amusements. For decades, Americans flocked to Coney Island, not only for the beach, but for the thrills found at the various parks. But those thrills began to shrink in numbers when the parks and area fell in disrepair during the last several decades.

When Astroland closed on Sept. 7, 2008, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg knew it was time for Coney Island to reinvent itself. It was then, at the 2008 IAAPA Attractions Expo that the NYC Economic Development Corp. (EDC) exhibited to promote a revitalized Coney Island. Enter the team of Alberto Zamperla and Valerio Ferrari who met with the EDC to gather information.

Mayor Bloomberg sends a letter on May 14, 2009 to the Coney Island Amusement Advisory Panel, and it sparks the interest of Ferrari — who is serving on the panel. That letter made him believe that Zamperla could make a park a reality. With Alberto’s blessing, a business plan was created and would be ready once the city’s RFP went public.

Tuesday, February 16, 2010 was the date Mayor Bloomberg officially announced that Zamperla’s Central Amusement International (already operators of the highly successful summer-only Victorian Gardens in Central Park) had been selected to lead the Coney Island redevelopment. CAI and Zamperla swiftly pulled together all of their expert resources, from both sides of the ocean, to make the new Luna Park a reality, opening to the public May 29, 2010. In that 100 day span, these two men, and their dedicated teams installed 19 new rides, built a restaurant, staff office, five food outlets and trained 230 new employees that would host guests on this new 3.3-acre site.

The planned Luna Park, with supporting parks and attractions that have followed, didn’t come without risk and investment. To date, more than $45 million has been pumped into these facilities managed by CAI. To ensure that original ride deliveries could be made, Alberto Zamperla committed to ride production, long before Mayor Bloomberg made it official. It was a huge risk for Zamperla the company, but one that did pay off.

At the close of the 2010 opening year, Mayor Bloomberg announced that Luna Park drew more than 450,000 visitors, who took more than 2.5 million rides for what was deemed a highly successful summer-only Victorian Gardens in Central Park) had been selected to lead the Coney Island redevelopment. CAI and Zamperla swiftly pulled together all of their expert resources, from both sides of the ocean, to make the new Luna Park a reality, opening to the public May 29, 2010. In that 100 day span, these two men, and their dedicated teams installed 19 new rides, built a restaurant, staff office, five food outlets and trained 230 new employees that would host guests on this new 3.3-acre site.

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Blackpool’s Valhalla takes Best Water Ride

A great mix of rides creates a full day of fun and variety. Here’s what our voters found to be outstanding in this year’s balloting.

The category of BEST WATER RIDE sees a new winner for 2015. Actually, this consistent finalist took home the gold in 2003 once before. Valhalla at Blackpool Pleasure Beach is an extraordinary water ride (as in drenching) that mixes the wet component with a dark ride setting featuring an audio soundtrack, fire, waterfalls and dramatic theming. Its one-of-a-kind sensory overload rates it at No. 1 this year. The Pleasure Beach worked with Intamin on this attraction.

Dudley Do-Right’s Ripsaw Falls at Universal’s Islands of Adventure, our long-running winner in this category, supplied by Universal, was supplied by Mack Rides. Three perennial favorites round out the top five: Splash Mountain, Magic Kingdom (No. 3); Mountain Slidewinder, Dollywood (No. 4); and Timber Mountain Log Flume, Knott’s Berry Farm (No. 5).

In the BEST WATER PARK RIDE category, Splashin’ Safari has bragging rights to the top two water park rides. Taking the Golden Ticket for the sixth year, Wildebeest has fans from all over. Its cousin, the six-person Mammoth moves up to the No. 2 spot. Both were supplied by ProSlide. Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels controls the next two places. Master Blaster, a former Golden Ticket winner, comes in at No. 3, while the extremely long rapids ride, The Falls, is at the No. 4 position. Sister park Schlitterbahn Kansas City and its record-setting water slide, Verrückt, close out the five finalists.

BEST INDOOR COASTER: Revenge of the Mummy, Universal Studios Orlando

BEST DARK RIDE: Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey, Universal’s Islands of Adventure

BEST WATER PARK RIDE: Wildebeest, Holiday World & Splashin’ Safari

BEST FUNHOUSE/WALK-THROUGH: Noah’s Ark, Kennywood

BEST INDOOR COASTER: Revenge of the Mummy, Universal Studios Orlando
Best Funhouse/Walk-Through Attraction
Noah’s Ark, Kennywood

Kennywood says “Thank You!!” to Amusement Today and its readers for this prestigious award.

kennywood.com
CONGRATULATIONS!

REVENGE OF THE MUMMY
THE RIDE

Premier Rides is proud and honored to be a part of Universal Studios’ formula for success.
Three #1 Golden Ticket Award Winners

BEST DARK RIDE
Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey

BEST INDOOR COASTER
Revenge of the Mummy

BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT
Universal Studios Florida - Halloween Horror Nights

See it all at UniversalOrlando.com
YOUR SUCCESS IS OUR PASSION.

Passion for this industry is the lifeblood of our company. It fuels our quest for the ultimate water rides and our full devotion to every project.

Because we're invested in our customers' success on a personal level, nothing feels better than helping you be your best.

Congratulations to Six Flags White Water and Dive Bomber; 2015 Golden Ticket first place award winner for Best New Water Park Ride.

Special recognition to Holiday World's Wildebeest for its first place Best Water Park Ride Award. Now a six-time champion, winning every year since the HydroMAGNETIC® ROCKET™ was installed.

Find the perfect water ride for your park: www.preslide.com/perfect

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For awarding us ...

#1 Water Park Ride, since 2010!

Two of America’s 10 Best Water Slides - PEOPLE Magazine

#2 Best Water Park Ride!

... and the Cleanest Park for the 16th consecutive year!

"The staff keeps this place so clean I would eat my hot dog if I dropped it on the ground!"
Jennifer G., Louisville, Ky.

HolidayWorld.com
Santa Claus, Ind.
Lightening things up, **BEST CAROUSEL** finds its brass ring favorite at Knoebels in the No. 1 spot once again. This carousel has never been defeated in this category. In addition to the ring dispenser, it is also adorned with classic band organs giving the entire attraction a nostalgic authenticity.

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk’s carousel continues to hold its No. 2 position. It also features a ring dispenser and multiple band organs.

Six Flags Great America has a hold on the No. 3 spot. Its double-decker statue at the park’s entrance is beautifully displayed with a reflecting pool.

The final slots of the category see some change. Tying for the No. 4 spot, Efteling in The Netherlands makes an appearance as a first-time finalist, while Six Flags Over Georgia’s historic grand Riverview Carousel makes a return to the charts after temporarily slipping off.

A great collection of children’s attractions clustered in one area makes for a convenient and sought-after location for both kids and parents. **Kings Island** keeps its undefeated grasp on **BEST KIDS’ AREA**.

Efteling stays at the No. 2 spot. Universal’s Islands of Adventure moves back to No. 3 and **Kings Dominion** resurfaces on the list at No. 4. A tie for the No. 5 position locks newcomer Blackpool Pleasure Beach with regular finalist **Nickelodeon Universe** at Mall of America. In an ironic twist, Blackpool’s kids’ area is also themed to Nickelodeon characters.
YOUR TICKET TO THE RIDE OF A LIFETIME

RIDEENTERTAINMENT.COM
Festivals and shows keep the audiences entertained

Spooks and snowflakes give great extended operating days to a park’s season, but they also provide guests with fresh park experiences in comparison to the summer season.

Universal Studios Orlando, one of only two parks to ever take the Golden Ticket, snatches it once again for BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT. Halloween Horror Nights has become a hugely attended event many scream-seekers do year after year.

Knott’s Berry Farm, a previous winner, comes in at the No. 2 spot. Californians make annual pilgrimages to attend this fall event.

Knoebels Amusement Resort keeps its No. 3 position and Kennywood stays at No. 4, as well.

New “blood,” if you will, is Busch Gardens Tampa at the No. 5 finalist position.

In most instances, parks are finding the Halloween mystique as a bankable way to significantly increase revenues. Many parks use this festival to close out their seasons. For others...

BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT goes to Dollywood, the only park to find this Golden Ticket in Santa’s stocking.

The next three parks keep their respective positions from 2014: Disneyland at No. 2, Silver Dollar City at No. 3 and Magic Kingdom at No. 4. A newcomer to the category is Europa-Park. Its winter celebration finds it at the No. 5 ranking.

Many parks around the globe continue to explore the magic of the holidays to bring in more and more people. The winter holidays also let parks creatively explore new imaginative directions for their venues.

It’s show time!

For a seventh year in a row, Dollywood takes the category of BEST SHOWS. With Dolly Parton as the park’s namesake, it is no surprise that quality entertainment comes naturally.

Six Flags Fiesta Texas, a ten-year winner of this category, still rates highly in the No. 2 spot.

Silver Dollar City (No. 3) and Europa-Park (No. 4) switch positions in comparison to last year’s charts.

Completing our five finalists is Disney California Adventure.

In the category of BEST OUTDOOR PRODUCTION, the two Disney juggernauts still rule the top two spots. To the surprise of many industry insiders, Epcot still keeps Disney California Adventure at bay from taking the Golden Ticket from Orlando. IllumiNations (No. 1) has enthralled guests for more than 15 seasons, while World of Color (No. 2) has mesmerized young and old alike, magically transforming the sister park to Disneyland at the California resort.

Fantasmic! is a hit on both coasts. This year, the Florida version at Disney Hollywood Studios (No. 3) has surpassed the votes for the original at Disneyland (No. 4).

Six Flags Fiesta Texas boldly stands as the only non-Disney park to rise to the charted lists in this category. Since the park opened in 1992, the multi-media shows including lasers, fireworks and projections on the park’s quarry walls has entertained for more than two decades. Lone Star Nights continues that tradition.
Thank You Amusement Today!

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Wooden coasters stand the test of time

With coasters on the charts dating back to the 1920s, wooden coasters still have the power to thrill. A different type of animal in comparison to the steel genre, a good wooden coaster requires tender care to remain viable on this list of the elite. It is common to see new stars rise, only to see their popularity fade over the years. Usually this is due to lack of maintenance instead of a rush of flashier, newer kids on the block.

This has some coaster fans a bit concerned. In the past few years, theme parks have been retiring wooden coasters at an eyebrow-raising rate, or converting them into glitzier new steel track hybrids. Business is business, but the whispers concerning the future of wood is palpable.

This chart celebrates wooden hits that continue to be stars at their respective parks.

Boulder Dash at Lake Compounce takes BEST WOODEN COASTER for a third year in a row. Of the top five, four of them have held the No. 1 spot at some point. Ironically, Phoenix at Knoebels has been one of two coasters that has been on every top ten list Amusement Today has printed since the inception of the Golden Ticket Awards in 1998. (Kings Island’s The Beast at No. 6 is the other.) However, Phoenix has yet to snare that No. 1 spot. Spot on loving care keeps the beloved woodie high on the charts, this year rising a notch to No. 3.

The remaining top five are El Toro at Six Flags Great Adventure (No. 2), which snared the Golden Ticket in 2012; The Voyage at Holiday World (No. 4) had a five year run from 2007-2011; and Thunderhead at Dollywood (No. 5) which held the title in 2005 and 2006. With the announcement of 2016’s Lightning Rod, Dollywood seems to be giving its sibling some challenging competition. Stay tuned for that drag race.

Other woodies in the top ten are Ravine Flyer II at Waldameer (No. 7); Silver Dollar City’s Outlaw Run, rising a notch to No. 8; and Gold Striker at California’s Great America at No. 9. A returning favorite is Hersheypark’s Lighting Racer, bringing the highest ranking racing coaster back to complete the top ten.

Compared to steel, newer wooden coasters are much more sparse. Still, Cú Chulainn, particularly given its isolated Ireland location, makes a tremendously impressive debut at No. 18. Coaster fanatics that have made it to Tayto Park have given the new-for-2015 woodie rave reviews.

A joyous return to the chart is Rampage at Alabama’s Splash Adventure. Re-opening last fall, this rejuvenated park has brought a well-respected wooden coaster back from the great beyond. Enthusiasts and preservationists both celebrate this valiant effort. Rampage’s return is found on the chart at No. 28.

Five coasters not listed last year sneak on the tail end of the charts for 2015: Twister at Gröna Lund returns to the charts at No. 44. In a tie for the No. 45 spot, Zippin Pippin
Voted the #1 Wooden Coaster in the World Again!

Thank you Amusement Today
WOOD
Continued from page 40 at Bay Beach returns again, this time alongside Hersheypark’s Comet, a first time appearance (ever) on AT’s charts. T-Express at Everland in South Korea also makes a return (No. 47). Blackpool Pleasure Beach features three woodies this year; Big Dipper lands on the charts for a first time at No. 48.

The biggest climber this year also happens to be another Blackpool favorite. Wild Mouse, one of the handful of wooden wild mouse coasters on the planet continues to receive newfound love from coaster fans, virtually doubling its points from last year which pushes it up to No. 26.

Above, since winning the management contract for the Coney Island Cyclone, Zamperla has continued numerous improvements for the ride and it has moved up the charts. Left, the re-opened Rampage at Alabama Splash Adventure leaps back onto the charts. Right, Blackpool’s Wild Mouse is a fan favorite.

CYCLONE AT/GARY SLADE; RAMPAGE COURTESY ALEX DICKEY; WILD MOUSE COURTESY CHERI ARMSTRONG
FIVE OF THE TOP 10 WOODEN ROLLER COASTERS USE THE WORLD’S MOST POPULAR COASTER TRAINS

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Lightning Racer at Hershey Park 2000
Thunderhead at Dollywood 2004

Gold Striker at California’s Great America 2013
White Lightning at Fun Spot Orlando 2013

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<td>Dinn - PTC/Schmeck</td>
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<td>The Voyage</td>
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<td>Waldameer</td>
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<td>The Raven</td>
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<td>1927</td>
<td>PTC/Miller</td>
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Steel Coaster chart sees lots of up and downs

The importance of good roller coasters cannot be stressed enough in being a viable theme park destination. With more than 3,000 steel coasters in the world, making it onto the Golden Ticket Chart is a major accomplishment.

“Hotel Breakers and our Lake Erie beach represent Cedar Point’s historical legacy; but world class roller coasters represent modern day Cedar Point,” says Jason McClure, vice president and general manager for Cedar Point. “Coasters are integral to the Cedar Point experience. While there are too many renowned experiences to list them all, Millennium Force remains our crown jewel. But we won’t rest upon our laurels. Cedar Point will build upon our legacy in 2016. Valravn will not just be another jewel for the crown, but a new crown all unto itself.”

Millennium Force snags the Golden Ticket for BEST STEEL COASTER for a sixth consecutive year. Overall, Cedar Point has five roller coasters on AT’s charts.

The remainder of the top ten is a jumble in comparison to last year’s chart. No. 6 is Apollo’s Chariot at Busch Gardens Williamsburg (up a spot); Intimidator, Carowinds’ other mega-coaster (No. 7, giving the park two coasters in the top ten); Leviathan at Canada’s Wonderland (No. 8) and New Texas Giant at Six Flags Over Texas at No. 10.

But, something fascinating happens. For the first time since 2003, Alton Tower’s Nemesis breaks back into the top ten at No. 9. Not only is the creatively-themed B&M inverted coaster making a wildly popular comeback, but it is also the first time that any steel coaster that travels upside down has graced the top ten in the Golden Ticket Awards in seven years.

Everything changes there as Carowinds’ Fury 325 makes an astonishing debut at No. 4, the highest debut of any coaster in nine years. Even with that powerful premiere, Six Flags Great Adventure’s Nitro holds strong to its No. 5 position.

The remainder of the top ten is a jumble in comparison to last year’s chart. No. 6 is Apollo’s Chariot at Busch Gardens Williamsburg (up a spot); Intimidator, Carowinds’ other mega-coaster (No. 7, giving the park two coasters in the top ten); Leviathan at Canada’s Wonderland (No. 8) and New Texas Giant at Six Flags Over Texas at No. 10.

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Other than Fury 325, two other new-for-2015 steel coasters grace the charts. Wicked Cyclone at Six Flags New England places at No. 23 and Six Flags Magic Mountain’s Twisted Colossus lands at No. 28. Both are by Rocky Mountain Construction.

Other steel coasters not on the list in 2014 to land on the 2015 charts: The Swarm at England’s Thorpe Park impressively places at No. 30 (which features two rows of backward facing seats), Alton Tower’s Air (No. 39), Six Flags Great Adventure’s Bizarro (No. 44) makes a dramatic return after years off the list, and Six Flags Mexico’s Medusa Steel Coaster’s jump on the charts (No. 49) places all of RMC’s projects on the boards.

In contrast to wood coasters, where numbers of installations are rather flat or barely decreasing due to the removal of a few wooden coasters or the transformation of wood over to steel track, steel coasters are thriving with big numbers of new installations each year. This makes the steel chart even more challenging to stay viable as points are spread among a much larger herd.

Thirteen roller coasters on the steel lists are found in parks outside the United States.

Intamin claims the top three coasters on the charts, as well as a total of 9 in the list. B&M boasts a total of 23 in the mix, and Rocky Mountain now has all their coaster projects on the charts, both on wood and steel.

Arrow, Chance, Mack, Morgan, Schwarzkopf and Vekoma also find their products on the steel list.
WE ARE AS PROUD AS THE PARKS ARE...

...Congratulations to Cedar Point

#1

...Congratulations to Blackpool Pleasure Beach

#1

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<td>Carowinds</td>
<td>Charlotte, N.C.</td>
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<td>Leviathan</td>
<td>Canada’s Wonderland</td>
<td>Vaughan, Ontario, Canada</td>
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<td>B&amp;M</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Nemesis</td>
<td>Alton Towers</td>
<td>Staffordshire, England</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>462</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>New Texas Giant</td>
<td>Six Flags Over Texas</td>
<td>Arlington, Texas</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>450</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Diamondback</td>
<td>Kings Island</td>
<td>Mason, Ohio</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Goliath</td>
<td>Six Flags Over Georgia</td>
<td>Austell, Ga.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Top Thrill Dragster</td>
<td>Cedar Point</td>
<td>Sandusky, Ohio</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Intamin</td>
<td>408</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Phantom’s Revenge</td>
<td>Kennywood</td>
<td>West Mifflin, Pa.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>405</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Magnum XL-200</td>
<td>Cedar Point</td>
<td>Sandusky, Ohio</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Arrow</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Intimidator 305</td>
<td>Kings Dominion</td>
<td>Doswell, Va.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Blue Fire Megacoaster</td>
<td>Europa-Park</td>
<td>Rust, Germany</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Mack</td>
<td>302</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Behemoth</td>
<td>Canada’s Wonderland</td>
<td>Vaughan, Ontario, Canada</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Iron Rattler</td>
<td>Six Flags Fiesta Texas</td>
<td>San Antonio, Texas</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>294</td>
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<tr>
<td>20  (tie)</td>
<td>Banshee</td>
<td>Kings Island</td>
<td>Mason, Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>20  (tie)</td>
<td>X2</td>
<td>Six Flags Magic Mountain</td>
<td>Valencia, Calif.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Arrow</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Maverick</td>
<td>Cedar Point</td>
<td>Sandusky, Ohio</td>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Wicked Cyclone</td>
<td>Six Flags New England</td>
<td>Agawam, Mass.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>251</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Montu</td>
<td>Busch Gardens Tampa</td>
<td>Tampa, Fla.</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>238</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Skyrush</td>
<td>Hersheypark</td>
<td>Hershey, Pa.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Intamin</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# THE LIST

## 2015 TOP 50 STEEL ROLLER COASTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>PARK</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>SUPPLIER</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mind Bender</td>
<td>Six Flags Over Georgia</td>
<td>Austell, Ga.</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Schwarzkopf</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Twisted Colossus</td>
<td>Six Flags Magic Mountain</td>
<td>Valencia, Calif.</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>193</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Black Mamba</td>
<td>Phantasialand</td>
<td>Brühl, Germany</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>183</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>The Swarm</td>
<td>Thorpe Park</td>
<td>Churtsey, England</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 (tie)</td>
<td>Raging Bull</td>
<td>Six Flags Great America</td>
<td>Gurnee, Ill.</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Griffon</td>
<td>Busch Gardens Williamsburg</td>
<td>Williamsburg, Va.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>136</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Helix</td>
<td>Liseberg</td>
<td>Gothenburg, Sweden</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Mack</td>
<td>127</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Lisebergbanan</td>
<td>Liseberg</td>
<td>Gothenburg, Sweden</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Schwarzkopf</td>
<td>114</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Goliath</td>
<td>La Ronde</td>
<td>Montreal, Quebec, Canada</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>110</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Cheetah Hunt</td>
<td>Busch Gardens Tampa</td>
<td>Tampa, Fla.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Intamin</td>
<td>109</td>
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<tr>
<td>38 (tie)</td>
<td>Air</td>
<td>Alton Towers</td>
<td>Staffordshire, England</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>108</td>
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<tr>
<td>38 (tie)</td>
<td>Kumba</td>
<td>Busch Gardens Tampa</td>
<td>Tampa, Fla.</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
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<tr>
<td>38 (tie)</td>
<td>Lightning Run</td>
<td>Kentucky Kingdom</td>
<td>Louisville, Ky.</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Chance</td>
<td>108</td>
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<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Shock Wave</td>
<td>Six Flags Over Texas</td>
<td>Arlington, Texas</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Schwarzkopf</td>
<td>107</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>SheiKra</td>
<td>Busch Gardens Tampa</td>
<td>Tampa, Fla.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>105</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Manta</td>
<td>SeaWorld Orlando</td>
<td>Orlando, Fla.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
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<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Bizarro</td>
<td>Six Flags Great Adventure</td>
<td>Jackson, N.J.</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>B&amp;M</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>Steel Force</td>
<td>Dorney Park</td>
<td>Allentown, Pa.</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Morgan</td>
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<td>46</td>
<td>Whizzer</td>
<td>Six Flags Great America</td>
<td>Gurnee, Ill.</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Schwarzkopf</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Expedition Everest</td>
<td>Disney’s Animal Kingdom</td>
<td>Orlando, Fla.</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Vekoma</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Olympia Looping</td>
<td>owner: R. Barth &amp; Sohn KB</td>
<td>(traveling)</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Schwarzkopf</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td>49 (tie)</td>
<td>Kingda Ka</td>
<td>Six Flags Great Adventure</td>
<td>Jackson, N.J.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Intamin</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>49 (tie)</td>
<td>Medusa Steel Coaster</td>
<td>Six Flags Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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