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Parks seeking gold head west

Southern California hosts AT's 2009 Golden Ticket Awards

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

For 12 years, *Amusement Today* has presented industry awards to "The Best of the Best." In 2001 *Holiday World* approached AT with the prospect of announcing the results *live*. And so, a ceremony was born. For the first time, the Golden Ticket Awards are hosted by the land of gold, the West coast and sunny Southern California.

The 2009 host park, **Legoland California**, has dominated the Best Children's Park category since its introduction. The eclectic mix of kid-friendly rides, imaginative activities, and inspirational family experiences have helped this park grow into a unique destination. Attendees at this year's Golden Ticket Awards ceremony will get to experience firsthand this creative property catering to children and all of its charms.

However, even the ceremony has continued to grow over the years. In 2003 **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** offered an add-on day of enjoyment by co-hosting award winners who had traveled to the ceremony at **Schlitterbahn**. Over the past years, this has developed into a pre-event party the night before. This year, that festive occasion is hosted by **Knott's Berry Farm**.

Holiday World added



LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA
Host Park
2009 Golden Ticket Awards
September 10, 2009

their own spin in 2006 by transforming the ceremony into an Oscar-style production with presenters taken from the industry – from parks to manufacturers. As the Golden Tickets have evolved, it has become one of the year's most pleasurable networking events within this amazing industry.

Last year's host park, **Give Kids The World Village**, near Orlando, Florida, treated Golden Ticket attendees to a very memorable event, complete with their own version of the "Red Carpet."

So, "Go West!" honored winners. Enjoy the character and ambience of Southern California. **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**, our repeat winner of Best Seaside Park, has a shorter journey to the south, but they already know the

many pleasures of the Golden State. This year it just happens to be the Golden Ticket State.

As this celebration acknowledges The Best of the Best, *Amusement Today* thanks its host venues both past and present, as well as the event sponsors, and congratulates all winners on their hard-earned accolades.

Amusement Today would like to thank our two event parks, **Knott's Berry Farm** and **Legoland California**, as well as our many sponsors who help make our event possible: **Larson International**, **Leisure Labs LLC**, **Mack Rides**, **Montgomery Inn**, **William H. Robinson Inc.** and **Zamperla**. We would also like to thank **Kay Park Recreation** for their support and the **Nocturnes** for the musical talents.



PHOTO COURTESY LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA

Legoland California (above) takes the category for Best Children's Park and serves as host for the 2009 Golden Ticket Awards ceremony. **Knott's Berry Farm** (below) co-hosts with an industry reception the night before the ceremony.



PHOTO COURTESY RIC TURNER

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COMING IN OCTOBER'S ISSUE: POST GOLDEN TICKET AWARDS COVERAGE

AMUSEMENT TODAY™

Your amusement industry **NEWS** source!

Gary Slade

Founder and Publisher
gslade@amusementtoday.com



A new beginning

When IAAPA elected to cancel their long standing Summer Meeting event for the 2009 year, many in the industry turned to *Amusement Today* asking if we would keep the tradition alive.

While we are no strangers to hosting events like our Golden Ticket Awards each year, hosting a summer celebration event is a little different as more activities are needed which in turn takes more advance planning.

AT, with the help of William H. Robinson, Inc. and our Golden Ticket event coordinator Janice Witherow, was able to take our annual awards event and expand it into a Summer Celebration, open to all professionals in the amusement industry.

Thanks to our great host parks, Knott's Berry Farm and Legoland California, we were able to put a nice two-day agenda together that we hope all attendees were able to enjoy. We have already learned much from this event that will be planned into our future events, and we welcome your input on what you would like to see or do in the future.

The last several years have been good to the Golden Tickets as we were able to conduct our event in year-round facilities that allowed for a meeting date after the Labor Day holiday. That date is always important as it allows more travel time for the small park owners who never leave their facility when they are open.

The next two event years are all set with our host park sites and both sites returning to seasonal parks, beginning with Busch Gardens Williamsburg in 2010.

Our question to the industry is when would you most like to visit Busch Gardens next year for our Summer Celebration event? Before or after the Labor Day holiday, and is it necessary that the park be in full operation when you visit?

We thank all of you who attended, or participated, in the event, but most of all we thank our 2009 event sponsors, who with their financial contributions, help make our fun event possible for all to enjoy.

—Gary Slade



Tim Baldwin

A challenge

Being in competition with all the other parks in the amusement industry is a sizable challenge. Each park shares similar goals and customer service cornerstones which makes the task put before our voters an even tougher one. So often park fans come up to me and say "It's so hard to choose just one!"

Indeed. This difficulty in choosing is a result of the countless parks out there striving to do not just a good job, but an outstanding one. By exceeding goals and building upon them, parks continue to offer a fantastic value for guests and offer a diverse range of entertainment not available from any other industry. It's no wonder that family vacations are planned around visiting parks, and so many TV specials focus on the amusement industry. Even in today's tough economic climate, our industry still offers what people crave.

It is also exhilarating to see the huge fan base all the parks have created. Loyalty is deeply felt through the many enthusiast groups that form around this industry. Like



Baldwin

avid sports fans, amusement park aficionados deeply feel the pride of their favorite parks, be they local or from the twelve countries from around the world represented in the Golden Ticket charts. The unquenchable desire to get to all the parks out there continues to drive the enthusiasts to spend their

hard earned dollars on travel, admission, and souvenirs. Their support is felt and voiced to the industry. It is their expertise collected into one enormous round of applause that creates the Golden Ticket Awards for *Amusement Today* each year. We here at AT never forget how important this fan base is, and how grateful we are that they accept our challenge.

So, for every enthusiast that tells us how tough the job is we have given them, I take pride in the fact that so many favorites have been created. To all the parks that make it onto the charts — congratulations. It is a huge compliment. And for those still garnering votes, you also are to be commended. Thanks for continuing to make it a tough challenge year after year.

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CONGRATULATIONS

to the 2009 Golden Ticket Award Winners!

2009 park winners showcase the Best of the Best

Cedar Point, Schlitterbahn both make an even dozen years with an award

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

Cedar Point and Schlitterbahn have made it an even dozen. Since the inception of the Golden Ticket Awards in 1998, these two parks have stayed at the tops of their mountainous peaks showing no mercy to the up-and-coming parks below. Their grasp on Best Park and Best Waterpark seems inescapably tight.

Rising in the category of Best Park is Knoebels Amusement Resort to the No. 2 spot. This off-the-beaten-path gem has charmed all who visit during the summer season, as well as our experienced voters.

Disneyland and all its magic places third, and Germany's magnificently themed Europa Park ties with Universal's Islands of Adventure in fourth place to create a top five. Along with the other noteworthy parks in our list of top 10, millions of guests each year have been delighted by their experiences at these great parks.



Taking the second place position in Best Waterpark again is Holiday World's **Splashin' Safari**. Already poised with a huge investment for 2010, this park continues to grow in huge proportions.

Rounding out the top five includes the delightfully themed **Blizzard Beach** at the Walt Disney World complex; Wisconsin Dells' **Noah's Ark**, one of the largest waterparks in the world; and the recently opened **Aquatica** in Orlando, a newcomer to our charts.

Best Children's Park is taken for the sixth year

in a row by Golden Ticket host Legoland California. The diverse rides, activities, and unique family interactions have continued to impress our voters.

Second place once again is nabbed by **Idlewild**, the backwoods treasure trove tucked away in Ligonier, Penn. Here young ones continue to delight to the notably unique Mr. Rogers Neighborhood trolley ride.

Completing the category of Best Children's Park is **Dutch Wonderland**, also in Pennsylvania; **Fårup Sommerland** in Saltum, Denmark; and the beloved **Kiddieland** outside Chicago, sadly closing after the 2009 season. Its absence will be a major loss for the city.

A waterfront setting often makes for a fantastic atmosphere. Earning the Golden Ticket for Best Seaside Park once again this year is **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**. Its Giant Dipper, the oldest coaster on our charts, has delighted riders for 85 years and the park has been a staple of Northern California entertainment for more than a century.

► See PARKS, page 12



Park and Ride Winners

Ranked by percentage of votes cast



BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2009 (Amusement Park)

Prowler	Worlds of Fun	35%
Diamondback	Kings Island	30%
Manta	SeaWorld Orlando	12%
Terminator Salvation	Six Flags Magic Mountain	7%
Monster Mansion	Six Flags Over Georgia	4% (tie)
Pilgrims Plunge	Holiday World	4% (tie)

BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2009 (Waterpark)

Congo River Expedition	Schlitterbahn	67%
Wahoo Racer	Six Flags St. Louis	11%
UpSurge!	Alabama Adventure	10%
Maximum Velocity	Wet 'n' Wild Phoenix	5%
Dr. Von Dark's Tunnel of Terror	Splish Splash	4%

BEST PARK

Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	27%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	13%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	8%
Europa Park	Rust, Germany	7% (tie)
Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	7% (tie)
Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	6.5%
Tokyo DisneySea	Tokyo, Japan	6%
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	5.5%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	5% (tie)
Holiday World	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	5% (tie)

BEST WATERPARK

Schlitterbahn	New Braunfels, Texas	60%
Splashin' Safari	Santa Claus, Ind.	14%
Blizzard Beach	Orlando, Fla.	9%
Noah's Ark	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	5%
Aquatica	Orlando, Fla.	4.5%

BEST CHILDREN'S PARK

Legoland California	Carlsbad, Calif.	37%
Idlewild	Ligonier, Pa.	26%
Dutch Wonderland	Lancaster, Pa.	11%
Fårup Sommerland	Saltum, Denmark	7%
Kiddieland	Melrose Park, Ill.	6%

BEST MARINE LIFE PARK

SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	61%
SeaWorld San Antonio	San Antonio, Texas	11%
Discovery Cove	Orlando, Fla.	9% (tie)
SeaWorld San Diego	San Diego, Calif.	9% (tie)
Six Flags Discovery Kingdom	Vallejo, Calif.	5%

BEST SEASIDE PARK

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	41%
Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	28%
Morey's Piers	Wildwood, N.J.	21%
Kemah Boardwalk	Kemah, Texas	4%

BEST INDOOR WATERPARK

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island	Galveston, Texas	28%
Kalahari Resort	Sandusky, Ohio	17%
Kalahari Resort	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	14%
World Waterpark	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	13%
Splash Landings	Staffordshire, England	7%

FRIENDLIEST PARK

Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	30%
Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	28%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	13%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	6%
Beech Bend	Bowling Green, Ky.	4%

CLEANEST PARK

Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	36%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	14%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	13%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	11%
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	7%

BEST SHOWS

Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	25%
Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	23%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	15%
Disney's Hollywood Studios	Orlando, Fla.	10% (tie)
SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	10% (tie)

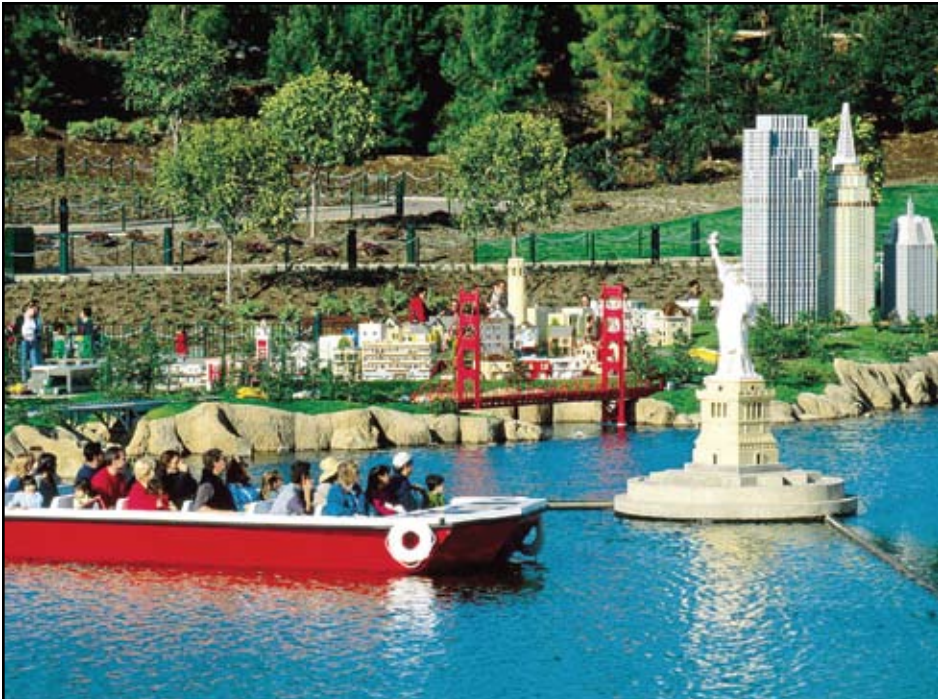


PHOTO COURTESY LEGOLAND CALIFORNIA

Legoland entertains children and families of all ages with its wide array of activities. Many amazing sculptures built out of LEGOs were created with thousands of manhours.



PHOTO COURTESY SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK PARK

Capitalizing on the wonderful California beach atmosphere, Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk wins again for Best Seaside Park. Its classic Giant Dipper is the oldest wooden coaster on our charts and is designated an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark.



Park and Ride Winners

Ranked by percentage of votes cast



BEST FOOD		
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	30%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	25%
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	13%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	11%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	7%
BEST WATER RIDE (PARK)		
Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls	Universal's Islands of Adventure	27%
Valhalla	Pleasure Beach Blackpool	16%
Splash Mountain	Magic Kingdom	12%
Mountain Slidewinder	Dollywood	8%
Popeye and Bluto's Bilge-Rat Barges	Universal's Islands of Adventure	7%
BEST WATERPARK RIDE		
Master Blaster	Schlitterbahn	35%
Zoombabwe	Holiday World	15%
Deluge	Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom	9% (tie)
Dragon's Revenge	Schlitterbahn	9% (tie)
Summit Plummet	Blizzard Beach	8%
BEST KIDS' AREA		
Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	41%
Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	17%
Nickelodeon Universe	Bloomington, Minn.	10%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, The Netherlands	6% (tie)
Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	6% (tie)
BEST DARK RIDE		
Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man	Universal's Islands of Adventure	32%
Twilight Zone Tower of Terror	Disney's Hollywood Studios	16%
Haunted Mansion	Knoebels Amusement Resort	12%
Indiana Jones...Temple of Forbidden Eye	Disneyland	8%
Journey to the Center of the Earth	Tokyo DisneySea	5%
BEST OUTDOOR SHOW PRODUCTION		
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	41%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	19%
Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	16%
Disney's Hollywood Studios	Orlando, Fla.	11% (tie)
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	11% (tie)

BEST LANDSCAPING		
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	35%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, The Netherlands	16%
Gilroy Gardens	Gilroy, Calif.	14%
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	6%
Disney's Animal Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	5% (tie)
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	5% (tie)
BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT		
Universal Orlando Resort	Orlando, Fla.	34%
Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	25%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	17%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	12%
BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT		
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	35%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	19%
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	13%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	12%
Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	6%
BEST CAROUSEL		
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	46%
Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	19%
Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga	10%
Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	8%
Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	6%
BEST INDOOR COASTER		
Revenge of the Mummy	Universal Studios Orlando	28%
Rock 'N Roller Coaster	Disney's Hollywood Studios	14%
Space Mountain	Disneyland	13%
Mindbender	Galaxyland	12.5%
Space Mountain	Magic Kingdom	12%
BEST FUNHOUSE/WALK-THROUGH ATTRACTION		
Frankenstein's Castle	Indiana Beach	38%
Noah's Ark	Kennywood	36%
Hotel Gasten	Liseberg	10%
Lustiga Huset	Gröna Lund	8%
Spok Huset	Gröna Lund	6%



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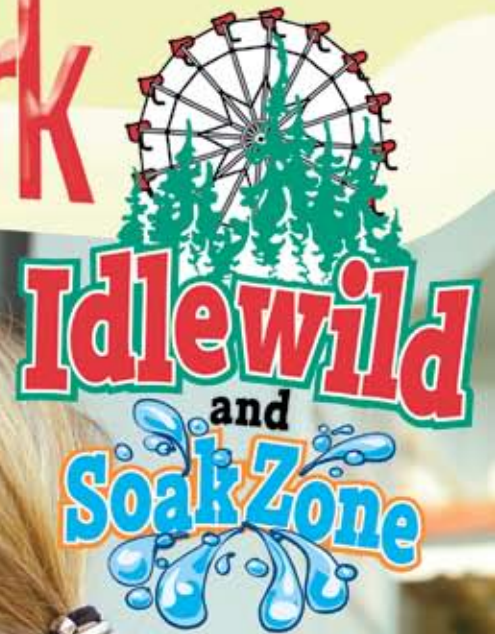


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#2 Best Children's Park



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► PARKS

Continued from page 4

Rounding out this category are seaside settings on all other edges of the country, and the world! **Pleasure Beach Blackpool** on the U.K.'s west coast, has the largest assortment of rides in the United Kingdom. It also boasts more than one hundred years of entertaining guests, dating all the way back to 1896. **Morey's Piers** on the East Coast is a well-known family favorite for those near the Jersey shore. **Kemah Boardwalk**, located south of Houston, closes out the category and triumphantly overcame numerous obstacles in rebuilding following the devastation of Hurricane Ike last year.

Best Marine Life Park was overwhelmingly voted to be **SeaWorld Orlando**. Its sister park in Texas, **SeaWorld San Antonio** places second. Rare in guest experience is the ingenious **Discovery Cove** in Orlando, tying for third with **SeaWorld San Diego**. Finishing out the category is **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom**.

Schlitterbahn Galveston Island, also making an amazing recovery following Hurricane Ike, was voted as Best Indoor Waterpark. Year round, visitors can enjoy more than 12 attractions in the park's convertible environment.

"Schlitterbahn Galveston Island was not just renovated after Hurricane Ike, but re-energized," says General Manager Ron Sutuala. "The hurricane afforded our park the opportunity to improve our property and motivated us to come back better than ever."

The enormous **Kalahari Resorts** in Sandusky, Ohio and Wisconsin Dells take the second and third place spots on our chart this year. **World Waterpark** in the massive West Edmonton Mall in Alberta Canada and **Splash Landings** at Alton Towers in England finish out the top five.



AT PHOTO / TIM BALDWIN



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE



AT PHOTO / TIM BALDWIN



AT PHOTO / TIM BALDWIN

Clockwise from top left, Cedar Point has taken the Best Park category since the Golden Tickets were introduced in 1998. Schlitterbahn celebrates its 30 year anniversary in 2009, plus another win as Best Waterpark. SeaWorld Orlando, winner of Best Sea Life Park, has become a worldwide destination with its lively shows, world class aquarium exhibits and thrilling roller coasters. Schlitterbahn Galveston Island came back even stronger following Hurricane Ike and was voted Best Indoor Waterpark.



PHOTO COURTESY IDLEWILD PARK

Above, kids and parents enjoy a whimsical Wild Mouse ride at Idlewild, our #2 Best Children's Park. Sea Life and park guests both enjoy the water at SeaWorld San Antonio (above right), our #2 Best Sea Life Park. At right, Kalahari Resort in Sandusky, Ohio offers visitors many indoor waterpark activities.



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE



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Silver Dollar City wins coveted Golden Ticket Award for first time



Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

"It's all about our people — our Citizens of Silver Dollar City," says Brad Thomas, general manager of Silver Dollar City Attractions. "Since we opened in 1960 with 17 employees, the heart and soul of Silver Dollar City has forever been defined by those who give their own hearts, as family, to our culture, to one another, and to our guests."

The 1880s theme park sees its first win of a Golden Ticket, as **Silver Dollar City** snags Friendliest Park Staff. Boosted by a convention of amusement park enthusiasts, Silver Dollar City was finally given the exposure to showcase their outstanding guest service and friendly atmosphere, in addition to their world class theming and attractions. "We love what we do, and we believe in one another," shares Thomas.

Very close behind was **Holiday World** with their renowned commitment to friendly service. **Dollywood** also made a strong showing, making for a true competition within the top three.

Rounding out the top five is **Knoebels** in fourth and **Beech Bend** in fifth.

The quest for the award of Best Food also involved some of the same principal players from the former category. **Knoebels Amusement Resort** held onto the prize, as it has for many years. **Silver Dollar City** rushed into a strong second place with their down home cookin', and **Epcot** placed third. **Dollywood** and **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** complete the five finalists.

As so many parks have such a diverse range of guests, many visitors are occupied admiring the beautiful landscaping at many parks. Our perennial winner, **Busch Gardens Williamsburg**, continues to hold on to Best Landscaping.

Efteling in The Netherlands garners a second place position with



PHOTO COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY PARK

Silver Dollar City boasts "Citizens" of the City instead of simply employees. The park's extraordinary 1880s hospitality has awarded them Friendliest Park Staff, the first Golden Ticket for Silver Dollar City.



PHOTO COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS WILLIAMSBURG

The lush gardens spread throughout **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** have let this park remain the sole winner of Best Landscaping in the entire history of the Golden Ticket Awards.

Gilroy Gardens taking third. Keeping things in bloom are **Epcot** in fourth place and a tie for fifth being shared between **Disney's Animal Kingdom** and **Silver Dollar City**.

Keeping the top spot in Cleanest Park is **Holiday World** for a tenth year in a row. The park's commitment to cleanliness is so well known, guests comment on it



PHOTO COURTESY DAN FEICHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Year after year, visitors come back to **Knoebels** to enjoy its many tasty foods from pizza to teaberry ice cream to many dining options. **Knoebels** has taken the award for Best Food for 10 years in a row.



PHOTO COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD

Cleanliness is taken very seriously at **Holiday World** and the park prides itself on its spotless reputation. Park guests have come to expect such conditions with **Holiday World's** long run as Cleanest Park.

to the park management.

Taking second place is **Busch Gardens Williamsburg**, which compliments their landscaping with a clean environment. Third place goes to

Dollywood. Wrapping up the finalists are sister parks **Disneyland** in fourth and **Magic Kingdom** in fifth, showcasing cleanliness on both coasts.



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Worlds of Fun, Schlitterbahn win Best New Rides

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today



Great Coasters International, Inc. is beaming over their new woodie coming in on top for Best New Ride. GCII's Jeff Pike says, "The guys at Cedar Fair were excited about keeping a wooden coaster under the treeline — very close to the ground, shrouded in mystery, relentless in speed and dynamics." Pike adds, "Their input really helped create a very unique coaster for GCII."

Frank Wilburn, general manager of Worlds of Fun agrees. "Immediately following my first ride on **Prowler**, I knew — *wow* — we have something very special." The success of this new wooden coaster is also reflected from the guests, says Wilburn. "Guests continually approach me with a handshake to express their pleasure with the ride and to pass on what they feel it adds to the park." He adds they are most impressed with it at night when it pounces through the woods with only moonlight to illuminate the journey.

Coming in a close second place for Best New Attraction in an Amusement Park is Kings Island's **Diamondback**. The monstrous new steel coaster

by B&M just might overtake the popularity of the park's legendary **Beast**. Coming in at 230 feet, **Diamondback** is the tallest coaster ever built at the park.

Other finalists in this category are B&M's **Manta** at SeaWorld Orlando that combines a sleek flying roller coaster brilliantly with gorgeous below-ground aquariums. The ride's noted spectator moment is the "wing dip" where the coaster cars appear to slice through the surface of the water.

Six Flags Magic Mountain's new **Terminator Salvation: The Ride**, also built by GCII, places fourth and a tie for fifth between Six Flags Over Georgia's re-do of **Monster Plantation** into **Monster Mansion** by Gary Goddard Entertainment and Holiday World's new record-setting **Pilgrims Plunge** from Intamin complete our finalists.

On the wet side, Best New Waterpark Ride overwhelmingly went to Schlitterbahn. Never content to just do



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE

Prowler, Worlds of Fun's amazing new wooden coaster provided by Great Coasters International, Inc., has taken Best New Attraction (Amusement Park) for 2009. It is the first win for Worlds of Fun. **Prowler** is the 8th roller coaster at the park.

something off the shelf, Schlitterbahn spectacularly transformed two underutilized attractions into the fiendishly clever **Congo River Expedition**. Now guests are lining up in droves to journey down a river of mystery enshrouded in fog, animated figures and jungle creatures and a terrifying drop into a

dark mine shaft. It is the most creative thing to hit the waterpark industry in ages.

New Jersey enthusiast Robert Derman visited Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels calling the ride innovative. "You could go all over a park to ride a lazy river, dark ride, flume, and rapids ride," says Derman, "or you could go

to Schlitterbahn and ride the Congo River Expedition!"

Six Flags St. Louis scores second place with its new **Wahoo Racer**, a multi-lane racing slide, and Alabama Adventure unleashed **UpSurge!**, a slide that twists and turns and drops riders into a halfpipe. This new attraction comes in third.

Rounding out the five finalists are **Maximum Velocity**, an uphill dueling waterslide at Wet 'n' Wild Phoenix and **Dr. Von Dark's Tunnel of Terror** at Splash Splash in Long Island.

Already several new attractions for 2010 have been announced which should have our panel of experts scrambling to experience the latest and greatest in both waterparks and amusement parks next year.



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE



PHOTO COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD



PHOTO COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

Clockwise from top left, **Diamondback** at Kings Island gave a strong charge toward the gold, placing at a solid No. 2 position. **Manta** at SeaWorld Orlando (No. 3) combined the thrill of a flying coaster with amazing below ground aquariums. The **Monster Mansion** re-do at Six Flags Over Georgia tied for fifth place with Holiday World's record-setting **Pilgrims Plunge**.



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE
Schlitterbahn's creative brilliance scored in a runaway victory with our voters hailing Congo River Expedition as Best New Attraction (Waterpark).



PHOTO COURTESY S. MADONNA HORCHER
Wahoo Racer, above, placed second in the Best New Attraction category and helped Six Flags St. Louis guests beat the summer heat. Below, Maximum Velocity (No. 4) propelled riders along the dual watercoaster at the new Wet 'n' Wild Phoenix.



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE

Congratulations Worlds of Fun



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Ride On!

Ride category winners hold onto awards until the Golden Tickets come to a complete stop

Tim Baldwin

Amusement Today

At least for one more year, perennial favorites reign supreme in our ride categories.

Best Water Ride (amusement park) stays with **Universal's Islands of Adventure**. The drenching Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls combines the excitement of a log flume along with thrilling theming and whimsical storytelling.

Other finalists in this category are Valhalla at **Pleasure Beach Blackpool**, which maintains its second place foothold, and Splash Mountain at **Magic Kingdom** in Florida hangs onto third.

New on the charts for this category is Mountain Slidewinder at **Dollywood**, a hugely popular (and wet!) homemade water toboggan down the hillside. Popeye and Bluto's Bilge-Rat Barges, also at IOA, completes the top five.

For Best Waterpark Ride, MasterBlaster at **Schlitterbahn** has remained dominant for close to a decade, winning the award for eleven out of the 12 years *Amusement Today* has bestowed Golden Tickets.

Zoombabwe at **Splashin' Safari** places second, and Deluge at **Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom** closes out the top three.

Other finalists are Dragon's Revenge, also at Schlitterbahn, and Summit Plummet, the ski-themed plunge at Walt Disney World's **Blizzard Beach**.

On the dryer side, but going indoors, Best Dark Ride continues to go to **Islands of Adventure's** Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man. IOA has seemed to have a lock on this category for some time, but next year, the strongest competition might come from themselves.

Other finalists are Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at **Disney's Hollywood Studios**, Haunted Mansion at **Knoebels**, Indiana Jones and the Temple of the Forbidden Eye at **Disneyland**, and new on the chart this year, Journey to the Center of the Earth at **Tokyo DisneySea**.



Keeping inside, Best Indoor Coaster once again goes to **Revenge of the Mummy** at **Universal Studios Orlando**. This indoor coaster took this award for the first time last year and continues scaring riders day after day.

The other finalists are Rock 'n' Roller Coaster at **Disney's Hollywood Studios**, Space Mountain at **Disneyland** in

California, Mindbender in Canada at **Galaxyland** within the West Edmonton Mall, and Space Mountain at Walt Disney World's **Magic Kingdom**.

The Best Funhouse/Walk-Through Attraction category introduced in 2008 maintains its same winner, but once again in a very close race. **Frankenstein's Castle** at **Indiana Beach** narrowly beats out Noah's Ark at **Kennywood**.

The remainder of the category is dominated by Europe where they know how to do such things quite well (and

► See RIDES, page 19



PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

Voters "want their mummy" when rating **Best Indoor Coaster**. **Revenge of the Mummy** at **Universal Studios Orlando** takes a win for the second year.



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE

There is no escape from getting wet on **Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls** at **Universal's Islands of Adventure**, a perennial winner in the **Best Water Ride** category.



AT PHOTO / TIM BALDWIN

In a close race once again, **Indiana Beach** creeps into a second year win in one of AT's newest categories — **Best Funhouse/Walk-Through Attraction**.



AT PHOTO / TIM BALDWIN

The innovative **Master Blaster** at **Schlitterbahn** has been one of the most popular rides at the park, and in the world, since it was built in 1996.



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE

Kings Island's delightful mix of kids' coasters, water attractions and children's rides have scored the park with **Best Kids' Area** since the category was introduced.



►RIDES

Continued from page 18

haven't let the lawyers scare these attractions away from the parks, which has sadly happened in the U.S.). Hotel Gasten, a frightening and elaborate mansion haunted by live (or are they?) characters at Liseberg is the highest rated European contender. Lustiga Huset (a hilarious funhouse) and Spok Huset (a haunted walk-through) both reside at Gröna Lund and wrap up the category.

Attracting children to begin enjoying a park at a young age is certainly a logical philosophy. Many parents find a respite during the day by landing in a children's section of the park. As the sole winner for this category ever since it has been introduced, **Kings Island** once again takes the Golden Ticket for Best Kids' Area.

Following KI's strong



PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

The multi-sensory overload of Universal's Islands of Adventure's Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man has riders (and voters!) coming back for more. It retains its Best Dark Ride win.

lead is **Universal's Islands of Adventure** in second place and its delightful **Seuss Landing**. Rising up two notches this year is **Nickelodeon Universe** in Bloomington, Minnesota, now placing third.

This category is completed with a tie. **Efteling**, with its huge fairy tale area offering much more than just rides, ties with **Knott's Berry Farm** and its very popular Camp Snoopy.

Finally, Best Carousel is once again recognized as the Grand Carousel at **Knoebels Amusement Resort**. Park fans know the nostalgic thrill of being able to catch the brass ring while riding. At Knoebels,

such an experience is highlighted by an authentic band organ.

Reaching for the ring is also available at **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**, one of very few places that remain in the United States where this is possible. This carousel comes in second.

Closing out the category is **Six Flags Over Georgia** and its century old Riverside Carousel in third place, **Islands of Adventure** with its custom-designed Car-Seuss-el in fourth place, and the double decker **Columbia Carousel** at **Six Flags Great America** in fifth.



PHOTO COURTESY DAN FEICHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Above, reaching for the brass ring is fun for nostalgia buffs and young children alike. Knoebels takes Best Carousel for another year. Below, Six Flags Over Georgia's Riverside Carousel (No. 3) has amused patrons for more than 100 years.



PHOTO COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

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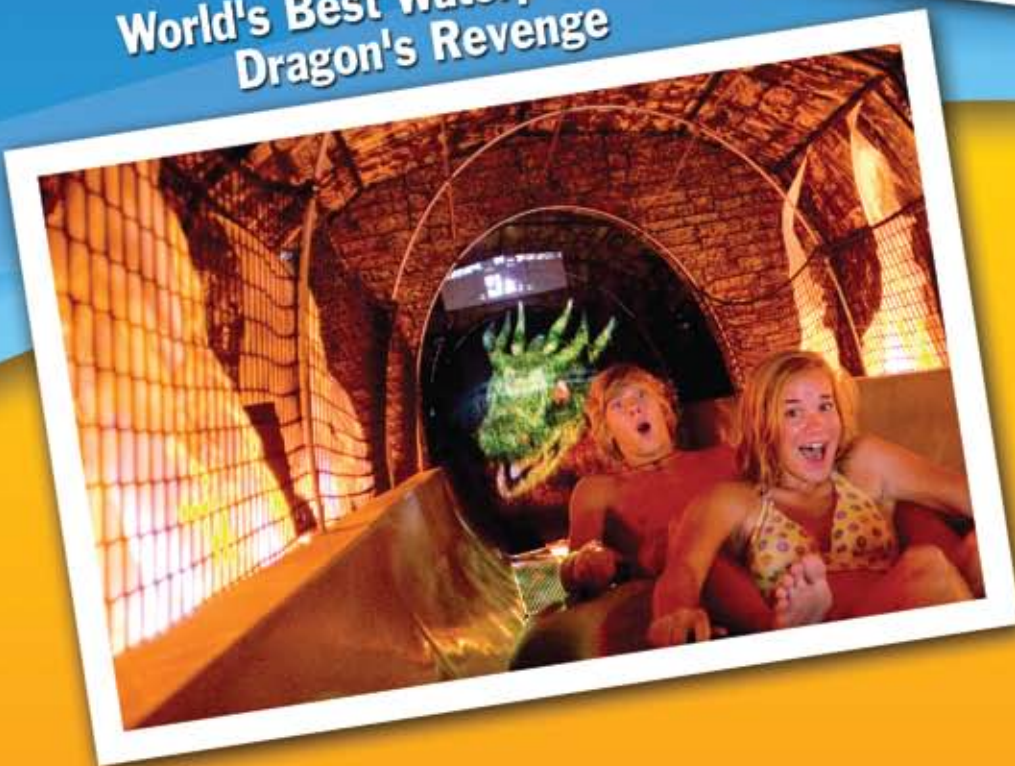
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World's Best New Waterpark Ride
Congo River Expedition



Voted #1
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Master Blaster



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Dragon's Revenge



The Schlitterbahn family would like to sincerely thank Amusement Today, Golden Ticket voters, park guests and our dedicated team for all of their support and friendship in helping us become the world's best waterpark twelve years in a row!

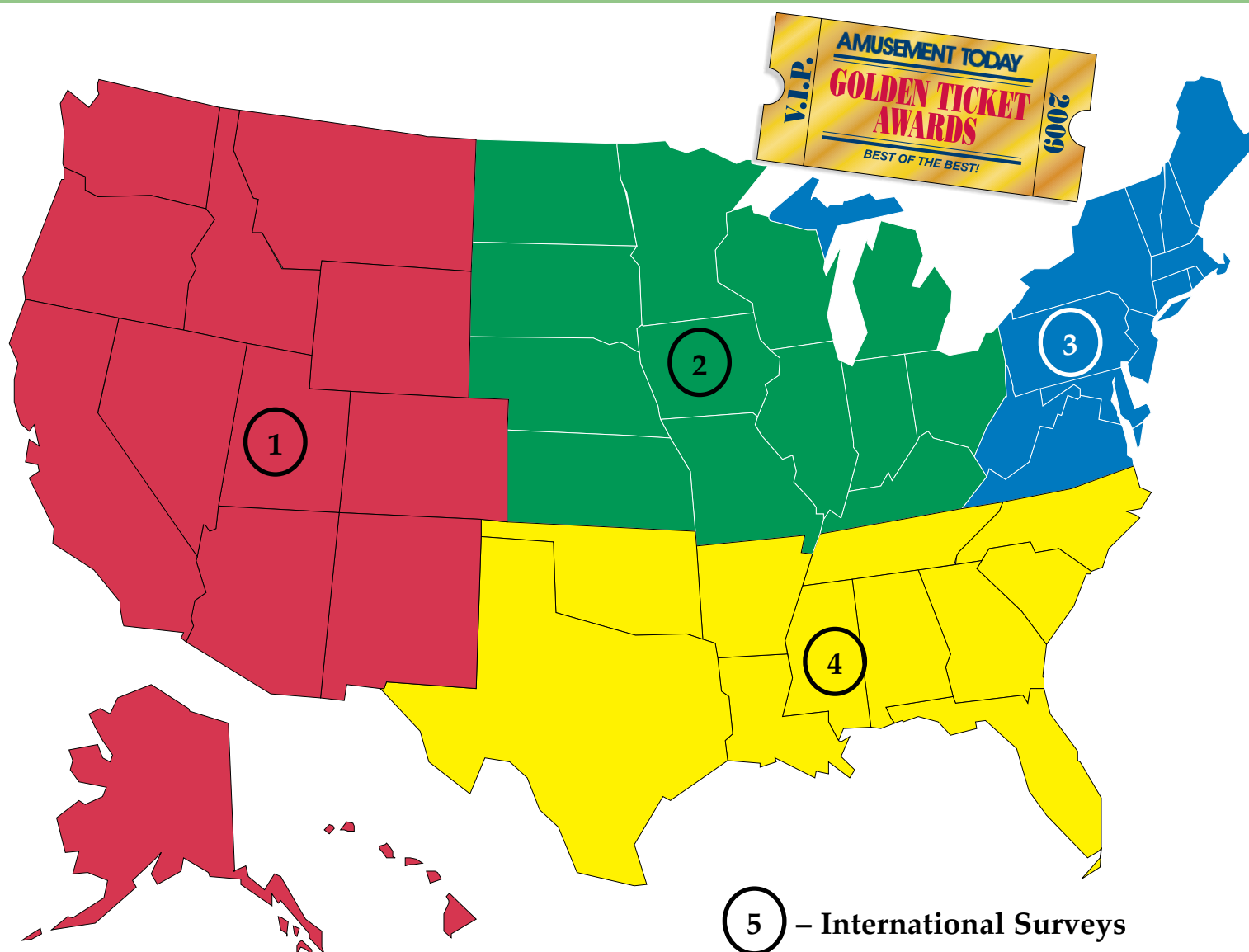
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Our panel of experts


Since *Amusement Today* introduced the Golden Ticket Awards in 1998, we continue to strive to find the most experienced enthusiasts to participate in our survey and *AT* follows a fair and balanced protocol of dividing our ballots between four geographical regions of the United States. In addition to the hundreds of surveys sent to American enthusiasts, international amusement park fans are also sought out and we invite such fans to contact us for participation in future years. *AT* thanks the hundreds of voters who helped make the 2009 Golden Tickets a reality.


2010 - A look ahead

With what has been announced for next year already, 2010 could be a big year with a lot of our categories seeing significant new contenders. Major new steel coasters, innovative dark rides, outdoor night productions, waterpark attractions and water rides are all seeing major installations being introduced. Our panel of experts should have a tremendous amount of fun discovering the "Best of the Best" for 2010. It should prove to be one of our most exciting years ever.











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Shows and seasonal events diversify year-round entertainment

Dollywood strikes gold with a ticket win for shows

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

Dollywood and **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** have continued to wrestle for top honors in the category of Best Shows over the past years. 2009 proved to be a real nail-biter once again as the outcome came down to the final day of ballot tabulation. Both parks offer a superb show product, and Dollywood couldn't be more thrilled to take the prize this year.

"Dollywood and especially Dolly herself continually encourage us to make our shows the best they can be," says Paul Couch, director of entertainment. "Pleasing our

audience is the ultimate goal. This Golden Ticket is a wonderful indication we are doing just that."

Six Flags Fiesta Texas, having claimed the Golden Ticket for the past decade comes in at a close second this year. **Silver Dollar City** rises into third place, and a tie for fourth is shared between **Disney's Hollywood Studios** and **SeaWorld Orlando**.

Since introducing the category in 2005, both **Universal Orlando** and **Knott's Berry Farm** have been engaged in a tug-of-war, taking the award for best Halloween Event from each other back and forth. However, Universal hangs



onto the prize for a second year in a row with a deathly grip this year. Spooky.

Following these top two leaders are **Knoebels** scaring up third place and **Kennywood** in fourth.

Christmas seems to be a growing festival season as more and more parks around the globe tap into the goodwill and merriment of the December yuletide. **Dollywood** once again stays on top this year with its sis-

ter park **Silver Dollar City** placing second. Both of these parks have been noted in the media for the tremendous light displays that truly define breathtaking.

Walt Disney World's **Magic Kingdom** jingles into third place on the charts with its sister park **Disneyland** also placing right behind. Completing the top five is the long running Christmas event at **Hersheypark**.

Ending the day at a park with one final "Wow!" is a popular trend. Outdoor Night Show Productions can help keep the guests in the park into the late hours. **Epcot** has taken top honors in this cat-

egory for several years and remains perched in the No. 1 spot.

Disneyland's Fantasmic still entralls visitors and places in second. **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** has dazzled park visitors with The Lone Star Spectacular since the park opened in 1992. The laser/pyrotechnic/multi-media extravaganza lands in third. Finishing the top five are **Disney's Hollywood Studios** and **Magic Kingdom**.

With Disney's California Adventure putting the finishing touches on the next big thing, all this Disney representation might find a new challenger next year from within.



PHOTO COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

Dollywood, winner of Best Shows, prides itself on top show talent and great venues throughout the season.



PHOTO COURTESY UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

Universal Orlando Resort keeps a death-grip on Best Halloween Event for a two-year win. Be afraid.



PHOTO COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD - EPCOT

Epcot's sound/laser/pyrotechnic spectacular dazzles guests night after night and wins Best Outdoor Night Show Production.



PHOTO COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

Voted Best Christmas Event, **Dollywood's Smoky Mountain Christmas** brings holiday joy to visitors during the November/December season.



No matter the season, thank you for making Dollywood the most entertaining park in the world.



Park, individuals, supplier each recipients of 2009 Publisher's Pick



AT PHOTO/GARY SLADE

Wonderland Amusement Park in Amarillo, Texas expanded this season with a new section, the West End, featuring three relocated rides, all refurbished in-house.

Texas' Wonderland Park traces roots back to 1951, expands in 2009

Founded in 1951 as Kiddieland by Paul and Alethea Roads, this West Texas amusement park would grow from three kiddie rides and a ticket booth, made out of the crates used to ship the rides in, to a full blown amusement park that Amarillo residents are proud to have.

Overseeing the duties of the park now are daughter Paula, husband Paul Borchardt and their daughter Rebecca Parker.

Wonderland Park has always been a family park. It's run by a caring family and it caters to families. With an annual attendance of more than 200,000 guests, there are no long lines here, just simple thrills, food and fun, all at an affordable price.

While the park has grown to include everything from a miniature train ride, a classic dark ride and even the high tech thrills of a double looping roller coaster, it wasn't until this year that the park saw its first multi-ride expansion in a new area.

Three rides, a Chance Yo-Yo, a Vekoma family coaster and a Moser drop tower, were all purchased used. The Wonderland team then totally refurbished the rides in house over a three year period. The result is the new West End, a big hit for guests and for the park, proving good things do come to those with dedication, drive and patience.

The park's marketing campaign plays on the WOW factor, also known locally as the World of Wonderland. Now Wonderland Park has something else to be wowed over, as AT's selection for **2009 Park of the Year**.



AT PHOTO/SUE NICHOLS

The matching book ends that keep Knoebels Amusement Resort going are Dick and Barbara Knoebel. Recently, the two have had to keep each other strong.

Dick and Barbara Knoebel work through health issues, keep park strong

Some things were just made to go together and sometimes those matching bookends can be found in the people behind the scenes, running an amusement park.

Such is the case for Dick and Barbara Knoebel. Two people made for one another. Two people, who not only work 100-hour weeks to keep the Knoebels Amusement Resort in Elysburg, Pa. running in tip top shape, but recently battled the odds to keep each other running in tip top shape.

In the spring of 2008 Barbara was diagnosed with cancer and many tests later was found to have cancerous spots in four other parts of her body. Chemotherapy led to many complications that left her ill, mentally exhausted and completely drained.

With Dick by her side every step of the way, Barbara underwent radiation therapy and later a completely different kind of chemo. Through all this she managed to read the staffing sheets for catering, the schedules for ticket sellers and correspondence with suppliers. Although she is not cancer free, her most recent CAT scan did not show cancer in two of the previous areas. Great news!

During the winter months, Dick fell down an ice-covered stairway and broke his ankle. Refusing a cast, he opted for a bandage and crutches so he could continue his duties at the park and his duties at home with Barbara. Dick and Barbara Knoebel are a match made for one another and *Amusement Today's* selection as our **2009 Persons of the Year**.



PHOTO COURTESY SFOG

Rating among the finalists, even when stacked against big new coasters, was the wonderful refurbishment and theming job done by Gary Goddard on Six Flags Over Georgia's Monster Mansion.

Gary Goddard's creativity for show production, theming good for guests

Starting out as a show designer at Walt Disney Imagineering in 1970, Gary Goddard has moved on outside of Disney to form several entertainment companies, including Gary Goddard Entertainment Design in 2002.

Since his job as an entertainment design consultant on the Georgia Aquarium that same year, Gary has gone on to produce concerts, the Broadway musical Hair, Crossroads of the World mega mall in Jakarta, Indonesia, and a mega slide called Atmosphere at the FX Lifestyle Center, also in Jakarta.

Closer to home, Gary oversaw the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles and the Hershey Story museum near the entrance to Hersheypark.

But it is two of his newest creations for Six Flags that are capturing the buzz in the parks and on the internet.

The Glow in the Park parades debuted last year at Six Flags parks in Mexico, New Jersey and New England. This year the parades wowed the guests at Six Flags Over Texas and Six Flags St. Louis.

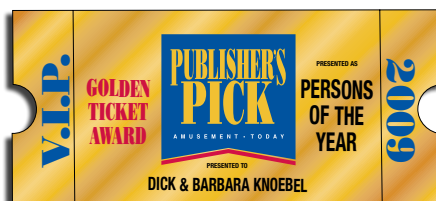
But Gary Goddard Entertainment's biggest hit of the year has been the complete makeover of the popular dark ride at Six Flags Over Georgia.

Now transformed into the Monster Mansion, Goddard went back to the ride he created in 1980, and brought it back to life better than ever with new animation, lighting, fog, special effects and a whimsical audio track that leaves guests wishing for more.

AT salutes Gary Goddard Entertainment as our **2009 Supplier of the Year** for its thematic excellence.



Gary Goddard



Amusement Today honors Jack Krantz in Legends Series

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

That is a quote that is inscribed on a plaque behind the desk of Jack Krantz, the late founder of Adventureland Park in Des Moines, Iowa.

For our amusement industry those words ring home. The people of this industry, like Jack was until his death in Jan. 2006, are full of enthusiasm equal only to the rides and thrills found in the parks.



Jack Krantz

Jack Krantz, seeing the need for a quality family amusement park in Des Moines, started construction in 1973 on a piece of former airport property that once saw a 1924 landing by Charles Lindbergh.

By August 1974 a portion of Adventureland opened to the public with its main street and a handful of rides. Its



opening was delayed only by a small tornado which passed through the park that July.

Adventureland's first full season arrived in 1975 and thanks to the addition of a skyride from the World's Fair in Spokane, Washington and numerous other rides, the park was off and running.

Running so well, Adventureland was able to add its first big ride in 1978, a wooden roller coaster. One year later it moved rides from the aging Riverview Amusement Park, also in Des Moines.

Under Jack's guidance, the park continued to grow into Iowa's largest tourist attraction complete with a hotel and campground and more than \$60 million in reinvestment into the 180-acre resort.

Those who knew Jack,



AT FILE PHOTO

Adventureland's famed Main Street is shown here with replicas of buildings throughout Iowa.

knew his love for the amusement industry. He listened, he learned and then he passed on his success and knowledge to others.

In AT's debut year of 1997, Jack's wisdom on the industry and his financial views were just part of the reason *Amusement Today* survived through its start up phase.

Jack may be gone, but the business sense he instilled into his family members running the park today, keeps his vision, his enthusiasm alive for all to enjoy.

Amusement Today is honored to present its first Legends Series award in the memory of Jack Krantz.

—Gary Slade

Weeki Wachee Springs new home for Legends

Amusement Today is proud to announce its newly created Legends Series, a tribute we hope will have a lasting impact long after this issue has been discarded.

With the gracious support of Marilee Gray of Kay Park Recreation, two park benches will be presented each year to the newest member of the Legends Series family.

One bench, compliments of Kay Park, will be sent to the Legends home park, so a quiet zone can be created for its guests to enjoy.

The second bench, courtesy of AT, will be sent to Florida's Weeki Wachee Springs where a Legends "Bench" of Fame will be created and added each year. This walkway of benches will, in time, serve as a historical record for all the amusement Legends that have touched our industry in their own unique way.

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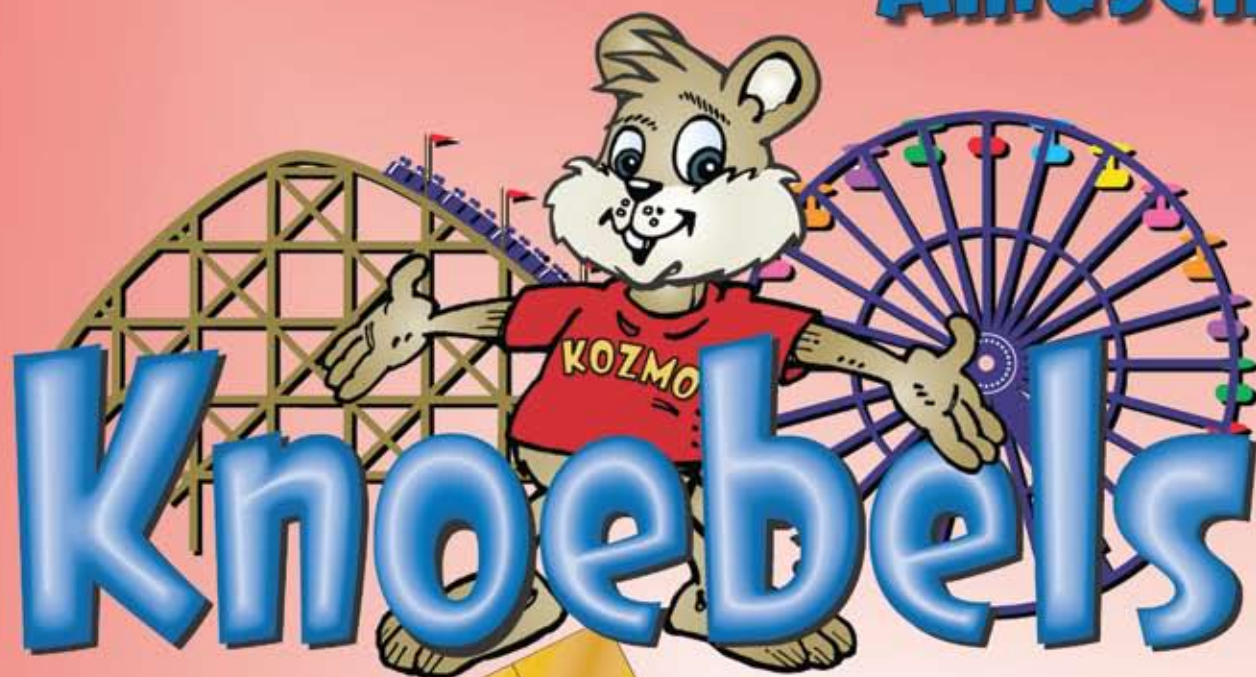
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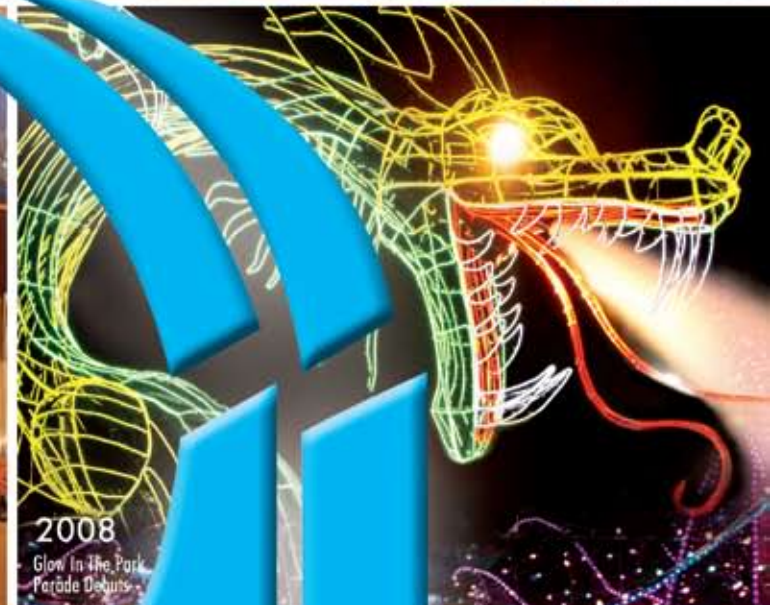
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GARY GODDARD ENTERTAINMENT DESIGN

Steel coasters battle for top spot!

Six Flags New England changes No. 1 coaster, keeps Golden Ticket



PHOTO COURTESY SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND

Sound and new effects keep the former No. 1 Superman Ride of Steel at Six Flags New England still on top as Best Steel Coaster, now called Bizarro.

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

In a move that had enthusiasts gasping in surprise, Six Flags announced last year that they would be changing Superman Ride of Steel at their New England park. Having won Best Steel Coaster for four years in a row, fans were shocked and bewildered why the park would fiddle with coaster perfection. Changing the name of the ride to **Bizarro**, Six Flags New England re-introduced the ride this past spring. New trains, a new paint job, and special effects throughout the ride such as fog, lighting, and sound have accented the ride experience.

Donna Piper, an assistant regional representative for the American Coaster Enthusiasts still raves over her local coaster. "Superman was always great, but Bizarro blasts it into



overdrive!" Noting the new effects, Piper adds, "Bizarro at night brings it on full force."

Melissa Pinkerton, public relations manager for Six Flags New England, adds "The new trains are more comfortable and allow for a smoother, quieter ride which lets you enjoy the on-board audio that is tracked precisely to each drop and turn."

Cedar Point's 310-foot **Millennium Force** scores once again in the second place spot. Since both it and Superman debuted in 2000 in the top ten, the two rides have battled for the top spot since 2001. This makes the fifth year in a row that New England's coaster has been declared champ. However, the gap between was much slimmer this year. Both coasters were built by Intamin.

The top five is rounded out by a trio by B&M. **Nitro** at Six Flags Great Adventure holds on to third place. Sister park Six Flags Over Georgia enters the top five with **Goliath** continuing to gain momentum making for three Six Flags parks in the top five. **Apollo's Chariot** completes the B&M trio of hyper coasters. This one debuted at Busch Gardens Williamsburg in 1999.

B&M has seen a strong fan base this year in addition to its coasters in the top five. Kings Island's new **Diamondback** made an impressive debut in the top ten at No. 7. Last year's **Behemoth** at Canada's Wonderland leapt up the charts from No. 29 in 2008 to the No. 12 spot this year by more than doubling its points. B&M boasts 20 of the 50 coasters listed on our charts, including SeaWorld Orlando's dazzling new **Manta** at No. 38.

Of note, one coaster will be saying goodbye after this year. By the time this issue goes to print, Busch Gardens Williamsburg will have dispatched the last train on **Big Bad Wolf**, celebrating its

► See **STEEL**, page 34



PHOTO COURTESY DAN FEICHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Millennium Force enjoys its tenth year of operation at the No. 2 spot once again.



AT PHOTO / GARY SLADE

Nitro at Six Flags Great Adventure gives the park a No. 3 steel coaster in addition to the same rating on the wooden charts.



PHOTO COURTESY RICH KOPPELMAN

Georgia's **Goliath** has climbed up the charts every year since debuting in 2006, this year making it to No. 4.



PHOTO COURTESY ADRIAN LLOYD

Busch Garden's **Apollo's Chariot** (No. 5) races through a very secluded setting out of view from the rest of the park.

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The List

2009 TOP 50 STEEL ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
1	Bizarro	Six Flags New England	Agawam, Mass.	2000	Intamin	1245
2	Millennium Force	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2000	Intamin	1192
3	Nitro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2001	B & M	785
4	Goliath	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	2006	B & M	662
5	Apollo's Chariot	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	1999	B & M	584
6	Expedition GeForce	Holiday Park	Hassloch, Germany	2001	Intamin	541
7	Diamondback	Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	2009	B & M	432
8	Phantom's Revenge	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	2001	Morgan/Arrow	431
9	Magnum XL - 200	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	1989	Arrow	423
10	Top Thrill Dragster	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2003	Intamin	348
11	Montu	Busch Gardens Tampa Bay	Tampa Bay, Fla.	1996	B & M	282
12	Behemoth	Canada's Wonderland	Vaughan, Ontario, Canada	2008	B & M	280
13	X2	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2002	Arrow	263
14	Raging Bull	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	1999	B & M	251
15	Maverick	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	2007	Intamin	230
16	Mind Bender	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	1978	Schwarzkopf	227
17	Dueling Dragons	Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	1999	B & M	219
18	SheiKra	Busch Gardens Tampa Bay	Tampa Bay, Fla.	2005	B & M	182
19	Alpengeist	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	1997	B & M	181
20	Nemesis	Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	1994	B & M	180
21	Powder Keg	Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	2005	S & S	171
22	Raptor	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	1994	B & M	169
23	Steel Force	Dorney Park	Allentown, Pa.	1997	Morgan	161
24	Big Bad Wolf	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	1984	Arrow	160
25	Goliath	La Ronde	Montreal, Quebec, Canada	2006	B & M	148

The List



2009 TOP 50 STEEL ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
26	Griffon	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	2007	B & M	144
27	Kumba	Busch Gardens Tampa Bay	Tampa Bay, Fla.	1993	B & M	139
28	Ride of Steel	Darien Lake	Darien Center, N.Y.	1999	Intamin	119
29	Incredible Hulk Coaster	Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	1999	B & M	118
30	Mamba	Worlds of Fun	Kansas City, Mo.	1998	Morgan	115
31	Kingda Ka	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2005	Intamin	111
32	Tatsu	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2006	B & M	109
33	Goliath	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2000	Giovanola	107
34	Shock Wave	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	1978	Schwarzkopf	105
35	Superman Ride of Steel	Six Flags America	Largo, Md.	2000	Intamin	103
36	Expedition Everest	Disney's Animal Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	2006	Vekoma/WED Imag.	99
37	Titan	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	2001	Giovanola	97
38 (tie)	Manta	SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	2009	B & M	85
38 (tie)	Storm Runner	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	2004	Intamin	85
40	Goliath	Walabi World	Biddinghuizen, The Netherlands	2002	Intamin	81
41	Volcano	Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	1998	Intamin	80
42	Xcelerator	Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	2002	Intamin	75
43	Euro Mir	Europa Park	Rust, Germany	1998	Mack	58
44	Superman Krypton Coaster	Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	2000	B & M	53
45	The Pepsi Max Big One	Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	1994	Arrow	52
46	Steel Eel	SeaWorld San Antonio	San Antonio, Texas	1999	Morgan	51
47	Whizzer	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	1976	Schwarzkopf	50
48	Mindbender	Galaxyland	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	1985	Schwarzkopf	47
49	Space Mountain	Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	1977	WED Imagineering	45
50	Katun	Mirabilandia	Savio, Italy	2000	B & M	44



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►STEEL

Continued from page 30

25th anniversary this year. With this huge loss, not just to coaster fans, but also loyal Busch Gardens guests, the United States will only claim three remaining Arrow suspended coasters. If ever there was a product just waiting to see a re-emergence, this is it. Hopefully some coaster manufacturer will update this truly exciting ride experience. Big Bad Wolf ended its life-long career at No. 24.

Another interesting twist to the chart this year is that for the first time in Golden Ticket history, the steel top ten list does not contain a single coaster that goes upside down. **Montu** at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay is the highest ranked loopster, this year placing at No. 11.

Another big climber this year is Silver Dollar City's **Powder Keg**, enjoying some quality exposure from ACE's Coaster Con XXXII this past June. Powder Keg was unleashed by S&S Power in 2005 and climbs from No. 49 last year to No. 21 this year.

Steel coasters from



six countries comprise the chart in 2009. **Katun** from Mirabilandia (Italy) debuts on our list (No. 50); Holiday Park's **Expedition GeForce**, our highest rated international coaster (No. 6) joins Europa Park's **Euro-Mir** (No. 43) in representing Germany; Great Britain is showcased with **Nemesis** at Alton Towers (No. 20) and **The Big One** at Pleasure Beach Blackpool (No. 45); Walibi World in The Netherlands boasts **Goliath** at No. 40; and Canada has three top-rated rides: **Behemoth**, **Goliath** at La Ronde (No. 25), and **Mindbender** at Galaxyland at West Edmonton Mall (No. 48).

Kings Dominion has already announced a new 300-foot contender for 2010, in addition to Carowinds and Kennywood unleashing new steel coasters as well. Next year looks to be a forceful battle to shake up the steel charts, and potentially the top 10 once again.



AT PHOTO / TIM BALDWIN

Powder Keg, above, makes the highest jump on the steel charts. Above right, **Expedition GeForce** is the highest rated international coaster. At right, **Big Bad Wolf**, a hugely popular ride with guests and coaster fans alike, ended its career this Labor Day.

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Holiday World stays on top while the top five shuffles

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

Out of all the categories featured in the Golden Ticket Awards, Best Wooden Coaster has had more winners than any other category. Holiday World's Raven held the title the longest for four years (2000 - 2003). Holiday World's amazing woodie, The Voyage, takes the prize for the third year in a row. Its strong fan-base could help the coaster easily tie its sibling's record in 2010. The nonstop drops, high banked curves, airtime, and tunnels have left riders (and voters) breathless since The Gravity Group designed this thriller in 2006.

The rest of the top five has seen a bit of a juggling act in comparison to last year's chart. **Boulder Dash** at Lake Compounce has seen a surge in popularity since a significant refurbish job by Great Coasters International, Inc. took place last season. Roller coaster historian Matt Crowther commented in 2008, "Can the re-do of BoulderDash count as Best New Attraction?" This woodie leaps solidly into second place. BoulderDash claimed the No. 1 spot in 2004.

Completing the Win-Place-Show positions is **El Toro**, rising a notch up to third place. Standing at 181 feet tall, Six Flags Great Adventure's star woodie is among the world's



AT PHOTO / TIM BALDWIN

Among the longest on the planet, The Voyage at Holiday World sails in as Best Wooden Coaster for a third year in a row.

tallest and delivers a smooth and wild ride, with some deliciously insane airtime.

Completing the top five is Knoebels' **Phoenix** at No. 4 and Dollywood's **Thunderhead** at No. 5.

Phoenix is regarded as one of the greatest preservation stories in roller coaster history. The ride dates back to the 1940s when it was designed and built by PTC at Playland in San Antonio. Rescued by Dick Knoebel and given new

life, Phoenix was reborn in 1985 and has enthralled riders and enthusiasts ever since as perhaps the quintessential wooden roller coaster.

Great Coasters International has some bragging rights this year. In addition to their handiwork helping BoulderDash rocket higher and Thunderhead placing in the top five, their brand new **Prowler** at Worlds of Fun debuts in the top ten and won Best New Attraction. Also,

last year's **Evel Knievel** at Six Flags St. Louis more than quadrupled its points from its debut year to vault from No. 44 to No. 13 this season. It was the biggest leap over last year's tallies.

Waldameer's **Ravine Flyer II** also jumps into the top ten after barely missing it last year. This coaster by The Gravity Group lands at No. 6 this year after taking Best New Attraction in 2008.

One coaster most likely



to be missing off next year's charts is **Texas Giant** (No. 31). After 20 seasons, the record-breaking woodie will become silent this fall. Six Flags Over Texas will not operate this coaster during their 50th season next year, but instead will invest millions in some TLC that will prepare the new, smoother version for the park's and chain's 50th anniversary in 2011. Coaster fans from across the country are expected to take some final rides at an event this September. Texas Giant took Best Wooden Coaster for the first two years of *Amusement Today's* Golden Ticket Awards.

Ten of the 50 coasters on our chart come from international destinations. Leading the way is **Colossos** at Heide Park, Germany (No. 18), **Balder** at Liseberg, Sweden (No. 21); **Megafobia** at Oakwood Leisure Park, Wales (No. 25); **Coaster** at Playland at the PNE, Canada (No. 26); **Grand National** at Pleasure Beach Blackpool, England (No. 27); **Thunderbird** at PowerPark, Finland (No. 34); **Troy** at Toverland, The Netherlands (No. 35), **Tonnerre de Zeus** at Parc Asterix, France (No. 38), **T Express** at Everland, South Korea (No. 46); and **Aska** at Nara Dreamland, Japan (No. 47). Incidentally, Coaster at Playland was just designated an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark this past summer, a designation currently shared with four other coasters on the chart.

From left, Boulder Dash at Lake Compounce leaps into second place. El Toro at Six Flags Great Adventure is known for its incredibly smooth ride and extreme airtime. Knoebels Phoenix is considered one of the major triumphs in coaster preservation. Thunderhead at Dollywood has been in the top ten since its debut in 2004.



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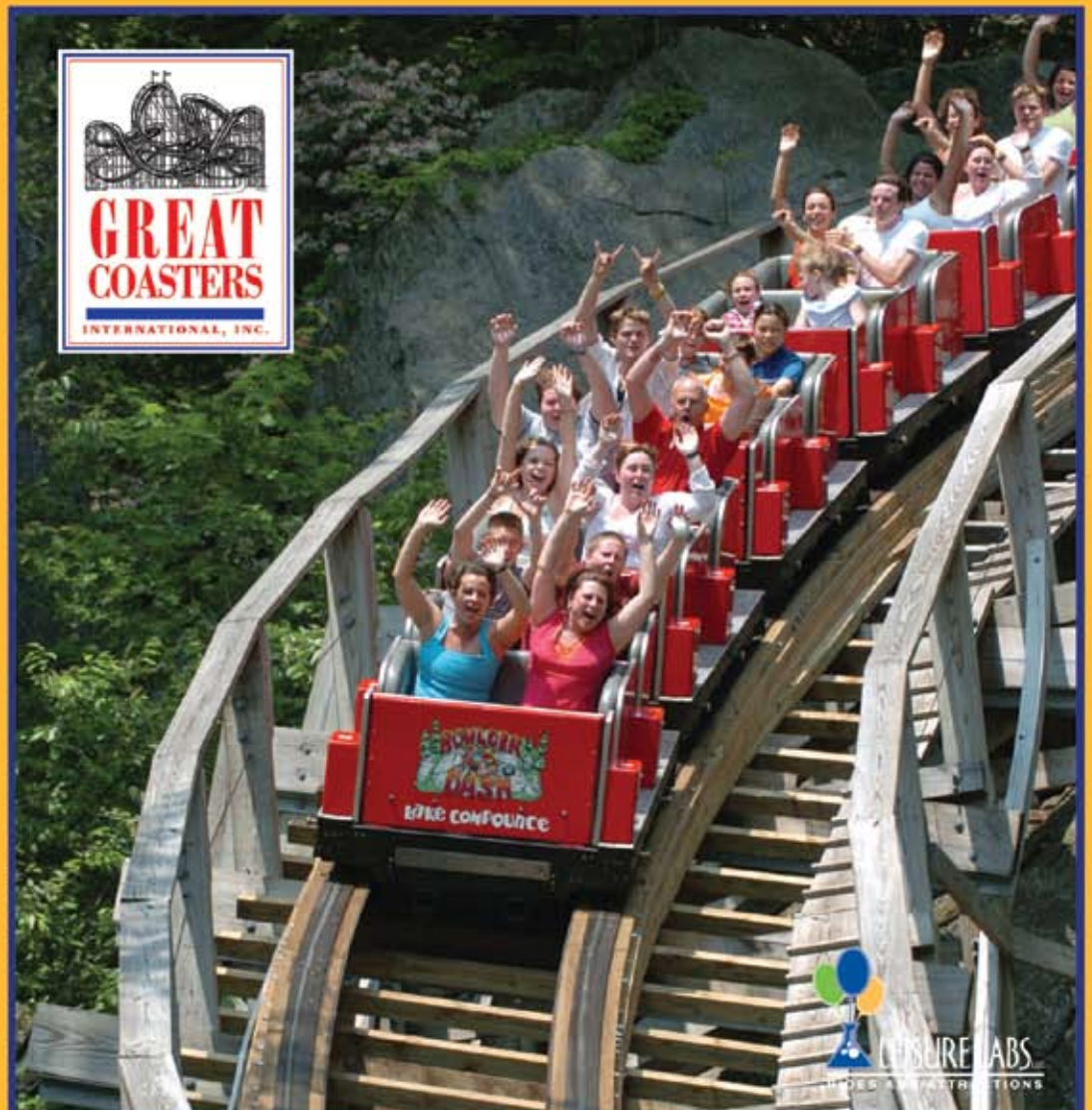
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The List

2009 TOP 50 WOODEN ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
1	The Voyage	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	2006	Gravity Group	1250
2	Boulder Dash	Lake Compounce	Bristol, Conn.	2000	CCI	1049
3	El Toro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	2006	Intamin	948
4	Phoenix	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	1985	Dinn/PTC-Schmeck	929
5	Thunderhead	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	2004	GCII	899
6	Ravine Flyer II	Waldameer	Erie, Pa.	2008	Gravity Group	617
7	The Beast	Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	1979	KECO	604
8	Prowler	Worlds of Fun	Kansas City, Mo.	2009	GCII	502
9	Hades	Mt. Olympus Theme Park	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	2005	Gravity Group	487
10	Shivering Timbers	Michigan's Adventure	Muskegon, Mich.	1998	CCI	475
11	The Raven	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	1995	CCI	418
12	Lightning Racer	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	2000	GCII	415
13	Evel Knievel	Six Flags St. Louis	Eureka, Mo.	2008	GCII	239
14	Cyclone	Astroland	Brooklyn, N.Y.	1927	Keenan/Baker	227
15	The Legend	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	2000	CCI	223
16	Hellcat	Timber Falls	Wisconsin Dells, Wis.	2004	S & S	194
17	Kentucky Rumbler	Beech Bend	Bowling Green, Ky.	2006	GCII	191
18	Colossos	Heide Park	Soltau, Germany	2001	Intamin	187
19	GhostRider	Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	1998	CCI	176
20	Tremors	Silverwood	Athol, Idaho	1999	CCI	173
21	Balder	Liseberg	Stockholm, Sweden	2003	Intamin	167
22	Giant Dipper	Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	1924	Prior & Church/Looff	153
23	Thunderbolt	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	1968	Vettel/Miller	141
24	Cornball Express	Indiana Beach	Monticello, Ind.	2001	CCI	133
25	MegaFobia	Oakwood	Pembrookshire, Wales	1996	CCI	124



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The List



2009 TOP 50 WOODEN ROLLER COASTERS

RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	YEAR	SUPPLIER	POINTS
26	Coaster	Playland at the PNE	Vancouver, B.C. Canada	1958	Phare	121
27	Grand National	Pleasure Beach Blackpool	Blackpool, England	1935	Paige	113
28	Rampage	Alabama Adventure	Bessemer, Ala.	1998	CCI	112
29	The Comet	The Great Escape	Lake George, N.Y.	1994	PTC-Schmeck	108
30	Viper	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	1995	Starkey/Six Flags	104
31	Twister	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	1999	Fetterman/Knoebels	102
32	Texas Giant	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	1990	Dinn/Summers	101
33	The Boss	Six Flags St. Louis	Eureka, Mo.	2000	CCI	100
34	Thunderbird	PowerPark	Alaharma, Finland	2006	GCII	91
35	Troy	Toverland	Sevenum, The Netherlands	2007	GCII	76
36	Ozark Wildcat	Celebration City	Branson, Mo.	2003	GCII	72
37	Boardwalk Bullet	Kemah Boardwalk	Kemah, Texas	2007	M&V/Gravity Group	64
38	Tonnerre de Zeus	Parc, Asterix	Plailly, France	1997	CCI	63
39	Jack Rabbit	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	1921	PTC-Miller	59
40	Screamin' Eagle	Six Flags St. Louis	Eureka, Mo.	1976	PTC-Allen	58
41	Hurricane	Boomers	Dania Beach, Fla.	2000	Coaster Works	57
42	Timber Terror	Silverwood	Athol, Idaho	1996	CCI	52
43	Terminator Salavation: The Ride	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	2009	GCII	49
44	Georgia Cyclone	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	1990	Dinn/Summers	48
45	Renegade	Valleyfair!	Shakopee, Minn.	2007	GCII	46
46	T Express	Everland	Yongin-si, South Korea	2008	Intamin	44
47 (tie)	Aska	Nara Dreamland	Nara, Japan	1998	Intamin	42
47 (tie)	Blue Streak	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	1964	PTC-Hoover	42
49	Giant Dipper	Belmont Park	San Diego, Calif.	1925	Prior & Church	39
50	Excalibur	Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.	Saco, Maine	1998	CCI	38

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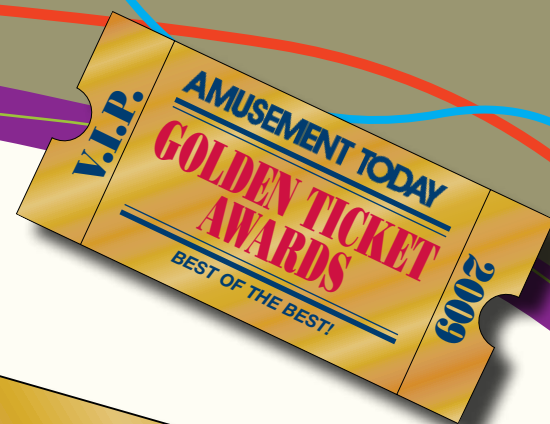


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