

AMUSEMENT TODAY

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All about the BUSINESS of FUN!

Two water ride categories produced

Tim Baldwin
Amusement Today

As introduced in 1998, *Amusement Today's* Golden Ticket Awards divided the country into four parts and surveyed an equal number from each portion to make as balanced a poll as possible. International participants were also included. Receiving its biggest response ever, the Golden Ticket Awards offers a broad range of park expertise.

New for 2002

One of the most common requests from our participants was a longer period in which to have an opportunity to travel more and experience what is new. Extending this time frame by one month this year, our survey panel made great strides in their traveling opportunities with many going overseas. A few international parks have surfaced in the park and ride categories, as well as the coaster lists. Admittedly, 2002 has been lighter on coaster additions than previous years, but one contender still made a strong showing in spite of some operational difficulties, X at Six Flags Magic Mountain debuting in the top 20.

Huge Leaps

While newer acquisitions may not have taken our charts by storm, some 2001 additions made significant jumps over last year's results



Voters in this year's poll didn't overlook jobs well done at Busch Gardens, Va., and Paramount's Kings Island.

Photos courtesy



as more enthusiasts made their way around the country, and even the globe. Nitro, Great Adventure's mega-coaster, debuted at number 16 and leaps this year into the number four spot. Likewise, Expedition GeForce didn't even appear in our top 50 listing last year, but strong-hands its way into the top ten at the number eight spot in this year's poll. In a similar fashion, Cornball Express jumps into the top 20 on the wooden coaster chart at number 18 after falling short of the top 50 last year.

An International Look

Obviously, it is more challenging for parks spread around the world to make a strong impression on our panel simply due to their distant location. Still, numerous

parks outside the United States have surfaced in our poll this year in several categories. In addition to such coasters as Expedition GeForce, Nemesis, The Big One, Collosos, Air, MegaFobia, and Tonnerre de Zeus, several parks appear in



this year's categories including Best Landscaping, Best Themed Music, and Best Capacity.

Best of the Best

Since its inception five years ago, two winners have continued to impress our panel with their park experience. Cedar Point, again,

takes the Best Park category. Known for its abundance of rides, resort accommodations, beautiful location, and the world's largest line-up of coasters, this enthusiast mecca continues to delight visitors. In a dual performance, Schlitterbahn holds onto its water dominance with Best Waterpark for the fifth year in a row. Islands of Adventure takes second place for Best Park, with Knoebel's good family value rounding out the three. Splashin' Safari, giving out free sunscreen this year, climbs to the number two waterpark, with Blizzard Beach splashing into third.

Holiday World may just serve as the benchmark for all parks to be measured against when it comes to friendliness. The small Indiana park still

continues to snag over half of the votes for Friendliest Staff. While somewhat distant from the leader, Knoebels and Cedar Point stand against the Holiday World juggernaut to take second and third place.

Parks continue to explore numerous options on how to get guests out of long lines. No matter what solution may be attempted, guests appreciate lines that move quickly. Cedar Point is still considered top pick for moving lines the fastest. Like most Disney properties, Disneyland utilizing the FastPass system zips people through queues in large numbers, taking our number two position. Several participants just returning from Europe had great things to say about some parks abroad. Europa

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Park garnered not only votes but rave comments about its capacity. Europa Park scores a third place spot.

Perhaps the industry is making a more concentrated effort to present their parks as cleaner places in the past as AT received virtually no complaints on cleanliness this year. Holiday World continues to impress and stands proudly in the number one place in the Cleanest Park category. Having set somewhat of a standard since 1955, Disneyland is recognized at second place, and Busch Gardens Williamsburg takes third place in votes.

Parks have long realized that creating a beautiful environment enhances the guest experience. Perhaps not spoken of as often, but always noticed, colorful landscaping is usually appreciated by patrons to parks. Busch Gardens Williamsburg continues to champion Best Landscaping, but 2002 sees two new players in this category. Efteling in the Netherlands and Bonfante Gardens in California have made people take notice with the second and third positions respectively.

In an era when it is all too easy to cut live entertainment for budgetary reasons, many parks still offer outstanding show packages for their guests. Topping the category again this year, Fiesta Texas

takes the Best Shows Golden Ticket. The park's live performances of singers, musicians, characters, and acrobatic performers, along with a laser-pyrotechnic Lone Star Spectacular, make it a feast for show-lovers. Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Silver Dollar City take second and third respectively for their line-up of talent as well.

The category of Best Food becomes a tough call when participants have to evaluate value, quality, variety, and the like. Knoebels, known for their tasty food at very reasonable prices, takes first place. Silver Dollar City comes in second with their variety of international foods and down home cooking. Busch Gardens Williamsburg rounds out the category in third place.

Ride Categories

Still amazing voters this year (with a smash movie to help) Islands of Adventure's Spiderman webs up Best Dark Ride with its 3D technology combined with physical and visual effects along with motion simulation. Two haunted mansions still captivate fans with their dark ride experience, the second place version being presented by Knoebels, and Disney's spook-filled manor coming in third.

The Best Kids Area category sees some new faces this go round. Paramount's Kings Island takes top honors again for the second year in a row with its many kid-sized rides, water activities, street characters, and collection of four

junior coasters. Arriving at second place this season is Legoland with its unique blend of kids coasters, unusual interactive rides, and various kid-themed attractions park-wide. Idlewild takes third place rounding out this category.

Close Calls

Never has the Golden Tickets seen such a battle as the surveys were tabulated this year over the two water categories. Jockeying for lead position was continuous until the final votes determined a winner.

Best Water Ride in an Amusement Park went to Islands of Adventure's Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls, with Valhalla of Blackpool Pleasure Beach splashing right at its heels. Valhalla also rates highly in the dark ride category as well. A newcomer also in third place resides at Islands of Adventure, Popeye and Bluto's Bilge-Rat Barges. This rapids ride delivers one of the wildest raft experiences to be found in a theme park. All in all, this could easily be the toughest category in the entire survey due to the great number of worthy candidates.

The results were every bit as exciting in the waterpark category as well. A neck-and-neck race was ongoing until Schlitterbahn's Master Blaster finally edged out Holiday World's brand-new Zoom-babwe for Best Waterpark Ride. Rounding out third place is Blizzard Beach's Summit Plummit.

On one final note in ride categories, our voters continue to applaud Rampage as a top ten coaster even though Visionland did not open this year and the park's future remains clouded.

New Categories

As detailed on page 3, *Amusement Today* will rotate categories every few years in an effort to keep the survey fresh and entertaining. Four new categories appear this year for the first time.

Many of our survey participants often buy souvenirs. T-shirts and postcards are

Park and ride winners

Ranked by percentage of votes.

Best Park		
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	28%
Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	18%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	9%
Best Waterpark		
Schlitterbahn	New Braunfels, Texas	48%
Splashin' Safari	Santa Claus, Ind.	17%
Blizzard Beach	Orlando, Fla.	9%
Friendliest Park Staff		
Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	60%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	8%
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	6%
Capacity (fastest moving lines)		
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	45%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	10%
Europa Park	Rust, Germany	9%
Cleanest Park		
Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	40%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	9%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	8%
Best Landscaping		
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	37%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, Netherlands	17%
Bonfante Gardens	Gilroy, Calif.	6%
Best Shows		
Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	29%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	11%
Silver Dollar City	Orlando, Fla.	8%
Best Food		
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	28%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	11%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	10%
Best Dark Ride		
Amazing Advs. Spiderman	Islands of Adventure	31%
Haunted Mansion	Knoebels Amusement Resort	13%
Haunted Mansion	Disneyland	9%
Best Water Ride (Amusement Park)		
Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls	Islands of Adventure	16%
Valhalla	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	15%
Popeye & Bluto's Bilge-rat Barges	Islands of Adventure	6%
Best Kid's Area		
Paramount's Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	38%
Legoland	Carlsbad, Calif.	6%
Idlewild	Ligonier, Pa.	5%
Best Waterpark Ride		
Master Blaster	Schlitterbahn	34%
Zoombabwe	Splashin' Safari	32%
Summit Plummit	Blizzard Beach	7%
Best Souvenirs		
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	16%
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	13%
Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	8%
Best Games Area		
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	19%
Parmount's Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	11%
Disney's California Adventure	Anaheim, Calif.	8%
Best Themed or Background Music		
Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	38%
Disney's California Adventure	Anaheim, Calif.	10%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, Netherlands	7%
Most Classic or Distinctive Coaster Station		
Cyclone, Lakeside Park	Denver, Colo.	22%
Racer, Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	12%
Dueling Dragons, Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	11%

AMUSEMENT TODAY

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Amusement Today's annual Golden Ticket Awards were bestowed upon all first-place finishers in each category. *Amusement Today* congratulates the many fine parks that won or placed in this year's categories. We also would like to thank the many people who took the time to return our survey forms and participate in the polling process. If you were not selected to vote, and would like your name added to the selection list, please drop us a postcard and we'll be glad to add your name to next year's ballot list. Remember, industry employees are ineligible to vote. AT also would like to thank our advertisers for their help in making this Bonus Section possible.

Thanks also go to Tim Baldwin for his countless hours in tabulating the poll results and to Ted Davidson and his staff at Corporate Graphics in Arlington, Texas, for the design and printing of the Golden Ticket Awards.

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Photos courtesy Cedar Point and Schlitterbahn

Left to right: Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio, was voted as the top rated park in the country for the fifth consecutive year. The park also picked up Golden Tickets for Best Park Capacity and Best Steel Coaster. In the favorite waterpark category, Schlitterbahn captured the title for the fifth consecutive year. The New Braunfels, Texas, park also was a repeat winner for its Master Blaster ride. Other repeat winners included: Knoebels (Food); Islands of Adventure (Water Ride and Dark Ride); Fiesta

► AWARDS

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easy to find, but comments were given on what made the park they voted for the best. Frequent answers were "good variety" as well as "they come out with new things each year." Many collectors enjoy finding the items they collect, with logo merchandise for both the parks and attractions being top pick. Knoebels was rated best, with Cedar Point and

Islands of Adventure coming in second and third, with all three being praised for their variety.

Probably the toughest category we have ever thrown at our voters, Best Games Area particularly caused them to think as many do not always play games. Cedar Point took top honors for its classic games, nostalgic look, and variety of prizes and skill levels. Finding pinball machines also was mentioned. Paramount's Kings Island

In an effort to continue the introduction of new Golden Ticket categories each year, *Amusement Today* has elected to place some awards on a three-year rotation for voting.

Last year, *AT* introduced Best Carousel as one of the new categories. Since new carousels are not being introduced each year, that category will not be voted on again until 2004.

This year, *AT* debuted winners for Best Souvenirs, Best Park Background Music, Best Games Area and the Most Distinctive or Classic Looking Roller Coaster Station. These categories will not be voted on again until 2005.

If you have a suggestion for a category you would like to see introduced contact *Amusement Today* at (817) 460-7220

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The List

Top 25 wood roller coasters

RANK	NAME	YEAR	PARK	LOCATION	POINTS
1	Raven	1995	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	838
2	Shivering Timbers	1998	Michigan's Adventure	Muskegon, Mich.	788
3	Boulder Dash	2000	Lake Compounce	Bristol, Conn.	764
4	Legend	2000	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	661
5	Phoenix	1985	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	604
6	GhostRider	1998	Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	570
7	Beast	1979	Parmount's Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	394
8	Texas Giant	1990	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	363
9	Megafobia	1996	Oakwood Leisure Park	Pembrookshire, Wales	328
10	Rampage	1998	Visionland	Bessemer, Ala.	321
11	Lightning Racer	2000	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	307
12	Comet	1994	The Great Escape	Lake George, N.Y.	278
13	Cyclone	1927	Astroland (Coney Island)	Brooklyn, N.Y.	244
14	Georgia Cyclone	1990	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	221
15	Thunderbolt	1968	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	218
16	Colossos	2001	Heide Park	Soltau, Germany	216
17	The Boss	2000	Six Flags St. Louis	St. Louis, Mo.	200
18	Cornball Express	2001	Indiana Beach	Monticello, Ind.	166
19	Villain	2000	Six Flags Worlds of Adventure	Aurora, Ohio	153
20	Tonnerre de Zeus	1997	Parc Asterix	Plailly, France	152
21	Tremors	1999	Silverwood	Athol, Idaho	149
22	Twister	1999	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	147
23	Grand National	1935	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	Blackpool, England	118
24	Viper	1995	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	116
25	Wildcat	1996	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	113

Amusement Today also presents the next 25 wooden coasters as determined by points.
26: Giant Dipper (Santa Cruz), 27: Coaster (PNE Playland), 28: Mega Zeph (Jazzland), 29: Grizzly (PKD), 30: Timberwolf (WOF), 31: Cyclone (SFNE), 32: Roar (SFMW), 33: Thunder Coaster (Tusenfryd); 34 tie: Blue Streak (Cedar Point), Gwazi (BGT); 36: Timber Terror (Silverwood), 37: Jack Rabbit (Kennywood); 38: Son of Beast (PKI), 39: Thunder Run (SFKK), 40: Mean Streak (Cedar Point), 41: Texas Cyclone (AstroWorld); 42: Big Dipper (SFWoA), 43 tie: Giant Dipper (Belmont), Roar (SFA); 45 tie: Colossus (SFMM), Hurricane (Boomers) 47: Cyclone (Lakeside), 48: Loup Garou Weerwolf (SF Belgium), 49: Racer (Kennywood), 50: Racer (PKI).



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The List

Top 25 steel roller coasters



RANK	NAME	YEAR	PARK	LOCATION	POINTS
1	Millennium Force	2000	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	970
2	Superman Ride of Steel	2000	Six Flags New England	Agawam, Mass.	897
3	Magnum XL-200	1989	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	723
4	Nitro	2001	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	398
5	Apollo's Chariot	1999	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	359
6	Steel Force	1997	Dorney Park	Allentown, Pa.	353
7	Phantom's Revenge	2001/1991	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	330
8	Expedition GeForce	2001	Holiday Park	Hassloch, Germany	329
9	Montu	1996	Busch Gardens Tampa	Tampa, Fla.	303
10	Superman Ride of Steel	1999	Six Flags Darien Lake	Darien Center, N.Y.	303
11	Dueling Dragons	1999	Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	267
12	Raptor	1994	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio.	247
13	Alpengeist	1997	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	244
14 tie	Goliath	2000	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	243
14 tie	Raging Bull	1999	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	243
16	Superman Ride of Steel	2000	Six Flags America	Largo, Md.	224
17	Incredible Hulk	1999	Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	213
18	Nemesis	1994	Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	203
19	Kumba	1993	Busch Gardens Tampa	Tampa, Fla.	188
20	X	2002	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	169
21	The Big One	1994	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	Blackpool, England	137
22	Mindbender	1978	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	131
23	Titan	2001	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Tex.	128
24 tie	Mamba	1998	Worlds of Fun	Kansas City, Mo.	102
24 tie	Superman Krypton Coaster	2000	Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Tex.	102

Amusement Today also presents the next 25 steel coasters as determined by points.

26: Medusa (SFGAd), 27: Goliath (Six Flags Holland), 28: Volcano (PKD), 29: California Screamin' (DCA), 30: Mind Bender (Galaxyland), 31: Big Bad Wolf (BGW), 32: Desperado (Buffalo Bill's), 33: Superman Ultimate Flight (SFOG), 34: Superman the Escape (SFMM), 35:Wildfire (SDC), 36 tie: Shock Wave (SFOT), Superman Ultimate Escape (SFWoA), 38: Riddler's Revenge (SFMM), 39 tie: Magnum Force (Flamingoland), Air (Alton Towers); 41: Mr. Freeze (SFOT), 42: Hypersonic XLC (PKD); 43: Top Gun (PGA) 44 tie: Batman Knight Flight (SFWoA), Kraken (SeaWorld Fla.), 46: Top Gun (PC), 47: Matterhorn (Disneyland), 48: Steel Eel (SeaWorld Texas), 49: Xcelerator (Knott's); 50: Rock n' Roller Coaster (WDW).



ANOTHER
GREAT YEAR!

2 Golden Tickets
2 Top 25 Coasters

Thank you readers of Amusement Today!

