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Silver Dollar City hosts 21st annual Golden Ticket Awards

Missouri theme park excels as first-time host

BRANSON, Mo. — Nothing says “Welcome” more than a day at **Silver Dollar City**. The mid-America theme park has enchanted guests since 1960. With theming centered around the late 1800s, the park has often used the tagline: “You’ve got a great past ahead of you.” Even with modern thrillers added to the ever-growing lineup of world-class attractions, they all find their place in the storyline that makes Silver Dollar City unique.

Attendees to the 21st annual Golden Ticket Awards found much to keep them busy. “The Networking Event of the Year” provided opportunities for behind-the-scenes tours that highlighted the park’s strengths: culinary expertise, craft-making experiences and the park’s world-renowned Christmas festival. In addition, all the customized one-of-a-kind attractions were on offer. PowderKeg, Outlaw Run and Fire in the Hole delighted industry professionals, as well as the innovative new-for-2018 Time Traveler, built by sponsor **Mack Rides**.

“We are excited to welcome our friends from around the amusement industry to Branson and to Silver Dollar City,” Park President Brad Thomas told *Amusement Today* leading up to the



event. “After a hectic summer, I am hopeful that attendees will be able to take a much needed break, relax and enjoy all that the Ozark Mountains have to offer. This is a special place filled with special people. It is our sincere pleasure to welcome industry leaders to our hometown.”

September 7 was a day to enjoy the park or area attractions. Facilities sharing the welcoming hospitality were **Branson Ferris Wheel**, **Bigfoot Fun Park**, **Ripley’s Believe It Or Not** and **Runaway Mountain Coaster**.

According to Thomas, a “Don’t Miss” list for Silver Dollar City would include: Time Traveler, Home of American Craftsmanship, Culinary & Craft School, Outlaw Run and Marvel Cave. “There would be no **Herschend Family**

Entertainment without Marvel Cave. The vast Cathedral Room entrance (tall enough for a 20-story building to stand in!) along with the other natural beauty and a cool 65-degree temperature provides a unique 55-minute experience not available in most any other theme park.”

Located in the Ozark Mountains, Silver Dollar City’s sloped topography has contributed to the signature rides at the park. “Built in 2013, Outlaw Run was a great ground-breaker for Silver Dollar City as well as **Rocky Mountain Construction**,” said Thomas. The wooden coaster dives into the valleys of the hillside. The park promoted it as the World’s Most Daring Coaster, and it won the Golden Ticket Award for Best New Ride that year.

“I am excited and honored to be presenting for the first time this year at the Golden Tickets Awards at Silver Dollar City,” said **Pete Barto**, director of sales, **S&S Worldwide**, heading into the event. “Herschend Family Entertainment is a top-notch operator, and I look forward to being in Branson for one of the best industry networking events of the year.”

“Come hungry, walk and sample,” said Thomas. “Stop into Sullivan’s Mill for warm cinnamon bread or watch them make peanut brittle or hand-dipped chocolates at Brown’s Candy Factory.” Several attendees also checked out the park’s famous big-skillet dishes.

For the first time ever, the awards ceremony was held on water. The **Showboat Branson Belle** set out on Table Rock



Silver Dollar City opened its gates and arms to welcome Golden Ticket Awards attendees. The Showboat Branson Belle (above) played host to the awards ceremony.

COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY; AT/TIM BALDWIN

Lake for an exclusive voyage dedicated to the Golden Ticket Awards and its attendees on the evening of September 8.

“Gary Slade and the *Amusement Today* family are always working hard to make each Golden Ticket event a special celebration,” said Thomas. “The Showboat Branson Belle provided a unique environment – we had a taste of Showboat entertainment, enjoyed a meal together, and celebrated this year’s Golden Ticket recipients, all while cruising Table Rock Lake and enjoying some of the sights along the 900 miles of shoreline.”

A full recap of the event weekend will be featured in the Nov 1/Pre-IAAPA issue.

*All stories this issue
by Tim Baldwin*

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INSIDE:

- Amusement Views...Page 3
- Publisher's Picks...Pages 5
- Best Parks...Pages 8-19
- Best Rides...Pages 20-33
- Best New Rides for 2018...Pages 34-39
- Food, Cleanest, Friendliest, Landscaping...Pages 40-41
- Shows, Seasonal Events...Pages 42-43
- Steel Roller Coasters...Pages 44-45
- Wooden Roller Coasters...Pages 46-53

*Thank you to Silver Dollar City
for hosting the 2018 Golden Tickets!*



Congratulations to all the nominees
of this year's Golden Ticket Awards!



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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

EDITORIAL: Gary Slade, gslade@amusementtoday.com

A Golden 'Thank You'



Slade

Each year *Amusement Today's* staff works hard alongside our host facility to make sure our attendees have a wonderful two-day event. As the event continues to grow we must acknowledge that AT and our host facilities could not continue to offer this free event without the financial support of our sponsors. We would like to take this moment to recognize them once again for their generous contributions:

**Mack Rides GmbH & Co.
Rocky Mountain Construction
S&S Worldwide**

We must also say thank you to **Brad Thomas, Lisa Rau, Martha Bohner** and **Dalton Fischer** at **Silver Dollar City** and **Casey Robertson** at the **Showboat Branson Belle** for their hard work to showcase these two unique facilities to the industry.

Not to be forgotten, AT would like to send a thank you to the board of directors for both **AIMS International** and the **National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives** for continuing to conduct their annual meetings the day before the GTA event kickoff. Thanks for the continued support!

Replacement Golden Tickets offered: if your park or facility has won a previous Golden Ticket Award and that award has faded — or is beginning to fade — *Amusement Today* would like to replace the artwork for you at no charge. We know your facility is proud of your Golden Ticket awards as we see them on display throughout the park industry.

There was a three-year time period when printing methods were different. Some of the awards produced during that time have begun to fade. We want our Golden Tickets looking 'Golden' for your visitors so let us help make them new again. But if you don't contact us, we don't know what to replace.

Please email **Savannah Breen** at sbreen@amusementtoday.com. Include the CATEGORY WIN NAME of the Golden Ticket Award and the YEAR.

AT plans to compile a list of replacement art through the IAAPA show and reprint all replacement awards in December. You will receive just the newly printed artwork for replacement in your existing acrylic brick.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



EDITORIAL: Tim Baldwin, tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

Family forever

I feel very blessed to be in this industry. This role allows me to see so much that is happening in the business of fun, for which I feel fortunate.

However, great as that is, traveling from park to park by yourself can at times get a bit lonely. I'm sure that is why enthusiast groups thrive. Shared connections among friends are irreplaceable.

On a recent international trip, I was thoroughly embracing the park I was visiting, but I couldn't shake my longing to share the experience with someone. Two accidental family moments were highlights of my trip.

As I boarded the back row of my favorite coaster at the park, I joined a young teen. His parents were in front of us. In the brief time from the station to the first drop, we had those exhilarating moments to discuss our adventure. They thankfully spoke English and were impressed that I had traveled all the way from Texas. As it turned out, I was riding along with the young lad on his very first big roller coaster. What a thrill! Having been on more than 1,000 coasters, it is easy to forget that extreme mix of fear and excitement that I once had. My



Baldwin

riding partner was not about to raise his hands, but his screams had that magical blend of joy and terror. We high-fived on the brake run, and I felt honored to be a part of his experience.

Likewise, on the next day, I was queuing with a family behind me who were neither American or British, but speaking English. I was intrigued enough to eventually ask where they were from. They shared their family history with me and (again) were surprised that I had traveled from Texas.

I was reminded of my family trips when I was a school-age boy. My oldest memory is of my first roller coaster ride at the age of six. It was on a family vacation, and, ironically, that coaster still runs just a couple of minutes away from the *Amusement Today* offices. I still enjoy every ride I take on it.

As I boarded the boat with that family, we yelled and laughed together. I immediately felt connected. They purchased the on-ride photo and told me I was now linked with them forever. What an honor.

This industry creates family memories that last a lifetime. I hope we never lose sight of the importance of what we do each day.



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Golden Ticket Awards frequently asked questions

Amusement Today often receives numerous questions about the industry's most sought-after awards. Here's a brief overview.

Is the voting panel the same every year?

No. AT has never had the exact same panel each year. New people are brought on as others are retired. The common thread is to find the most experienced, well-traveled park fans out there.

How many ballots are sent out?

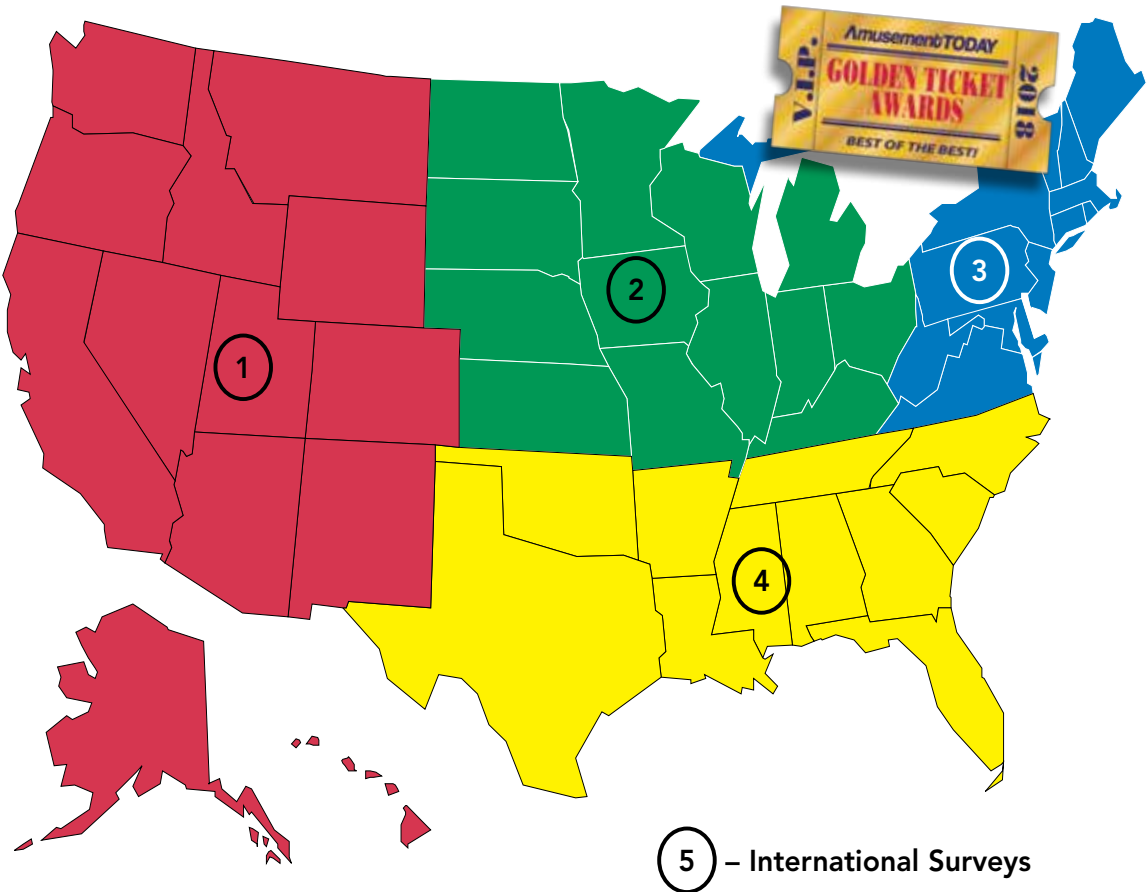
AT reaches out to around 500 voters each year, and the response is strong. To help keep things balanced, an equal number is divided among four geographical regions of the U.S., and an international segment is also represented.

Does Amusement Today select nominees?

No. Staff members, as well as park employees and manufacturer representatives are not able to vote. Any qualified park, ride or event for that category can receive votes.

Can anyone vote?

Amusement Today is looking for enthusiastic park fans who visit several parks a year and have had several years of experience. We are always seeking new candidates for our panel. If you feel your experience is high and are actively visiting numerous parks and attractions each year, contact Tim Baldwin at tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com to inquire if you are a good fit for next year's panel.



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2018 Publisher's Picks

Chance Rides receives first-ever Innovation of the Year Publisher's Pick

Like any industry, the business of providing entertaining rides to amusement parks around the world takes more than just "doing what we've always done." Innovation has always been a driving force in the amusement industry, and with it comes more than just thrills.

Chance Rides debuted its all-electric C.P. Huntington train earlier this season. The **Landry's Company** was the first to climb aboard with an installation at the **Downtown Aquarium — Houston**.

As Chance views it: The Electric C.P. Huntington Train is changing the way the industry evolves in terms of environmental impact, reliability, operator satisfaction and guest experience. The electric drive system has proven to be effective in dealing with varying loads and conditions and allows the train to respond to changing conditions, environments and demands that are not available with a gasoline or diesel engine.

With the development of lithium-ion batteries, this advancement was brought to the attention of some of the industry's biggest players. The technology was used on floats at Disney and Universal, with successful results. Chance Rides embraces green technologies and invested in the development of this first-of-its-kind, lithium-ion battery powered train. According to the company, the future of transportation will be built around green, electric-powered drive systems. The dual charging station capability combined with regenerative braking has allowed the battery system to run in its "sweet spot" day after day. In terms of going "green," there are multiple benefits:

- Reduced maintenance and operation costs
- Zero emissions and Eco-friendly operation
- Virtually no fuel cost
- Recharge for pennies
- Safe, quiet, programmable all-day train operation
- Parks can step away from storing hazardous fuels

The fact that the innovation is perfect for indoor/outdoor applications is also noteworthy. Previously internal combustion powered trains could only be located outdoors. This not only broadens a customer base but does so with safety and efficiency in mind.

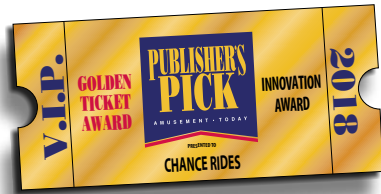
Chance has delivered more than 400 installations of the C.P. Huntington. Now the company has moved toward taking their most successful product into the future.

The level of interest has been exceptional in the industry. That is an indication that such a step forward is needed. When entertainment is combined with efficiency and safety, it's the right direction for business.

Amusement Today honors Chance Rides for its green initiatives with the first **INNOVATION OF THE YEAR** Publisher's Pick.



Attending the unveiling of the Electric C.P. Huntington Train at Landry's Downtown Aquarium in Houston were (from left) Roger Berry of Lithionics; Steve Howe, director, Landry's Downtown Aquarium — Houston; and Dick Chance, Chance Rides. COURTESY CHANCE RIDES



Silver Dollar City pushes for a greater future

Anyone remotely familiar with Branson, Missouri, is undoubtedly aware of **Silver Dollar City**. The two have intertwined histories that go back more than half a century. As the theme park has continued to grow since its origins in 1960, one thing has stayed consistent — a commitment to a quality experience.

From extraordinary tours of Marvel Cave to the addition of unique, custom rides, the park has also found success with lively entertainment and a passionate and friendly staff — the citizens of the City — that bring back guests year after year.

It would be easy to sit back and rest on one's laurels, but that is not the case here. Considering Branson's relatively remote location, the beautiful area in the Ozark Mountains works hard to bring tourists into town. Silver Dollar City is not hesitant to take risks.

With the announcement of Time Traveler in the summer of 2017, the park also doubled down and brought in Christmas in Midtown last fall. The park's holiday festival, An Olde Time Christmas, has always been popular. Park management pushed themselves, both in developing a brilliant in-house creation of the beyond-dazzling scenes as well as ingeniously storing the sets. The result? Magic.

Silver Dollar City saw an 18 percent increase in attendance at An Olde Time Christmas. The addition of Christmas in Midtown took the holiday festival to the next level, setting a record for more than 500,000 people during that time period.

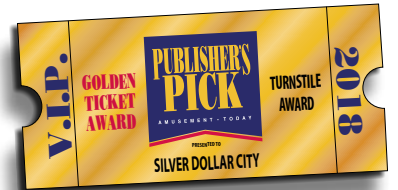
With Time Traveler, again, the park took risks. The investment on this new attraction more than doubled any previous ride installation. On top of that, the park didn't hesitate to debut something groundbreaking. Driving roller coaster innovation with new technology from **Mack Rides**, the park debuted the world's tallest, fastest and steepest spinning coaster. Many industry insiders questioned the park's course. But Time Traveler has delivered in no uncertain terms. The coaster has thrilled more than 500,000 riders thus far and has opened to rave reviews from the public to enthusiasts alike.

The new addition, along with the accompanying gift shop and restaurant, has created 40 new jobs. And at the same time, the park has stayed true to their story. In fact, following on the heels of Outlaw Run celebrating law enforcement and Fireman's Landing being dedicated to volunteer firemen, a new message with Time Traveler has been Dream Big, Do Good.

Clearly, Silver Dollar City has.

Attendance is up from all 14 of the park's key feeder markets, and projections are on course for another record-setting year.

For its commitment to excellence, the willingness to push themselves and the courage to take risks, *Amusement Today* is proud to acknowledge Silver Dollar City with the Publisher's Pick **TURNSTILE AWARD**.



Silver Dollar City has boosted attendance with both its Christmas in Midtown expansion and the innovative new Time Traveler roller coaster, both in the past ten months.

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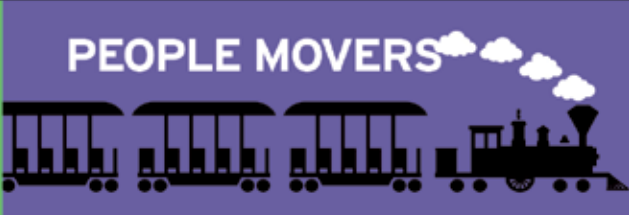
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Europa-Park makes it five in a row; Schlitterbahn undefeated

In the category of **BEST PARK**, **Europa-Park** takes the Golden Ticket for the fifth time. After a dominance that lasted 16 years, **Cedar Point** could have been considered unstoppable. For a park outside the U.S. to unseat the giant should have been unthinkable. However, Europa-Park inched its way up the chart of finalists year after year before taking the top spot.



"We are proud, but at the same time humbled. This honor pushes us to do more for the guests. We feel obligated to be better and better," said **Michael Kreft**, representative to the board, Europa-Park.

Currently the German theme park is building its second gate, **Rulantica**, as well as its sixth resort hotel.

Power player Cedar Point holds the No. 2 spot and continues to reign as the top park in the U.S. With the addition of Steel Vengeance, the park's latest-and-greatest roller coaster, the Ohio mega-park worked at closing the gap between the



top two contenders.

Then things change from there.

Knoebels Amusement Resort rises a spot to the No. 3 position. The family-owned, free-admission park continues to receive accolades for its offerings and value to local families as well as tourists.

Busch Gardens Williamsburg returns to the Top Five finalists. A blend of world-class coasters, great food, fantastic landscaping and solid entertainment cre-

BEST PARK:
Europa-Park (above)
BEST CHILDREN'S PARK:
Idlewild & SoakZone (right)
AT/TIM BALDWIN;
COURTESY IDLEWILD

ates the ideal success formula for both voters and guests.

Still placing among the upper elite is **Dollywood**. Holding the No. 5 finalist position, the Tennessee themed echoes the Busch Gardens blend with great food, rides, hospitality and entertainment.

Since the creation of the



Golden Ticket Awards in 1998, only two categories have gone undefeated for all 21 years. One of them is **BEST WATER**

PARK, with the award having been taken by **Schlitterbahn**. The one-of-a-kind feel of the New Braunfels, Texas, property, poised on the banks of the natural spring-fed Comal River, not to mention an abundance of innovative rides, has made the park a leader in the water park industry.

Splashin' Safari in Santa Claus, Ind., entered the list of finalists in 2001 in third place and has taken the No. 2 spot since 2002. The water park is known for its big slides and boundary-pushing water coasters.

Volcano Bay, in just less than two years, has snagged the No. 3 position two times since its 2017 debut. The ultra-themed resort found its niche by offering all daily guests

► See PARKS, page 10



BEST WATER PARK: Schlitterbahn New Braunfels
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BEST WATER PARK No. 2: Splashin' Safari
AT/TIM BALDWIN

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

►PARKS
Continued from page 8

reserved ride times during their visit. It is Orlando's highest-rated water park.

Dollywood's Splash Country stays on at No. 4. The wooded setting and natural ambience of the water park offer a relaxing feel.

New on the charts is **Aquatica** in Orlando (No. 5). For this season, the park introduced the award-winning Ray Rush.

A perennial winner is also found with **BEST CHILDREN'S PARK**. Taking the Golden Ticket now for nine years, **Idlewild & SoakZone** provides fairy tales, fun rides and Daniel Tiger from Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood in a day filled with family fun.

After a No. 4 debut last year, **Morgan's Wonderland** in San Antonio, Texas, climbs

to the No. 2 position. The all-inclusive park, welcoming guests regardless of physical abilities, makes it great play for every family.

A new finalist at No. 3 emerges this year. **Sesame Place** in Langhorne, Pa., lands on the chart rather impressively. The park just added its second coaster, Oscar's Wacky Taxi.

Legoland Florida climbs a notch to the No. 4 position and **Storybook Land** in New Jersey hangs on to its status as a finalist, rounding out the Top Five.

In the category of **BEST SEASIDE PARK**, three parks have arm-wrestled for the rankings. Taking the Golden Ticket again is **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**.

"We are proud to have played a unique role in the

► See PARKS, page 12

PARK AND RIDE WINNERS

Ranked by percentage of votes cast



BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2018 (Amusement Park)			BEST NEW RIDE FOR 2018 (Water Park)		
Steel Vengeance	Cedar Point	33%	Ray Rush	Aquatica Orlando	23%
Time Traveler	Silver Dollar City	29%	Breaker's Edge	Hersheypark	21%
Twisted Timbers	Kings Dominion	6%	Whitecap Racer	Hersheypark	12%
Oscar's Wacky Taxi	Sesame Place	TIE 5%	Rock Wheel	Chimelong Water Park	11%
Wicker Man	Alton Towers	TIE 5%	Raja	Noah's Ark	9%

BEST PARK			BEST SEASIDE PARK		
Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	25%	Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	33%
Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	20%	Morey's Piers	Wildwood, N.J.	22%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	8%	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	Blackpool, England	20%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	7%	Gröna Lund	Stockholm, Sweden	19%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	6.5%	Kemah Boardwalk	Kemah, Texas	4%

BEST WATER PARK			BEST KIDS' AREA		
Schlitterbahn	New Braunfels, Texas	51%	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	23%
Splashin' Safari	Santa Claus, Ind.	20%	Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	13%
Volcano Bay	Orlando, Fla.	8%	Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands	10%
Dollywood's Splash Country	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	5%	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	9%
Aquatica Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	4%	Paultons Park	Romsey, England	8%

BEST CHILDREN'S PARK			CLEANEST PARK		
Idlewild & SoakZone	Ligonier, Pa.	16%	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	25%
Morgan's Wonderland	San Antonio, Texas	11%	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	12%
Sesame Place	Langhorne, Pa.	10%	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	11%
Legoland Florida	Winter Haven, Fla.	8%	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	9%
Storybook Land	Egg Harbor Twp., N.J.	7%	Tokyo DisneySea	Tokyo, Japan	8%

BEST MARINE LIFE PARK			BEST SHOWS		
SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	56%	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	42%
SeaWorld San Diego	San Diego, Calif.	13%	Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	14%
SeaWorld San Antonio	San Antonio, Texas	9%	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	9%
Discovery Cove	Orlando, Fla.	7%	Disney's Animal Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	TIE 5%
Ocean Park	Hong Kong	TIE 6%	Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	TIE 5%
Six Flags Discovery Kingdom	Vallejo, Calif.	TIE 6%			

Fun Never Gets Old

THANKS FOR THE GOLDEN TICKET



beachboardwalk.com

►PARKS

Continued from page 10

long and rich history of Santa Cruz," **Marq Lipton**, vice president of marketing and sales, told *Amusement Today*. "We are honored to have won 11 Golden Tickets for Best

Seaside Park and lucky to be part of an amazing industry full of incredible parks and attractions and talented people. Winning the Golden Ticket makes living and working in Santa Cruz, California, even better."

In a battle for second

place, **Morey's Piers** stays ahead of **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** (No. 3). **Gröna Lund** in Sweden keeps its No. 4 position but makes great strides toward the upper challengers. Second through fourth place were separated by just a few percentage points.

Kemah Boardwalk at No. 5 completes the finalists.

Three **SeaWorld** parks dominate **BEST MARINE LIFE PARK**. **SeaWorld Orlando** easily swept all others to take the Golden Ticket. It is followed by the original, **SeaWorld San Diego** (No. 2), and — ris-

ing a notch — **SeaWorld San Antonio** (No. 3).

Discovery Cove slips one rung this year to No. 4.

A tie for our last finalist spot is seen between **Ocean Park** in Hong Kong and California's **Six Flags Discovery Kingdom**.



BEST SEASIDE PARK: Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk
COURTESY SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK



BEST MARINE LIFE PARK: SeaWorld Orlando
AT/TIM BALDWIN

PARK AND RIDE WINNERS

Ranked by percentage of votes cast



BEST FOOD

Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	22%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	20%
Epcot	Orlando, Fla.	14%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	13%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	8%

BEST WATER RIDE (PARK)

Valhalla	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	22%
Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls	Universal's Islands of Adventure	18%
Splash Mountain	Magic Kingdom	10%
Chiapas	Phantasialand	9.50%
Timber Mountain Log Flume	Knott's Berry Farm	9%

BEST WATER PARK RIDE

Wildebeest	Splashin' Safari	29%
Mammoth	Splashin' Safari	16%
The Falls	Schlitterbahn	11%
Master Blaster	Schlitterbahn	10%
Krakatau Aqua Coaster	Volcano Bay	9%

BEST INDOOR COASTER

Revenge of the Mummy	Universal Studios Orlando	25%
Space Mountain	Disneyland	12%
TRON Lightcycle Power Run	Shanghai Disneyland	TIE 11.5%
Winja's Fear and Force	Phantasialand	TIE 11.5%
Black Diamond	Knoebels Amusement Resort	11%

BEST DARK RIDE

Twilight Zone Tower of Terror	Disney's Hollywood Studios	13%
Harry Potter ... Forbidden Journey	Universal's Islands of Adventure	12%
Haunted Mansion	Knoebels Amusement Resort	11%
Pirates: Battle for the Sunken Treasure	Shanghai Disneyland	10%
Harry Potter ... Escape from Gringott's	Universal Studios Orlando	9%

BEST CAROUSEL

Knoebels Amusement Resort	Grand Carousel	43%
Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Looff Carousel	17%
Six Flags Over Gerogia	Riverview Carousel	8%
Efteling	Stoomcarrousel	6%
Universal's Islands of Adventure	Caro-Seuss-El	5%

BEST LANDSCAPING

Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	34%
Gilroy Gardens	Gilroy, Calif.	16%
Efteling	Kaatsheuvel, The Netherlands	12%
Tivoli Gardens	Copenhagen, Denmark	9%
Disney's Animal Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	TIE 6%
Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	TIE 6%

BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT

Universal Studios Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	28%
Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	22%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	13%
Kings Island	Mason Ohio	6%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	TIE 5%
Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	TIE 5%

BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT

Dollywood	Piegeon Forge, Tenn.	35%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	14%
Disneyland	Anaheim, Calif.	8%
Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	TIE 6%
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	TIE 6%

FRIENDLIEST PARK

Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	29%
Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	19%
Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	15%
Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	12%
Lagoon	Farmington, Utah	TIE 4%
Magic Kingdom	Orlando, Fla.	TIE 4%

BEST FUNHOUSE/WALK-THROUGH ATTRACTION

Noah's Ark	Kennywood	34%
Frankenstein's Castle	Indiana Beach	13%
Ghost Ship	Morey's Piers	12%
Gasten Ghost Hotel	Liseberg	11%
Lustiga Huset	Gröna Lund	10%

BONUS COVERAGE

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Carowinds
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Cedar Point
- #3 Steel Vengeance™
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- #8 Leviathan®
Canada's Wonderland
- #9 Maverick®
Cedar Point
- #10 Diamondback
Kings Island
- #12 Intimidator® 305
Kings Dominion
- #14 Magnum XL-200
Cedar Point
- #16 Top Thrill Dragster®
Cedar Point
- #22 Intimidator®
Carowinds

TOP Wooden Roller Coasters

- #5 The Beast®
Kings Island
- #9 Gold Striker®
California's Great America
- #11 Mystic Timbers
Kings Island
- #13 Ghost Rider®
Knott's Berry Farm
- #22 Shivering Timbers®
Michigan's Adventure

BEST New Ride

- #1 Steel Vengeance™
Cedar Point
- #3 Twisted Timbers™
Kings Dominion

BEST Kids' Area

- #1 Planet Snoopy™
Kings Island
- #4 Planet Snoopy™
Kings Dominion

BEST Landscaping

- #2 Gilroy Gardens

BEST Halloween Event

- #2 Knott's Scary Farm®
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- #3 Halloween Haunt® &
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BEST Christmas Event

- #4 WinterFest
Kings Island



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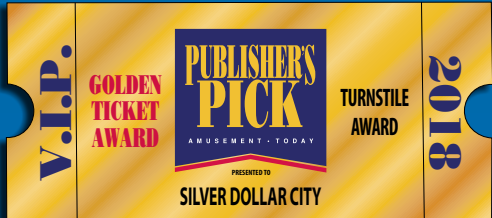


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Favorite rides keep their lock on Golden Ticket wins

Getting a Golden Ticket in a ride category is tough enough. Keeping it for multiple years is a bigger challenge.

In the category of **BEST DARK RIDE**, a few legendary rides have snagged the prize. In one of the more recent overthrows, **Disney's Hollywood Studios** took the reins two years ago with its **Twilight Zone Tower of Terror** — and takes it again for a third year. Disney recently converted a similar attraction at **Disney California Adventure** to a storyline themed to *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Are fans indirectly telling the company not to touch this one? Possibly. Regardless, this longtime favorite has been scaring the bejeebers out of its guests since 1994.



In the No. 2 spot is **Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey** at **Universal's Islands of Adventure**. For many years, the same Universal park had a lock on this category with its Spider-Man-themed ride.

Knoebels' Haunted Mansion (No. 3) keeps its hold as a top finalist. While many voters appreciate the huge budgets behind the theme park giants, many also hail the traditional park's old-school version as a nostalgic classic.

A new player enters the finalist board. **Shanghai Disneyland** has wowed guests during its first year of operation with **Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure**. It arrives at No. 4. *Amusement Today* predicts this is one to watch.

Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts at **Universal Studios Orlando**, with its combination dark ride mixed with coaster moments, winds down the finalists.

Want to get wet? Whether in a park or water park, both our champions have taken over top prize at some point. **Wildebust** at **Splashin' Safari** has now held the Golden Ticket for **BEST WATER PARK RIDE** since 2010.

"Congratulations to



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

Holiday World & Splashin' Safari for winning this prestigious award for the ninth time!" cheered **Ray Smegal**, VP of design and product strategy for the maker of the award-winning ride, **ProSlide Technologies**. "Wildebust set a new benchmark for water coasters when it opened in 2010. It's the longest in-line water coaster in the world, with non-stop action from start to finish. It's fast and smooth, utilizing ProSlide's patented Linear Induction Motor [LIM] technology — driving high speeds, capacity and performance."

Behind it is another Splashin' Safari hit, **Mammoth**. This six-passenger hydromagnetic water coaster was a popular follow-up to Wildebust.

The Falls (No. 3) and **Master Blaster** (No. 4) are both at **Schlitterbahn** in New

Braunfels, Texas, and are both previous Golden Ticket Winners — the former for Best New Ride and the latter for Best Water Park Ride.

Krakatau Water Coaster at the new **Volcano Bay** in Orlando lands on the charts for the first time.

Only two rides have held the Golden Ticket for **BEST WATER RIDE**. Both still hold the top two slots.

Valhalla at **Blackpool Pleasure Beach** takes the award for a sixth time. The water ride was supplied by **Intamin** and has multiple indoor scenes. And tons of drenching water.

Islands of Adventure's **Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls**, a 12-time winner, stays strong in its No. 2 position. The whimsically themed flume ride was built by **Mack Rides**.

Magic Kingdom's Splash Mountain (No. 3)

and **Phantasialand's Chiapas** (No. 4) switch positions for 2018, but by a razor-thin voting margin.

Completing the list of finalists is a returning contender, **Timber Mountain Log Flume** at **Knott's Berry Farm**.

BEST INDOOR COASTER finds familiar faces with a new player added to the mix. Universal Studios Orlando has taken the category since 2008 with **Revenge of the Mummy**, a coaster from **Premier Rides**. **Disneyland's Space Mountain** also keeps its No. 2 position.

A new attraction zips on the scene here. **TRON Lightcycle Power Run** at Shanghai Disneyland is a sought-after coaster by enthusiasts everywhere. It debuts on the chart at No. 3. (Of note, a version

of the attraction is coming to Orlando in 2021.) Tying for third is **Winja's Fear and Force** at Germany's Phantasialand.

Completing the list is **Black Diamond** at Knoebels.

BEST FUNHOUSE/WALK-THROUGH ATTRACTION keeps its top five finalists with only minor changes. **Noah's Ark** at **Kennywood** makes it nine years after taking the Golden Ticket for the first time in 2010.

Indiana Beach's Frankenstein's Castle (once a Golden Ticket winner) and **Ghost Ship** at **Morey's Piers** (No. 3) duke it out for second and third, and another slight margin determines the flip of positions this year.

Gasten Ghost Hotel at **Liseberg** (No. 4) and **Lustiga Huset** at **Gröna Lund** (No. 5) keep their positions from last year.

In the ride categories, two winners have been undefeated since the creation of their awards.

BEST KIDS AREA debuted in 2001. Not only was **Kings Island** the first winner of this category, but the park and Planet Snoopy have refused to let go of it — carrying it for the 18th time.

Keeping their respective positions from last year, **Seuss Landing** at **Islands of Adventure** comes in at No. 2 and **Fairytale Forest** at **Efteling** in The Netherlands holds on to No. 3.

Finding a place back on the list of finalists is **Kings Dominion** in Virginia, where Planet Snoopy (like the

► See RIDES, page 25



BEST FUN HOUSE/WALK-THROUGH ATTRACTION: Noah's Ark, Kennywood AT/TIM BALDWIN

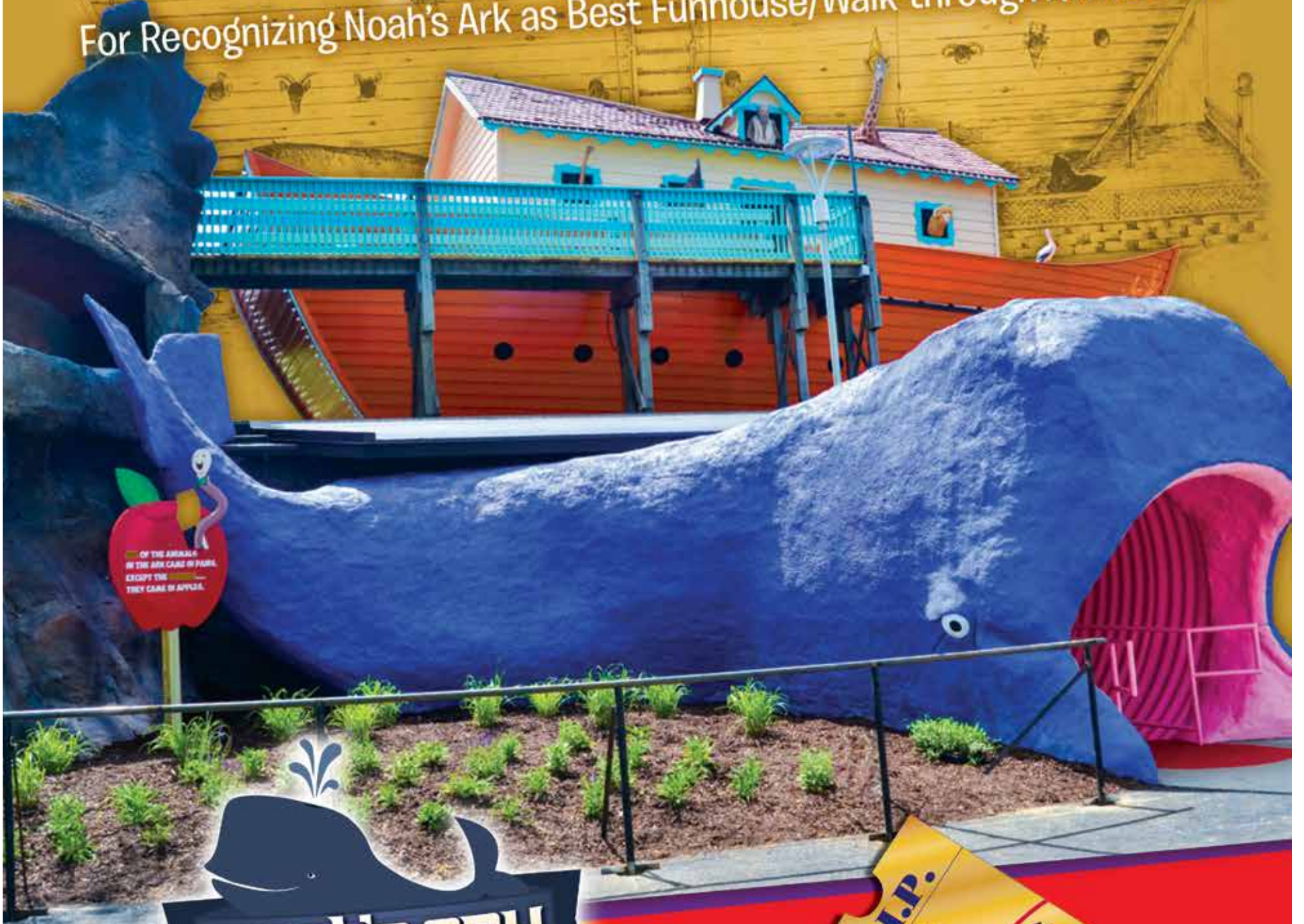


BEST DARK RIDE: Twilight Zone Tower of Terror, Disney's Hollywood Studios AT/TIM BALDWIN



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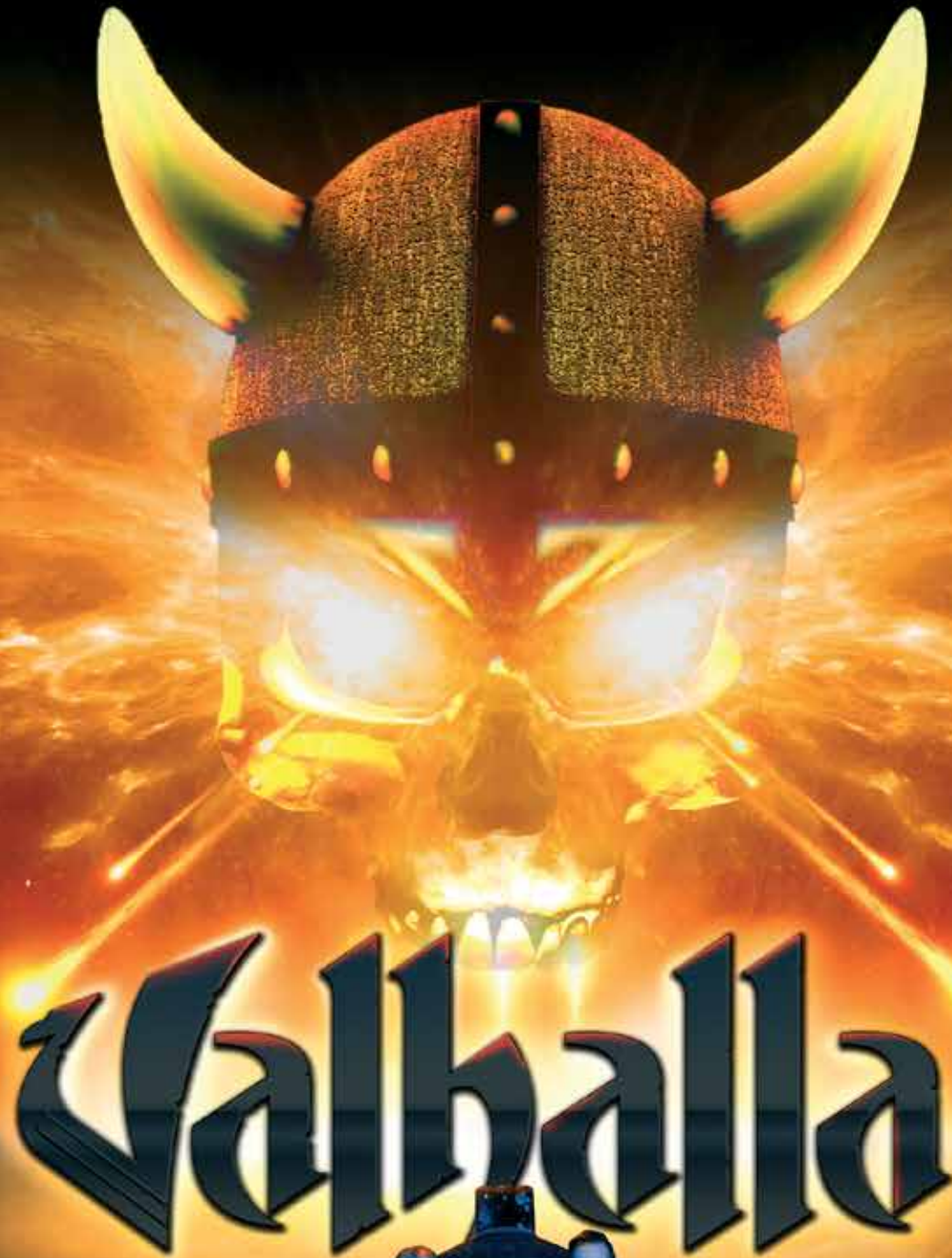


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▶RIDES**Continued from page 20**

Golden Ticket winner) has also found favor with voters.

Staying on the list of finalists is England's **Paultons Park**, where the popular Peppa Pig World is loved by kids and parents alike.

What started out as a rotating category on a three-year cycle eventually became a recurring category. **BEST CAROUSEL** appeared in 2001 and 2004 before being added as an annual distinction in 2007. In each instance, like the previous category, there has only been a single winner — Knoebels Amusement Resort. The perennial winner has now taken the award for the 14th time.

Many industry aficionados refer to the carousel as the heart of any park. Knoebels' beloved classic

was built in 1913 and purchased by the Knoebel family in 1941. Grand Carousel, with its historic band organ and classic brass ring dispenser, is nothing short of timeless. Anyone catching a brass ring gets a free ride. It is the envy of any park owner.

Those same attributes are found in the No. 2 position. **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk** prides itself on its Looft Carousel that dates back to 1911. It is a National Historic Landmark.

Six Flags Over Georgia remains in third with its preserved Riverview Carousel in a beautiful pavilion.

Efteling moves up a notch to No. 4. The park's Stoomcarroussel also boasts more than 100 years of history and is situated in what is often referred to as the Carousel Palace.

Making a return to com-



plete the finalists is Carosseus-El at Universal's Islands of Adventure.

BEST WATER RIDE:
Valhalla, Blackpool
Pleasure Beach (top left)

BEST KIDS' AREA:
Planet Snoopy,
Kings Island (top right)

BEST WATER PARK RIDE:
Wildebeest,
Splashin' Safari (right)
COURTESY ALEX RIGSBY;
AT/TIM BALDWIN



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#3



MASTER BLASTER UPHILL WATER COASTER
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#4



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Royal Caribbean,
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

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Congratulations to all of these "best parks" for their Golden Ticket Awards. And special congratulations (again!) to Holiday World & Splashin' Safari's Wildebeest for its **ninth consecutive** first place Best Water Park Ride award. They've won every year since their HydroMAGNETIC® ROCKET® was installed.

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#3 BEST NEW RIDE (WATER PARK)
HERSHEYPARK'S WHITECAP RACER



#2 BEST NEW RIDE (WATER PARK)
HERSHEYPARK'S BREAKER'S EDGE WATER COASTER



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Best New Rides offer boundary-pushing thrills

New investments are always a risk, but when that certain attraction resonates with guests, a bona fide hit brings visitors back again and again. Often, people come from across the country or from around the globe to experience world-class thrillers.



Four years in the planning and two years in the construction process, **Steel Vengeance** takes the Golden Ticket Award for **BEST NEW RIDE – PARK**. In a year that was fierce with competition, rave reviews poured in for **Cedar Point's** new legacy ride.

"Steel Vengeance has so many awesome features, its single best attribute is its relentlessness. From start to finish the ride delivers one thrilling moment after another," **Jason McClure**, VP and general manager of Cedar Point, told *Amusement Today*. "My favorite part of the ride is the second half, when you spend so much of the ride experience inside the wooden structure. The structure disguises what is coming around the corner; the transitions happen so fast that you lose track of whether you are in a banked curve, upside down or right side up. The bonus is that while intense, the ride is so smooth that you are ready to ride it again."

Rocky Mountain Construction was the manufacturer of the ride.

As outrageously popular as Steel Vengeance is, taking the prize was no piece of cake. A hard-fought battle took place



BEST NEW RIDE: Steel Vengeance, Cedar Point AT/TIM BALDWIN

between it and the No. 2 contender. **Time Traveler** at **Silver Dollar City** finished strong. Fans were praising its innovation, smooth ride and beautiful aesthetics.

"Time Traveler is a must-do!" said **Brad Thomas**, park president. "Our friends at **Mack Rides** created a fun and unique ride experience. It's the tallest, fastest spinning coaster in the world. It features two launches and three inversions, and quickly became a guest favorite."

In third place is **Twisted Timbers** at **Kings Dominion**. As with Steel Vengeance, Rocky Mountain Construction took an aging wooden coaster and created a steel track layout that features dramatic maneuvers, an abundance of airtime, inversions and a remarkable smooth-

ness compared to its former life.

Two wooden coasters complete our list of finalists. **Oscar's Wacky Taxi** at **Sesame Place** in Pennsylvania introduced its first roller coaster in 20 years. Not losing sight of its young audience, the wooden coaster by **The Gravity Group** packs solid fun into a diminutive stature. Tying for fourth is **Wicker Man** at **Alton Towers**. Created by **Great Coasters International, Inc.**, the highly themed woodie races through a 60-foot central effigy multiple times, making it appear to burst into flames as the trains pass through. It is the first wooden roller coaster for the park.

BEST NEW RIDE – WATER PARK saw several innovations as well.

Taking the Golden Ticket is **Ray Rush** at **Aquatica Orlando**. The ride was a project from **WhiteWater West**.

"Our guests are raving about the three-in-one thrills of Ray Rush. The combination of the Master Blaster, AquaSphere and Manta slide elements seamlessly blended into one attraction creates a ride experience that is both thrilling and family-friendly," said **David Heaton**, vice president, Aquatica. "We are incredibly honored to be the recipients of this year's Golden Ticket."

Right on its heels — or fins — was **Breaker's Edge** at **Hersheypark**. In fact, Hersheypark placed in the No.

2 and No. 3 slots with two new additions for 2018. Both from **ProSlide Technology**, **Breaker's Edge** and **Whitecap Racer** makes a major statement at **Hesheypark's** Boardwalk. Breaker's Edge is an uphill water coaster that incorporates ProSlide's captivating saucers, while Whitecap Racer features

six lanes of competitive thrills with double tunnels.

Completing the top five are **Rock Wheel** at **Chimelong Water Park** in China, the outlandish rotating Ferris wheel-meets-waterslide supplied by Weigand, and **Raja** at **Noah's Ark** in Wisconsin Dells, manufactured by **Polin**.



BEST NEW RIDE (WATER PARK): Ray Rush, Aquatica Orlando COURTESY SEA WORLD ORLANDO



BEST NEW RIDE, No. 2: Time Traveler, Silver Dollar City COURTESY SILVER DOLLAR CITY



BEST NEW RIDE, No. 3: Twisted Timbers, Kings Dominion AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT

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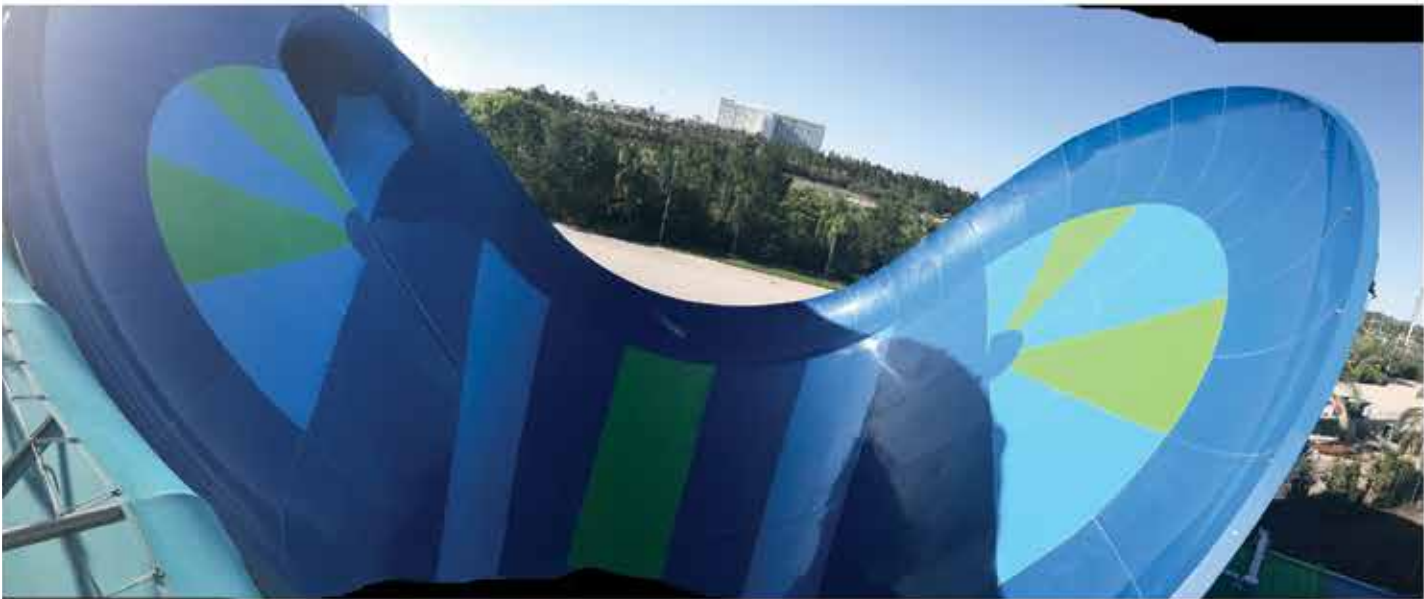


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Throughout the globe, winners of the prestigious Golden Ticket Awards have showcased their victories in publications, signage, park maps and promotional materials. Seen here are the entrance to Europa-Park (top) and fanfare for Kings Island's Planet Snoopy.

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Knoebels and Dollywood continue tug-of-war with Best Food

"Last year, **Dollywood** raised the bar. We're hoping our waists don't show that we've spent the time since then taste testing to figure out how we can regain the top spot," **Dick Knoebel** told *Amusement Today*.

And so it goes. The two parks have wrangled for the Golden Ticket for **BEST FOOD** for several years now. For 2018, it is back in the hands of **Knoebels Amusement Resort**. The combination of taste, value and variety of comfort foods makes eating at Knoebels a popular pastime.

The other finalists hold fast in their claimed spots from last year. **Epcot** (No. 3), **Silver Dollar City** (No. 4) and **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** (No. 5) have found favor with voters as well.

For **BEST LANDSCAPING**, **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** remains the undefeated champ. The park is blessed with natural beauty, but lush landscaping and color is plentiful throughout the park. From the moment guests walk from their cars to all areas surrounding attractions and walkways, the park's



commitment to beauty is evident at the highest level.

Gilroy Gardens in California (No. 2) and **Efteling** in the Netherlands (No. 3) have not faltered in their dedication to beautiful landscaping and keep their places from 2017.

For the first time, **Tivoli Gardens** jumps onto the charts this year in fourth place. The Copenhagen landmark is known for its blend of gardens, food eateries and fun rides.

Disney's Animal Kingdom (No. 5) keeps its place as a finalist in this category. Animal Kingdom dazzles with lush tropical landscaping throughout the park and incorporates natural beauty with extraterrestrial flora in the Pandora section, some of which glows in the nighttime hours. The fifth-place position is tied by **Europa-Park**, Germany's most popular theme park, known for stun-



BEST LANDSCAPING: Busch Gardens, Williamsburg AT/TIM BALDWIN

ning landscaping throughout its many themed areas.

Holiday World has long felt pride for claiming **CLEANEST PARK**. Park management has continuously impressed the importance of cleanliness in the park. Holiday World & Splashin' Safari has claimed this category since 2000.

"We stress to all our employees — both full-time and seasonal — that it's everyone's job to keep our parks clean," said **Matt Eckert**, president and CEO, Holiday World. "When we talk to new hosts and hostesses, we ask that they treat our parks like their home. When you have friends over, you don't want them to think you live in a dump, right? It's the same at Holiday World & Splashin' Safari — we want our guests to have fun and feel comfortable when they visit."

Busch Gardens Williamsburg was the very first park to claim this category and, this year, it rises two places to the No. 2 spot. (It has been a



BEST FOOD: Knoebels Amusement Resort
COURTESY KNOEBELS

finalist three times previously.) **Dollywood** (No. 3) and **Europa-Park** (No. 4) return as finalists in 2018. New to the list is **Tokyo DisneySea**, completing the Top Five.

Dollywood returns as **FRIENDLIEST PARK** in 2018. It is the seventh time for the park to take the Golden Ticket in this category, which it first claimed in 2012 after numerous years as a finalist. Silver

Dollar City (No. 2) and **Holiday World** (No. 3) swap places for 2018, with the **Branson** park — a one-time winner in this category — climbing a notch back toward the top rung.

Knoebels takes the No. 4 spot, as it did last year.

Two finalists tie for the No. 5 spot. Newcomers **Lagoon** and **Magic Kingdom** now stake their claims on the charts.



CLEANEST PARK: Holiday World & Splashin' Safari
COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD & SPLASHIN' SAFARI



FRIENDLIEST PARK: Dollywood
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Dollywood makes it ten years even for Best Shows

As entertainment continues to be a key part of a day at a theme park, shows not only give park visitors a relaxing break, but also rejuvenate families in a fun, invigorating way.

With a 2018 win for **BEST SHOWS**, **Dollywood** has now taken this category for 10 years. This follows a 10-year run previously held by **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** before Dollywood snatched the gold.



"Dollywood was built on entertainment. In every show we produce, we strive to live up to Dolly's level of excellence and creativity," said **Pete Owens**, vice president of marketing and public relations, Dollywood. "It is incredible to think this is 10 years in a row winning the BEST SHOWS Golden Ticket. It is humbling, but it emphasizes the consistent quality our performers exhibit every day."

Fiesta Texas continues to hold the No. 2 spot, maintaining its record of outstanding show quality.

Moving back into the finalists is **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** in the No. 3 position.



BEST SHOWS: Dollywood — Dolly Parton's performance influence helps the park take home its tenth consecutive win in the category. COURTESY DOLLYWOOD

Disney's Animal Kingdom and **Silver Dollar City** feature crowd-pleasers for all ages and tie for the No. 4 spot.

Dollywood takes another Golden Ticket for **BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT**. The park remains undefeated in this category since it was introduced in 2008. Sister park Silver Dollar City moved into second place last year, and with the addition of the dazzling Christmas in Midtown

expansion in 2017, the Branson theme park gathered more of the vote, but not enough to topple Ms. Parton's perch at the top.

Despite many new parks introducing expanded seasons with Christmas events, **Disneyland** remains in the third position. However, **Kings Island's** Winterfest returned last season and found great praise with voters and guests debuting on the chart for the first time in this category at No.

4, tying with **Magic Kingdom** at **Walt Disney World**.

Even more parks are introducing holiday events this season. Christmas is the new Halloween.

And speaking of Halloween, the holiday is still scaring up strong attendance numbers. Unquestionably one of the hottest trends of the last century, fall fright events designed to terrify guests are seeing greater investment each season.

Universal Studios Orlando and **Knott's Berry Farm** are the only two parks to take the gold for the category of **BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT**. Both continue to score strong, with Universal Studios Orlando wrapping its talons around the Golden Ticket for the 11th straight year. Knott's is a close second.

The haunted train ride and car ride at **Knoebels Amusement Resort** boast legions of fans. The park remains in the No. 3 spot in the Halloween category.

As with Christmas, Kings Island lands on the chart for the first time with Halloween as well, also in fourth place.

Tying for fifth are two regional favorites, **Kennywood** and **Six Flags Fiesta Texas**. Both parks have numerous haunted houses in addition to scare zones. Fiesta Texas also thrills and chills audiences with multiple Halloween shows featuring live musicians and performances featuring a gigantic cast.



BEST HALLOWEEN EVENT: Universal Studios Orlando
COURTESY UNIVERSAL RESORT



BEST CHRISTMAS EVENT: Dollywood — Dollywood remains the undefeated champion in wishing guests a Merry Christmas.
AT/TIM BALDWIN

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Newcomer upsets Top Five Steel, Fury 325 remains on top

For a new coaster to debut in the Top Ten is a laudable goal. From there, its challenge is to inch to the top, as most No. 1 coasters have done.



For a third year in a row, **Fury 325** has snagged the Golden Ticket Award for **BEST STEEL COASTER**. Carowinds Vice President and General Manager **Pat Jones**, said, "We're thrilled that Fury 325 has been named No. 1 Steel Coaster in the World for the third time, and recognize that it was up against some tough competition. This is validation that Fury 325 continues to deliver the heart-racing adrenaline rush our guests crave. Fury 325 marked the beginning of an exciting wave of transformation for Carowinds, one that continues into 2019."

Fury 325 is the tallest non-launched roller coaster in the world and, as its name indicates, stands 325 feet tall. It was a 2015 Golden Ticket winner for **BEST NEW RIDE** and took the top prize on the STEEL charts a year later. It was manufactured by **Bolliger & Mabillard**.

The previous Golden Ticket holder, **Millennium Force** at **Cedar Point**, continues to hold fast at No. 2. The original 300-footer, built by **Intamin**, debuted in 2000.

New competition challenges



BEST STEEL COASTER: Fury 325, Carowinds
COURTESY KRIS ROWBERRY

both. **Steel Vengeance**, which has taken the Golden Ticket for **BEST NEW RIDE** this year, makes a remarkable debut at No. 3. A creation of **Rocky Mountain Construction**, it is the fourth time that RMC has taken the **BEST NEW RIDE** award. Paired with **Millennium Force**, it is a one-two punch for Cedar Point.

"Debating at No. 3... that's crazy! That's, wow... not just an honor... but, I just didn't expect that high of a debut," said **Jake Kilcup**, COO of Rocky Mountain Construction. When asked by *Amusement Today* about his favorite moment on **Steel Vengeance**, Kilcup shied away from the coaster's more market-

able attributes. "I love dropping into the second half. It pops you out of your seat and then takes you into the jungle of wood. It's nonstop."

Climbing a notch, **Expedition GeForce** moves up to No. 4 and refuses to release its grasp on the title of Europe's highest-rated coaster. Built at **Holiday Park** in Germany by Intamin in 2001, the airtime-filled steel coaster has been a destination ride for enthusiasts around the globe.

Superman: The Ride at **Six Flags New England** is also known for its negative Gs. It is the third coaster by Intamin in the Top Five. This ride, which was called **Bizarro** for a period of time, held the Golden Ticket for

five years.

Apollo's Chariot (No. 6) at **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** moves several notches upward to return to the Top Ten. Built by Bolliger & Mabillard in 1999, it was the Swiss firm's first foray into the hypercoaster genre.

Iron Rattler (No. 7) at **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** maintains its Top Ten status. The wood-to-steel RMC transformation of the 1992 record-breaking woodie took place in 2013.

Leviathan at **Canada's Wonderland** (No. 8) and **Diamondback** at **Kings Island** (No. 10) are two more top-tier rides from Bolliger & Mabillard. Of note, Kings Island is the only park in the world to feature a wooden and steel coaster in the



BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 3: Millennium Force, Cedar Point
AT/TIM BALDWIN

Top Ten of the respective lists.

Intamin completes the Top Ten with Cedar Point's **Maverick** moving up one notch to take the No. 9 spot.

Steel Vengeance's stunning debut not only gave Cedar Point a good year, but also bragging rights of having three coasters in the Top Ten and five of the 25 coasters on the chart.

Silver Dollar City's new **Time Traveler** debuts at No. 18, the only other new-for-2018 coaster to crack the charts.

The oldest roller coaster on the charts is the legendary **Schwarzkopf Mind Bender** at **Six Flags Over Georgia**. It debuted in 1978.

See the Top 50 at GoldenTicketAwards.com.



BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 3: Steel Vengeance, Cedar Point
AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON



BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 4: Expedition GeForce, Holiday Park
COURTESY ALEX DICKEY



BEST STEEL COASTER, No. 5: Superman: The Ride, Six Flags New England
AT/TIM BALDWIN

THE LIST

2018 TOP 25 STEEL ROLLER COASTERS



RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	SUPPLIER	YEAR	TOTAL
1	Fury 325	Carowinds	Charlotte, N.C.	B&M	2015	1222
2	Millennium Force	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	Intamin	2000	1156
3	Steel Vengeance	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	Rocky Mountain	2018	829
4	Expedition GeForce	Holiday Park	Hassloch, Germany	Intamin	2001	540
5	Superman: The Ride	Six Flags New England	Agawam, Mass.	Intamin	2000	535
6	Apollo's Chariot	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	B&M	1999	522
7	Iron Rattler	Six Flags Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	Rocky Mountain	2013	483
8	Leviathan	Canada's Wonderland	Vaughan, Ontario, Canada	B&M	2012	410
9	Maverick	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	Intamin	2007	390
10	Diamondback	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	B&M	2009	347
11	Nitro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	B&M	2001	345
12	Intimidator 305	Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	Intamin	2010	344
13	Phantom's Revenge	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	Morgan/Arrow	2001	324
14	Magnum XL-200	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	Arrow	1989	300
15	Taron	Phantasialand	Brühl, Germany	Intamin	2016	283
16	Top Thrill Dragster	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	Intamin	2003	278
17	Mako	SeaWorld Orlando	Orlando, Fla.	B&M	2016	251
18	Time Traveler	Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	Mack	2018	248
19	Blue Fire	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	Mack	2009	244
20	Nemesis	Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	B&M	1994	238
21	Helix	Liseberg	Göteborg, Sweden	Mack	2014	234
22	Intimidator	Carowinds	Charlotte, N.C.	B&M	2010	233
23	New Texas Giant	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	Rocky Mountain	2011	222
24	Twisted Colossus	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	Rocky Mountain	2015	212
25	Mind Bender	Six Flags Over Georgia	Austell, Ga.	Schwarzkopf	1978	211

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Knoebels' Phoenix rises as the new No. 1 wooden coaster

Coaster fans have kept things fluid in the Golden Ticket Awards. During this past decade, all four of the Nos. 1 – 4 wooden coasters have held the top spot at one point. Jockeying for position appears to be the rule of thumb. For 2018, the venerable **Phoenix** has finally taken top spot for the **BEST WOODEN COASTER** Golden Ticket.

A success story since 1985, Phoenix was a triumph of preservation when **Dick Knoebel** of **Knoebels Amusement Resort** rescued **The Rocket** after **Playland Park** in San Antonio, Texas, locked its gates for good. Paying no attention to naysayers who said the move shouldn't be done, Knoebel resurrected the ride and made it better than ever.

"Knoebels needed Rocket just as badly as Rocket needed a new home," said Knoebel. "We looked on with excitement as Rocket began to rise as Phoenix, still not fully realizing what this coaster would mean to us and generations of park guests. The happiness it brings makes it seem as if it's doing what it can to repay us for providing a second chance to thrill riders."

"Phoenix isn't the tallest, fastest or longest roller coaster, but it sure does have heart. We're ecstatic knowing riders love Phoenix every bit as much as we do. Thanks to that love, a design that can withstand the test of time and our team's meticulous care of the coaster, Phoenix has risen to the top,



and my heart is happy."

"What it went through to stay alive is pretty amazing," said **Tom Rebbie**, president of **Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.** "To go from a closed park to a world-recognized park is remarkable. The Knoebel family takes care of it and keeps the nostalgia part of it alive. Phoenix is just a great ride that everyone in the family can go on."

The **BEST WOODEN COASTER** category has had more winners than any other recurring category. Phoenix is the seventh ride to hold the title.

El Toro at **Six Flags Great Adventure**, the Golden Ticket winner from 2012 and 2017, is strong in the No. 2 position. It was built by **Intamin**.

The Voyage at **Holiday World**, which enjoyed a five-year run in the No. 1 spot, places third in 2018 — one notch up from last year. The 6,442-foot-long ride was created by **The Gravity Group**.

BoulderDash at **Lake Compounce** comes in at the No. 4 spot. This ride opened as part of the Class of 2000 from **Custom Coasters, Inc.** It held the No. 1 spot in 2004, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

In the No. 5 spot is **The Beast** at **Kings Island**, the highest the coaster has ever



BEST WOODEN COASTER:
Phoenix, Knoebels Amusement Resort
AT/TIM BALDWIN

placed. At 7,359 feet, it is still the longest wooden roller coaster in the world, a record it has held for 40 seasons. Phoenix and **The Beast** are the only two wooden coasters to place in the Top Ten every year for the 21 years *Amusement Today* has polled for the Golden Ticket Awards.

Lightning Rod at **Dollywood** (No. 6) and **Outlaw Run** at **Silver Dollar City** (No. 7) are two **Rocky Mountain Construction** coasters to place in the Top 10 wood.

Ravine Flyer II at **Waldameer** (No. 8) is another

installation by **The Gravity Group**, while **Gold Striker** at **California's Great America** (No. 9) and **Dollywood's Thunderhead** (No. 10) are both by **Great Coasters International** and all maintain their top ten status.

Interestingly, all coasters in the Top Ten of the Golden Ticket Awards chart are the same, yet not a single one maintains its position from 2017.

The oldest roller coaster in the Top 25 is **Jack Rabbit** at **Kennywood**, in the No. 20 position. Designed by **John Miller** in 1920, the ride's famous

double dip has been thrilling visitors for close to a century.

Holiday World, one of the rare parks to operate three or more wooden coasters, finds all three of its collection on the chart. In addition to **The Voyage**, **The Raven** (No. 18) and **The Legend** (No. 23) land in the Top 25.

The largest jump was by **Valleyfair's Renegade**, which rolled into the No. 52 spot in 2017 and climbed to No. 26 this year, just shy of charting.

The complete list of Top 50 can be seen at GoldenTicketAwards.com.



BEST WOODEN COASTER, No. 2:
El Toro, Six Flags Great Adventure
AT/TIM BALDWIN



BEST WOODEN COASTER, No. 4:
Boulder Dash, Lake Compounce
COURTESY LAKE COMPOUNCE



BEST WOODEN COASTER, No. 3:
The Voyage, Holiday World
AT/JEFFREY SEIFERT



BEST WOODEN COASTER, No. 5:
The Beast, Kings Island
AT/GARY SLADE

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2018 TOP 25 WOODEN ROLLER COASTERS



RANK	NAME	PARK	LOCATION	SUPPLIER	YEAR	TOTAL
1	Phoenix	Knoebels Amusement Resort	Elysburg, Pa.	Dinn-PTC/Schmeck	1985	1330
2	El Toro	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	Intamin	2006	1197
3	Voyage	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	Gravity Group	2006	1086
4	BoulderDash	Lake Compounce	Bristol, Conn.	Custom Coasters	2000	982
5	Beast	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	KECO	1979	781
6	Lightning Rod	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	Rocky Mountain	2016	691
7	Outlaw Run	Silver Dollar City	Branson, Mo.	Rocky Mountain	2013	573
8	Ravine Flyer II	Waldameer	Erie, Pa.	Gravity Group	2008	560
9	Gold Striker	California's Great America	Santa Clara, Calif.	Great Coasters Int.	2013	497
10	Thunderhead	Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	Great Coasters Int.	2004	477
11	Mystic Timbers	Kings Island	Mason, Ohio	Great Coasters Int.	2017	465
12	Lightning Racer	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	Great Coasters Int.	2000	329
13	GhostRider	Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	Custom Coasters	1998	307
14	Balder	Liseberg	Gothenburg, Sweden	Intamin	2003	289
15	Thunderbolt	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	Vettel/Miller	1968	260
16	Wodan	Europa-Park	Rust, Germany	Great Coasters Int.	2012	236
17	Wildfire	Kolmården	Norrköping, Sweden	Rocky Mountain	2016	232
18	Raven	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	Custom Coasters	1995	229
19	Goliath	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	Rocky Mountain	2014	215
20	Jack Rabbit	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	Miller	1920	211
21 - tie	Giant Dipper	Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	Prior & Church/Looff	1924	206
21 - tie	Shivering Timbers	Michigan's Adventure	Muskegon, Mich.	Custom Coasters	1998	206
23	Legend	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	Custom Coasters	2000	201
24	White Lightning	Fun Spot	Orlando, Fla.	Great Coasters Int.	2013	196
25	Troy	Toverland	Sevenum, Netherlands	Great Coasters Int.	2007	183

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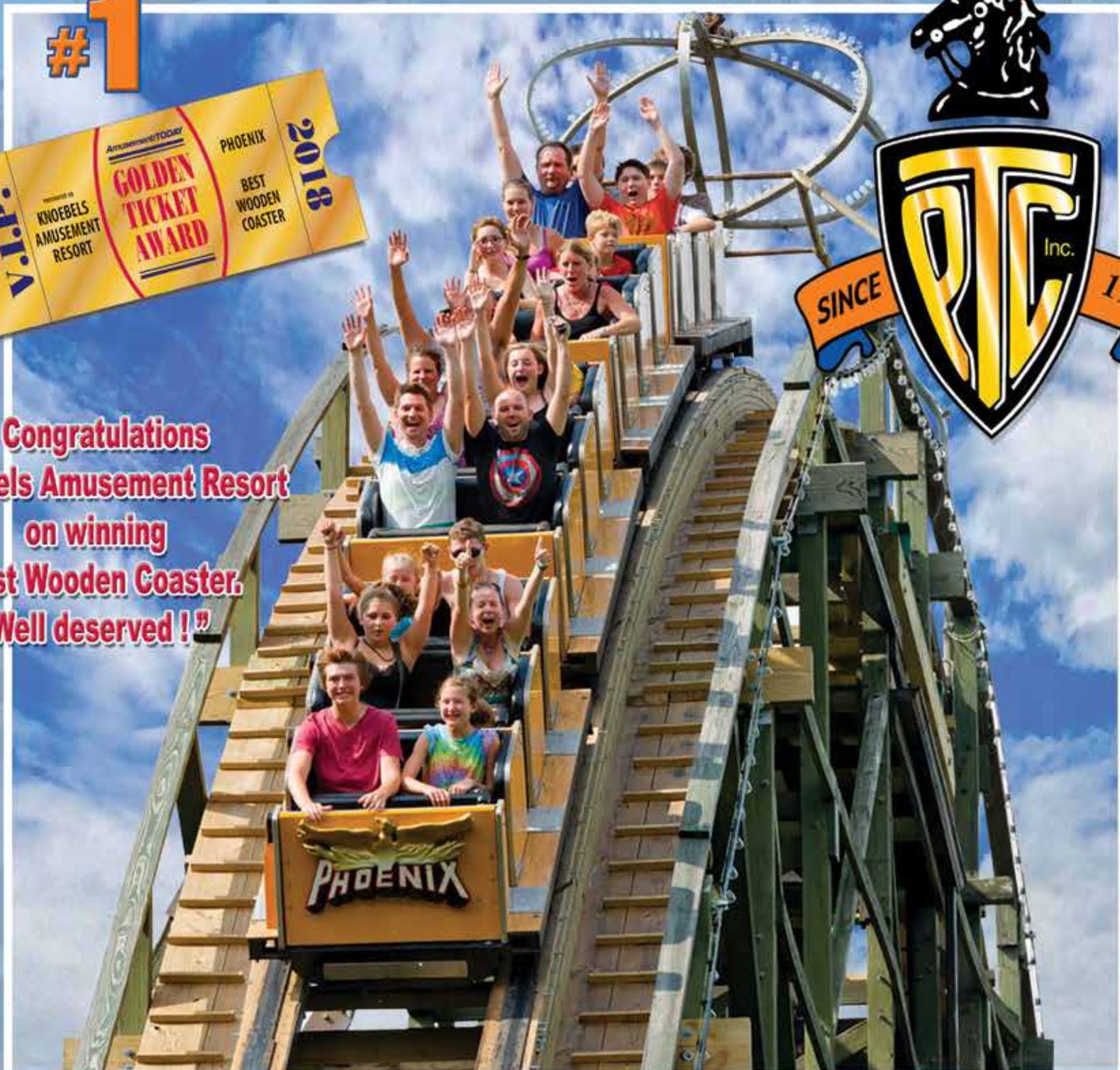
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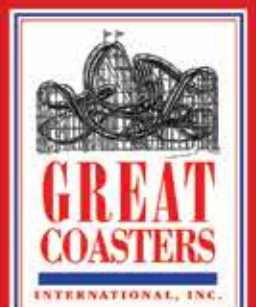
Lightning Racer at Hershey Park 2000



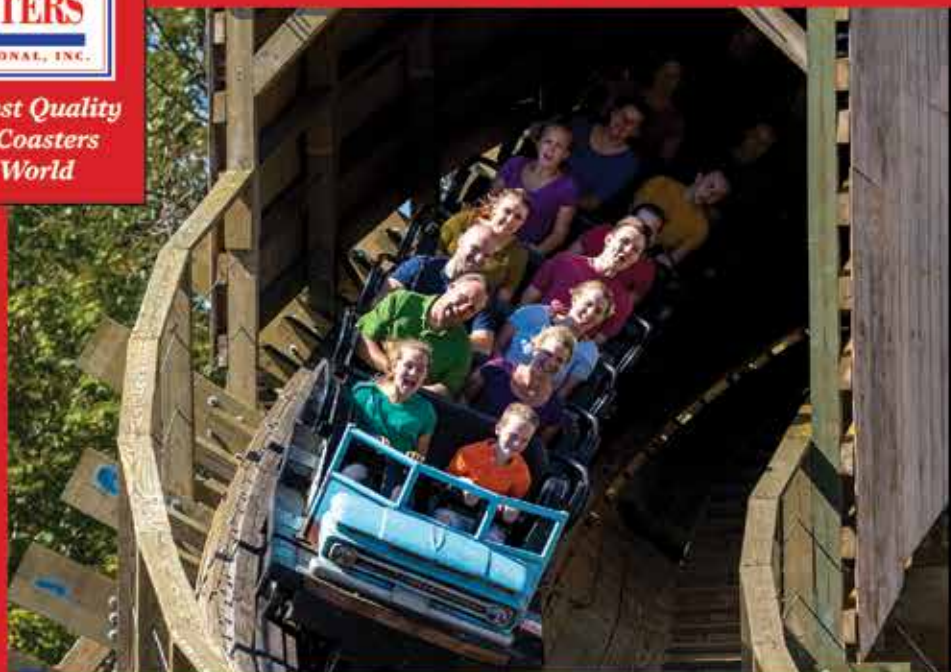
Thunderhead at Dollywood 2004



**Ghost Rider, Knott's Berry Farm
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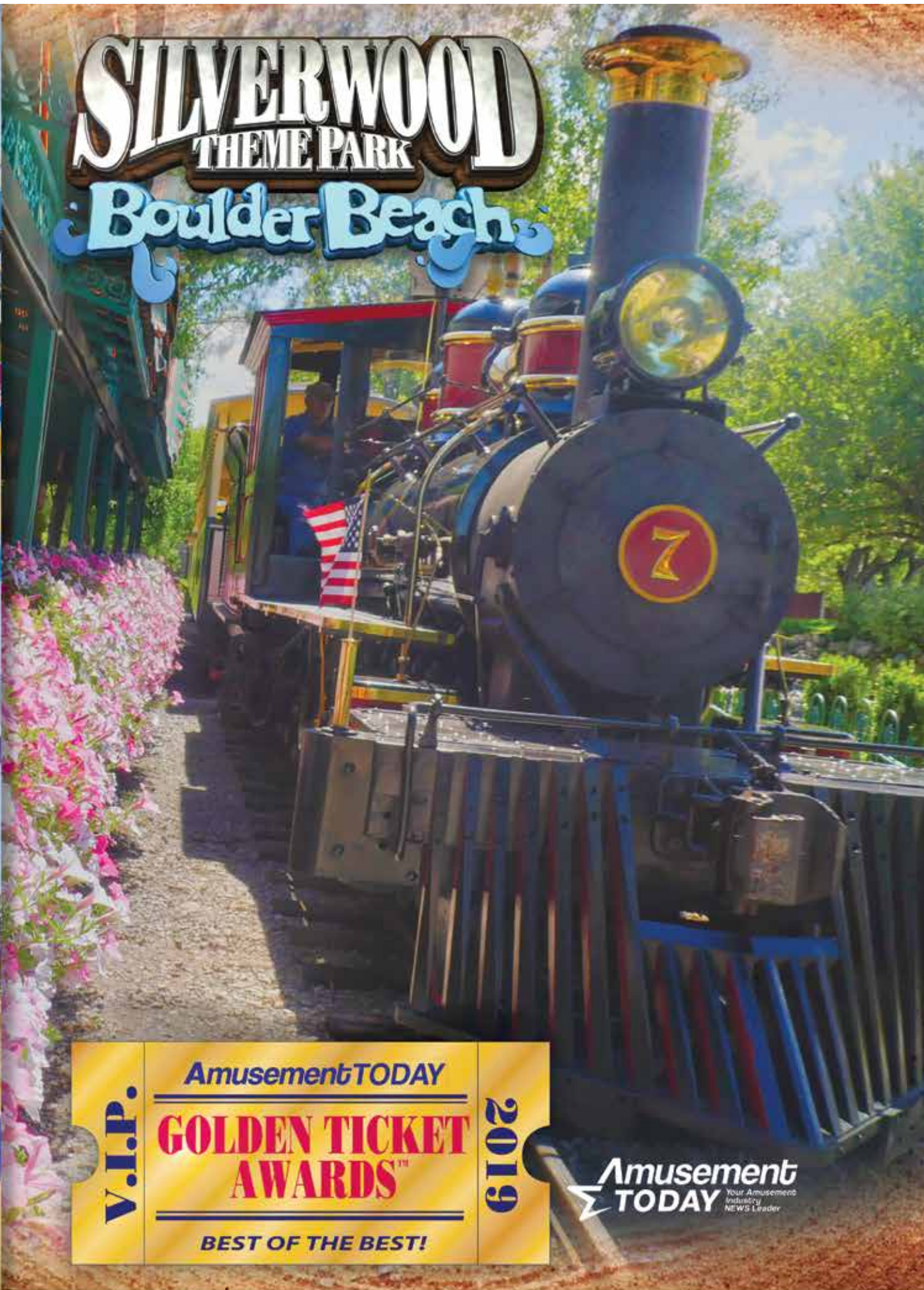
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