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Luciana Periales: The Trailblazing Dynamo

Leading with passion, authenticity, and heart as
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Whitewater's Palm Rattler slide is now open at Jungala Aqua Experience in México. See page 109 for a roundup of more new-for-2025 attractions.

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Rope Drop

Attractions Industry Talks: CEO of Dubai Holding Entertainment Fernando Eiroa

IAAPA EMEA Vice President and Executive Director Peter van der Schans (left) visited Dubai for an exclusive conversation with CEO of Dubai Holding Entertainment Fernando Eiroa. They discuss the vision behind developing sports-themed entertainment offerings and the promising future of entertainment in Dubai. Watch the video here on IAAPA's Youtube channel:



Funworld Magazine Team

**Senior Director,
Global Editorial and Digital Content**
Scott Fais
SFais@IAAPA.org

Managing Editor, Funworld Magazine
Michael Costello
MCostello@IAAPA.org

Associate Editor, Funworld Magazine
Avery Matteo
AMatteo@IAAPA.org

Contributing Editor
Juliana Gilling
julianagilling@gmail.com

Manager, Global Advertising and Sales
Kelsey O'Hearne Bohl
KBohl@IAAPA.org

Production Manager
Michelle Wandres
MWandres@IAAPA.org

Contact us for advertising info at
+1 321-319-7682
or email at
Advertising@IAAPA.org

IAAPA.org/Funworld

IAAPA Chair of the Board
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**Interim IAAPA North America Vice
President and Executive Director**
Michael Shelton

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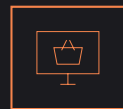
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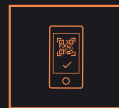
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Launch



VIRGINIA AQUARIUM

The Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center utilized billboard space to bolster a clever, yet shocking, marketing campaign that educates potential visitors on animal droppings and waste.

ZOOS AND AQUARIUMS

Potty Mouth Payoff

How the Virginia Aquarium's bold marketing made a splash

by Juliana Gilling

THERE'S AN AQUARIUM IN VIRGINIA THAT'S TALKING TRASH. The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center in Virginia Beach has created a playful campaign that's a masterclass in memorable marketing. Looking for the scoop on animal poop? Dropping Science has it covered.

The aquarium's marketing team has turned fun scatological facts into eye-catching ads. "We honed in on a select few for the campaign, including 'Urine the Danger Zone: Frogs pee to repel predators,' 'Wee Love Coral Reefs: Fish pee keeps coral reefs healthy,' 'Party Pooper: Male river otters perform a poop dance,' and 'Potty Mouth: Jellies poop from their mouths,'" says Mackenzie Di Nardo, vice president of marketing and public relations at the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center.

The witty campaign pairs scientific facts with vibrant and original animal art. Virginia Aquarium created a landing page on its website to showcase the project and crafts organic social media content to keep the conversation going online. The campaign runs ads locally and regionally through billboards, social media, audio streaming, and print publications.

The quirky campaign stemmed from the success of a Dropping Science project involving Virginia Aquarium's public bathrooms. Signs on the back →



of each stall door shared a digestive-themed animal fact—"Great white sharks make great big poops, which are feasts for smaller fish," for example. Visitors raved about it.

"We've heard about people talking between stalls to share their bathroom facts. It teaches guests something new about animals that's related to a taboo topic—and they love it," Di Nardo says.

The aquarium is collaborating with industry partners, including Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation and the Virginia Beach Visitor's Center, to share Dropping Science facts in their restrooms.

Strategically, the campaign focused on several main goals. It aimed to spark a positive conversation about the Virginia Aquarium, connect consumers to the marine environment, and drive ticket sales. The campaign created a centralized webpage for Dropping Science content and sought to increase website and social media engagement.

"Education is at the core of everything we do at the Virginia Aquarium, so it felt natural to integrate it into our advertising," Di Nardo explains. The Dropping Science campaign needed to feel "like our brand—playful, educational, engaging, and

inspiring—and turn people's heads."

The aquarium's marketing team worked with its advertising agency, Otto Design and Marketing, to bring the creative campaign to life. "The campaign wouldn't have come to fruition without the partnership," Di Nardo says, adding that audiences have responded enthusiastically. "We've received a lot of positive feedback. Our team is really proud of the campaign, and we're eager to hear more from guests and the public."

Given the campaign's theme, the Virginia Aquarium team was mindful of its approach. "We were considerate when it came to tone and word choice—biologists, marketing, and leadership reviewed these to ensure our message met the mark." While the team says they have not received any negative feedback, the aquarium drafted statements just in case.

"Yes, we're talking about poop, but we didn't want to include language that had a negative connotation. While facts about poop could be perceived as 'gross,' these are normal and natural animal behaviors that have a significant role in ecology. If that scientific notion remains the campaign's cornerstone, then it keeps us rooted in our mission and meeting our goals," Di Nardo says.

Marketing success depends on knowing the audience and what will resonate. "Humor is relatable to people, and it feels especially desirable today," she says. "We hope our campaign inspires organizations to step outside of the box and look at complex and serious subjects in a light-hearted and approachable way."

With its fresh perspective, the Dropping Science campaign gets people talking, thinking, and smiling. And therein lies its charm. 

<https://virginiaaquarium.com/dropping-science>



Juliana Gilling, Funworld's contributing editor, began covering the global attractions industry in 1994. She reports on innovative people, projects, and additions for Funworld and the IAAPA News Hub. Juliana lives in the U.K., where she is a freelance writer. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#):



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1

PUBLICITY

PLEASURE BEACH BROADCASTS OUT OF THIS WORLD

The famed **Pleasure Beach Resort** in Blackpool, U.K., teamed up with Sent Into Space—a provider of commercial near-space launches—to broadcast guest messages into the heavens using a hydrogen-filled stratospheric balloon. The amusement park invited guests to record videos at a “mission control booth” near the park’s **S&S Worldwide**-supplied tower ride. The messages were then loaded onto a custom-designed screen that launched into space at 110,000 feet,



PLEASURE BEACH RESORT

hovering above the earth at -65 degrees Celsius.

The heartwarming videos included messages to loved ones who have passed, profound declarations, and big questions like marriage proposals.

“We’re famous for taking thrills to new heights... and now we’ve sent our guests’ voices into space. It’s a world-first

for a theme park and a moment we’ll never forget,” says **Amanda Thompson OBE**, CEO of Pleasure Beach Resort.

2

NEW AND NOTABLE

NOW BOARDING IN MÉXICO

Aztlán Urban Park opened a new immersive flying theater named **Vuela México por el Mundo** (Fly Mexico Around the World). The attraction from **Brogent** features a 10-meter-high curved screen and capacity for 32 riders. Special effects include rain, wind, surround sound, aromas, and vibrations to simulate a flight over iconic regions of the world.



AZTLÁN URBAN PARK

SOMETHING FUNNY IN SOUTH KOREA

Here’s one to smile at: **Oak Valley Resort** in Wonju, Gangwon-do, South Korea, has opened a new outdoor attraction named **Funny Factory**. The park, developed by **Vaunce**, features family rides including a Ferris wheel, electric carts, spinning rides, and a drop tower that introduces the feeling of weightlessness to a new generation. Special events include kids yoga sessions, natural healing classes, and proper breathing seminars.



OAK VALLEY RESORT

HIGHER LEARNING MADE FUN

KidZania has opened **ACADEMI** at Riona High Plaza southeast of Mexico City. The innovative educational center is designed for children, teens, and adults. Inspired by active learning methodologies, ACADEMI provides hands-on, challenge-based workshops in areas like animation, culinary arts, robotics, and entrepreneurship. Programs are divided by age groups and include structured weekly sessions.



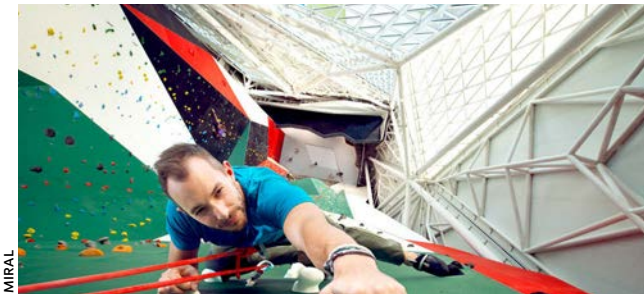
BATTLEKART

3

SPECIAL EVENTS

YAS ISLAND CLYMBBS TALL

Called the first of its kind in the UAE, the inaugural Summyt Showdown Climbing Competition took place in September at **Clymb Abu Dhabi**. Participants found themselves challenged by 30 technical routes—and that was just the qualifier. The top athletes faced two newly designed routes on the iconic 20-meter-tall Summit Wall. The Summyt Showdown Climbing Competition showcased Abu Dhabi's growing passion for the sport of climbing.



MIRAL

4

MARKETING

DEBUT WITH A VIEW



EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

While the top, fins, and antenna of **The Empire State Building** can be used to illuminate colors for brands and events, the iconic structure also offers an opportunity to generate publicity for new food and beverage products. Located 1,050 feet above New York City on the 86th floor outdoor observatory, dessert restaurant Serendipity 3 debuted its new Bubble Lick Frozen Hot Chocolate Edible Bubbles, along with limited-edition merchandise, like the Serendipitous Perfume.

5

PHILANTHROPY

MARATHON MAN CROSSES FINISH LINE



KEN WHITING

2022 IAAPA Chair Ken Whiting likes to run. A lot.

In his 2021 Funworld cover story titled **Marathon Man**, the respected president of **Whiting's Foods**

Confessions proclaimed his goal of running 50 marathons—one in each U.S. state (that's 1,300 total miles). Update: He did it.

In October, Whiting crossed the finish line in New Jersey, completing his life's goal. But he didn't do it alone. Whiting marked the feat by raising donations for the **IAAPA Foundation**, a U.S. 501(C)(3) tax-exempt charity—separate from IAAPA, a 501(C)(6) trade association—that supports careers in the attractions industry through academic, experiential, and industry scholarships. While his race is over, Whiting's footwork continues; all donations

made in honor of his feat will be matched by IAAPA. Scan the code to learn more.



HAVE A DISPATCH FROM THE FIELD?

Have a Dispatch from the field for Funworld in 2026? Share your successes, wins, and innovations with IAAPA News. Send news, photos, and advancements to FunworldWorks@IAAPA.org

JUNGLIA OKINAWA



Junglia Okinawa Swings into Japan with Nature-Based Attractions

Junglia Okinawa, a large-scale theme park in northern Okinawa, Japan, officially opened on July 25. Developed by Katana Inc. and Japan Entertainment, the ¥70 billion project spans 60 hectares and introduces 22 attractions, including a Dinosaur Safari with animatronic creatures, an aerial adventure zone, and the Horizon Balloon, offering panoramic views of the subtropical landscape.

Conceived by Tsuyoshi Morioka, former CMO of Universal Studios Japan, Junglia positions itself as an alternative to mega-resorts, blending themed entertainment with Okinawa's natural

setting. "Our vision is to deliver a unique 'Power Vacance' (a translated phrase referencing the power of nature) that combines excitement and immersion in nature," Morioka explains.

Tickets start at ¥6,930 for domestic visitors and ¥8,800 for international guests. Early tickets quickly sold out, reflecting strong demand. For the Japanese attractions industry, Junglia signals renewed investment beyond established hubs, and its success could inspire similar mid-scale developments in regional Asian markets like Taiwan and Indonesia.

junglia.jp

VinWonders Vu Yen Opens as Vietnam's Largest Theme Park Investment

VinWonders officially opened its newest destination, VinWonders Vu Yen, in Hai Phong, Vietnam, in July. Developed by Vingroup with an estimated US\$1 billion investment, the 50-hectare site represents one of the largest entertainment projects in Vietnam to date. The park combines more than 80 indoor and outdoor attractions with themed dining, retail, and cultural experiences. Key highlights include a seven-hectare wildlife safari housing over 2,000 animals, a European-inspired Grand Avenue, and Asia's largest Twister



Slide Complex at 40 meters tall.

"VinWonders Vu Yen will contribute to the strong development of the city and country's tourism industry," notes Vingroup Vice Chairman and General Director Nguyen Viet Quang.

For operators and suppliers, the project signals Vietnam's ambition to position itself as a competitive player in the Asia-Pacific leisure market, creating opportunities for international partnerships in design, technology, and content integration.

vinwonders.com



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GAMESTATE CIRCUS ZANDVOORT

Gamestate Turns Up the Fun at Circus Zandvoort in the Netherlands

The arrival of Gamestate has made the flag-topped Circus Zandvoort, one of the Netherlands' quirkiest buildings, even more playful. Gamestate, part of the Veltmeijer Group, now has 17 Gamestate family entertainment centers in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Poland, and Slovakia. The company runs 50 locations, including its Gamecity and Gametown concepts, across eight European countries.

The Gamestate Circus Zandvoort arcade covers three floors and offers more than 2,000 square meters of modern gaming experiences. "From classic pinball machines to interactive games, there is something for every age and skill level. There are also

pool tables, shuffleboard, and darts—ideal for a group game," says Leroy Dijkstra, concept operations manager for Gamestate, Gamecity, and Gametown. Next to the arcade, guests will find a compact, 50-seat auditorium screening movies daily.

Gamestate is refurbishing two arcades within Center Parcs this year—one at Park Nordseeküste in Germany and the other at Parc Sandur in the Netherlands. "Both will go cashless and integrate with Embed," Dijkstra says. "In addition, we are expanding our Rotterdam location, Gamestate De Kuip." The group aims to reach Europe's major cities with its concepts.

gamestate.com

Puy du Fou Seeks Approval for History-Themed Park in U.K.

Puy du Fou's plans to expand its spectacular historical destinations internationally have moved forward with the submission of an outline planning application to Cherwell District Council for a £600 million park near Bicester in Oxfordshire, England. If approved, the new park will open in eight phases, beginning in 2029.

Visitors will step back in time to discover four period villages and 13 live shows inspired by British heritage. Plans include three history-themed hotels, a conference center, a wooded park, and landscaped gardens.

Olivier Strebelle, CEO of Puy du Fou, has emphasized the depth of community engagement that preceded the company's planning application. "We have submitted these plans

after an extensive consultation, which took over a year and included six in-person events and over 250 individual meetings, all of which have helped to shape our final proposals. We did not rush our consultation because we wanted to get our proposals right," Strebelle says.

Strebelle shares that the project will be a £600 million investment in the local economy over the next 10 years. "It will create thousands of jobs, but it will also have the environment and sustainability at its heart," he shares.

Puy du Fou will build on the experience it has gained in live entertainment rooted in its interpretations of national history and culture at its parks in France and Spain.

puydufouconsultation.co.uk



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ZAYED NATIONAL MUSEUM

Zayed National Museum Nears Grand Opening in the United Arab Emirates

Set to open this December, the Zayed National Museum, the national museum of the United Arab Emirates, is a powerful tribute to the vision of the founding father of the UAE, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The traditional Emirati art of falconry inspired the museum's design by Foster and Partners. Five feather-like lightweight steel structures rise skyward from a paneled structure based on the topography of the UAE. Inside, visitors can explore six permanent galleries spanning 300,000 years of human history, along with a temporary exhibition gallery.

"This museum is more than a place of preservation; it is a

promise to future generations, a beacon of our identity, and a space where our story is told not just through objects, but through emotion, memory and vision," says His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism—Abu Dhabi.

zayednationalmuseum.ae

Tour the Zayed National Museum during IAAPA Expo Middle East 2025

Registration is now open for IAAPA Expo Middle East, taking place in Abu Dhabi, March 30–April 2. The inaugural expo in the region will feature EDUTours, EDUSessions, receptions, networking opportunities, and a vibrant trade show floor. Visit IAAPA.org/Expos to learn more.

New District Promises Immersive Experiences in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

New Murabba, a new downtown city district rising in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, plans an innovative combination of living, working, and entertainment experiences.

New Murabba, the Public Investment Fund company driving the project, has signed an agreement with entertainment experience design firm Falcon's Creative Group to create "visionary concepts and immersive experiences" for The Mukaab—the cube-shaped skyscraper at the heart of the development.

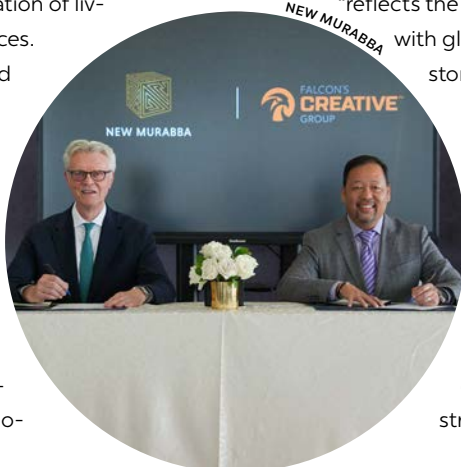
Falcon's Creative Group will focus on developing immersive attractions, interactive environments, and integrated technologies for The Mukaab.

New Murabba CEO Michael Dyke says the collaboration "reflects the company's commitment to partnering with global leaders in design and immersive storytelling."

Falcon's Creative Group CEO Cecil D. Magpuri says, "We are more than just developing the story structure. We are creating an infinite storytelling ecosystem and shaping how people feel, connect, and dream within it."

This agreement advances the project and follows the completion of major excavation works ahead of the next construction phase.

newmurabba.com, falconscreativegroup.com





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Colombia's Coffee Axis Welcomes New Multipurpose Plaza

Bio Hábitat Hotel in Quindío, Colombia, has unveiled its latest addition: Basto Plaza, a new multipurpose space inspired by the traditional town squares of the Coffee Axis, such as those in Finlandia and Salento.

Designed to be more than just the hotel's reception area, Basto Plaza integrates multiple experiences. Visitors can browse a boutique specializing in Colombian design and textiles from Quindío, enjoy a café that doubles as a coworking hub, or take part in recreational activities ranging from pingpong and billiards to tennis and tejo, Colombia's national sport.

Bio Hábitat Hotel has earned a reputation as a benchmark in sustainable architecture and design. While many of its facilities remain exclusive to guests, the property has developed a range of experiences accessible to non-guests, including access to the new multipurpose space. With Basto Plaza, Bio Hábitat continues to blur the line between hotel and attraction, inviting both travelers and locals to engage with Quindío's cultural and natural heritage.

biohabitathotel.com

PeruRail Launches Immersive Onboard Pisco Experience

From panoramic views to pisco pours, PeruRail is transforming its route to Machu Picchu into a cultural attraction. PeruRail unveiled a limited-time sensory journey aboard its Vistadome Observatory service, which links Cusco, Ollantaytambo, and Aguas Calientes. Themed around pisco, a grape brandy made in Peru, the offering invites travelers to explore one of the country's most celebrated culinary and cultural symbols.

Named PeruRail Meets Pisco: A Taste of History, the experience pays tribute to Peru's five officially recognized pisco-producing regions while underscoring the spirit's role as a national emblem of pride. Initially scheduled to run from late May to mid-July, the program has been extended through Dec. 31 following high demand.

Onboard, guests are immersed in the story of pisco through themed decor, expert-led tastings, and live cultural performances, including traditional dance and music. Passengers are also educated on the drink's denomination of origin, heritage, and versatility in mixology. Their journey then concludes with a curated pisco gift set.

perurail.com





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Concept Rendering

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Australia's Wallis Entertainment Expands from Film to FEC

Wallis Cinemas plans to evolve from theater to family entertainment center operator. The company will reshape its entertainment experience with a landmark \$50 million redevelopment in Mount Barker, South Australia. The plan includes a five-story, 100-room hotel alongside a three-story entertainment complex featuring duck-pin bowling, laser tag, mini-golf, arcade games, and large event spaces. Wallis Cinema's director, Deanna Wallis, highlights the company's ambition. "After more than 20 years entertaining the Adelaide Hills, we are excited to be able to offer more for the youth and families in the area while also

helping to bring increased visitation and tourists into Mount Barker," she says.

The cinema and function space are projected to be complete by late 2026, with the hotel expected to follow in 2027. The expansion reflects a broader industry trend, with regional venues evolving into multi-attraction hubs to remain competitive against streaming services. The project signals growing demand for integrated, flexible entertainment models in secondary Australian markets.

wallis.com.au/wallis-cinemas/mt-barker-2/

Timezone Grows Family Entertainment Offerings in New Zealand

Timezone, owned by The Entertainment and Education Group (TEEG), has strengthened its New Zealand presence with two new family entertainment centers this summer. On June 14, the 940-square-meter Timezone Palmerston Square opened in Palmerston North, offering arcade games, mini-bowling, a party room for up to 30 guests, and ColourGrid, an interactive light-floor game. The Queen Street venue in Auckland reopened on Aug. 9 in a 1,200-square-meter space featuring karaoke booths, racing simulators, Dance Dance Revolution, claw machines, and other attractions. The launch included live entertainment and promotional offers to attract visitors.

James Woodbridge, general manager of Timezone New Zealand, comments, "These new venues embody our commitment to creating vibrant spaces where friends and families come together to celebrate life and make lasting memories."

These openings reflect Timezone's strategy to grow its footprint in New Zealand, targeting family audiences and groups seeking multi-attraction entertainment experiences.

timezonegames.com/en-nz/play/arcade-games/



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CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

Cleveland Metalwork Company Spotlighted in New Exhibition

In July, the Cleveland Museum of Art opened its newest exhibition, *Rose Iron Works and Art Deco*, featuring pieces from Cleveland-based decorative metalwork company Rose Iron Works, which first began operation in 1904.

"The 100th anniversary of Art Deco in 2025 has inspired events worldwide, but the Cleveland Museum of Art's current exhibition stands out for its focus on Rose Iron Works—a celebrated decorative metalwork firm of international renown—and its founder, Martin Rose, who helped bring Art Deco style and sophistication to America," says the museum's Senior Conservator of Objects and Head of the Objects Conservation

Lab Beth Edelstein. "The exhibition also explores Rose's close collaborations with fellow Hungarian expatriate Paul Fehér, a designer closely identified with Art Deco, and features masterpieces they created together—many rarely seen by the public—alongside Fehér's original finished drawings and sketches."

The exhibit features several of Rose Iron Works' most notable Art Deco pieces, including *Muse with Violin Screen* (1930), a 90-foot frieze on the history of metalworking, and a door grille salvaged from a high-end 1920s Cleveland department store.

roseironworks.com

Immersive Art Experience Atlas9 in Kansas City Now Open

Atlas9, a new narrative-driven immersive art experience, is now open in Kansas City, Kansas. Developed by Dimensional Innovations and Homefield, the \$40 million, 46,000-square-foot venue is designed as a cinematic universe filled with themed rooms, live performance spaces, and interactive storytelling. Guests encounter a 1940s-style jazz club, speakeasy, arcade, and a 240-seat auditorium with cutting-edge projection mapping. "Atlas9 is proof that the state of Kansas can dream big and deliver experiences found nowhere else," says Kansas Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of Commerce David Toland.

atlas9.com



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Kenya's New Suyian Conservancy Welcomes Visitors

A new chapter for conservation and sustainable tourism has begun in northern Kenya with the official opening of Suyian Conservancy in Laikipia. Once a working cattle ranch, the 44,000-acre property has undergone decades of rewilding to become a thriving biodiversity corridor.

Managed under a Kenya Wildlife Service-approved plan and overseen by conservation NGO Space for Giants, the conservancy is positioned as both a driver of community development and a refuge for wildlife. Suyian offers rare access to some of Laikipia's most iconic and endangered species, including Grevy's zebra, Laikipia hartebeest, reticulated giraffe,

African wild dogs, and the black leopard.

Guests have access to this unfenced landscape, with activities that extend beyond traditional game drives. Options include walking with herders across grazing lands, night drives to track nocturnal species, helicopter excursions, and conservation talks led by expert guides.

To anchor this vision, their Suyian Conservancy partner, named AndBeyond, opened Suyian Lodge in July. The lodge draws inspiration from Laikipia's granite kopjes and resilient flora, blending into the rocky terrain.

suyian.org, andbeyond.com

Curaçao Rif Mangrove Park Launches Interactive Marine Exhibit

The Curaçao Rif Mangrove Park has introduced a new interactive exhibit to showcase the island's rich marine biodiversity while celebrating the launch of the Caribbean guilder—the new official currency of Curaçao and Sint Maarten. Developed by the CARMABI (Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity) Foundation in partnership with the Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten, marine species are depicted on the banknotes.

The new attraction consists of interpretive panels along the park's walking trails that offer insights in both English and Papiamentu. Highlighted species include the gray angel-fish, spotted eagle ray, green sea turtle, spotlight parrotfish, and longsnout seahorse, all part of Curaçao's underwater Ecosystem—and now, its currency.

Visitors can experience the exhibit during the park's daily walking and kayak tours, led by rangers who share stories linking Curaçao's ecology, heritage, and identity. The site

welcomes more than 20,000 visitors annually, and expansions of the same concept are under review for different national parks on the island.

mangrovepark.org



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Face Amusement Group Appoints Kashif Ahmad as Vice President of Business Development

Face Amusement Group named **Kashif Ahmad** vice president of business development to guide the company's next phase of growth. Ahmad brings more than 30 years of international experience in family entertainment operations, technology integration, and guest experience strategy.



Kashif Ahmad

Most recently, Ahmad served as chief management consultant for North and South America at Embed, where he worked with operators to implement cashless business management systems tailored to evolving guest needs. He also served as executive director at Cineplex Entertainment LP, playing a key role in the development of Playdium and The Rec Room.

"What drew me to Face is their clear commitment to both innovation and community," Ahmad says. "They understand that fun can be meaningful, and I'm proud to join a team that brings that to life every day."

As vice president of business development, Ahmad will focus on strategic partnerships, concept development, and market expansion across Face Amusement's portfolio, which includes Arcade City, Rockin' Raceway Arcade, 7D Dark Ride Adventure, Downtown Flavortown, and Guy Fieri's Branson Kitchen and Bar.

Emily Popovich Joins KMI International to Drive Global Business Development

Construction consultancy services company **KMI International** welcomed **Emily Popovich**, ICAE, as global director of business development, expanding the firm's leadership team as it pursues growth across multiple market sectors. With more than two decades of industry experience, Popovich is known for her ability to connect operators, vendors, and suppliers in ways that strengthen projects from concept to completion.



Emily Popovich

She currently serves on the IAAPA Manufacturers and Suppliers Committee and the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) Board of Directors. Her career includes 16 years at IAAPA and, most recently, business development leadership at L3DFX, a design and fabrication company.

Virginia Aquarium CEO Elected Vice President of WAZA Council

Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis, president and CEO of the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, was elected vice president of the **World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA)** Council for the 2025–2027 term. She has served as a regional representative on the WAZA Council since 2023. This year, 86% of WAZA voting members participated in the election, a record turnout for the WAZA community.

"Cynthia's election is a testament to her leadership and to

the global regard for the Virginia Aquarium's work," says Daniel Peterson, chair of the aquarium's foundation.

WAZA is a global alliance representing approximately 400 member institutions. The organization advocates for high animal-welfare standards and leads conservation initiatives on issues such as illegal wildlife trade, coral-reef restoration, and climate resilience.

Whitbred-Spanoulis has been with the City of Virginia Beach since 1996 and became CEO of the Virginia Aquarium in 2017.



Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis

VIRGINIA AQUARIUM

Digonex Appoints Patrick Walsh as CEO

Digonex has named **Patrick Walsh** as its new chief executive officer, guiding the company into its next phase of growth in dynamic pricing solutions for attractions, cultural institutions, and live entertainment. Walsh expands on his responsibilities as president, COO, and board member at Emmis Corporation, bringing more than 30 years of leadership experience across media, technology, and finance.

"Pat's deep operational acumen, solid leadership, and proven success in innovation and strategic renewal will be instrumental in guiding Digonex into its next chapter," says Jeff Smulyan, chairman and CEO of Emmis.

Walsh has previously led initiatives including Emmis's divestiture strategy, Mediaco's operations, and the IPO of Monument Circle Acquisition Corporation. He has also held senior roles at Xperi, McKinsey & Company, General Motors, and Deloitte.



Patrick Walsh

LINKEDIN

Accesso Names Mike Evenson as Chief Commercial Officer

Accesso Technology Group appointed **Mike Evenson** as its new chief commercial officer (CCO), accelerating the company's global expansion and alignment across sales, marketing, and business development. Evenson joins acceso with more than 20 years of leadership experience at the intersection of technology, ticketing, live events, and customer engagement.

At AudienceView, he held progressive executive roles including vice president of marketing and product management, vice president of strategy, and chief marketing officer, where he unified brand positioning, product direction, and go-to-market strategy to drive transformation.

"As we enter our next phase of growth, Mike's proven ability to identify new markets, build lasting partnerships, and optimize commercial operations makes him an outstanding addition to our executive team," says Steve Brown, CEO of Accesso. He adds that Evenson's leadership, together with incoming COO Lee Cowie, positions acceso strongly for its next chapter.

"This opportunity allows me to apply both my experience



Mike Evenson

MIKE EVENSON



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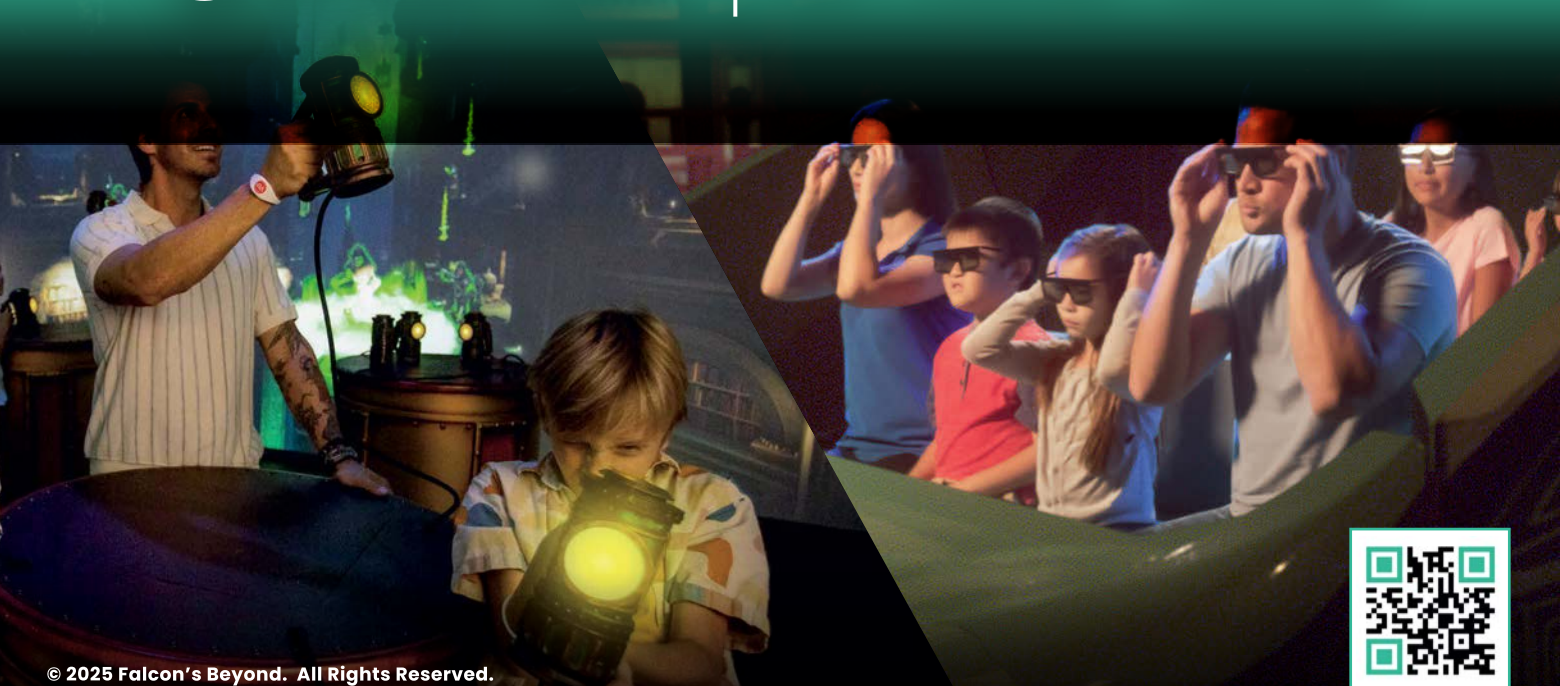
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contact@falconsattractions.com

and passion for the live events and attractions industry with a company I've long admired. acceso is uniquely positioned for its next phase of growth and innovation," says Evenson.

Royal Caribbean Appoints Ari Adler Brotman as President for México

Royal Caribbean Group appointed Ari Adler Brotman as its new president for México, where he will lead the company's strategic growth and stakeholder engagement for its exclusive destinations, including Perfect Day México and the Royal Beach Club in Cozumel. The appointment reflects Royal Caribbean's continued investment in delivering signature guest experiences in the region.

"As we seek to meaningfully fulfill our commitments in México, Ari's real estate development background and deep regional knowledge add value to our team," says Jay Schneider, director of product innovation at Royal Caribbean.

Royal Caribbean has positioned both projects on sustainable foundations. Initiatives include mangrove conservation, coral reef protection, turtle nesting safeguards, and the deployment of environmentally advanced infrastructure, all aimed at aligning resort development with local well-being and ecological stewardship.

Adler Brotman brings extensive experience in public and



Ari Adler Brotman

ROYAL CARIBBEAN GROUP

private project management, combined with a strong understanding of México's regulatory landscape. He affirmed his commitment to ensuring compliance, enhancing community living standards, and preserving the company's values through its Mexican ventures.

Baynum Amusement Solutions Strengthens Leadership with Coatings Expert Shannon Benjamin

Baynum Amusement Solutions expanded its leadership team with the appointment of Shannon Benjamin, an AMPP Level 2 Coatings Inspector with more than 30 years of experience in protective and marine coatings. Benjamin has held senior roles at Sherwin-Williams, PPG Industries, National Coatings & Supplies, and Basco Manufacturing, bringing a depth of expertise directly relevant to the maintenance and preservation of attractions.

"Shannon has been a trusted part of our work for years and having him on our team takes things to another level," says Walt Bowser, president and CEO of Baynum Solutions. "He knows the specs, he knows the environments, and he knows what it takes to get the job done right."

Benjamin's certification from the Association for Materials



Shannon Benjamin

SHANNON BENJAMIN

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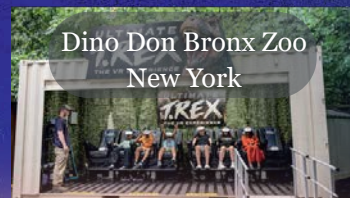
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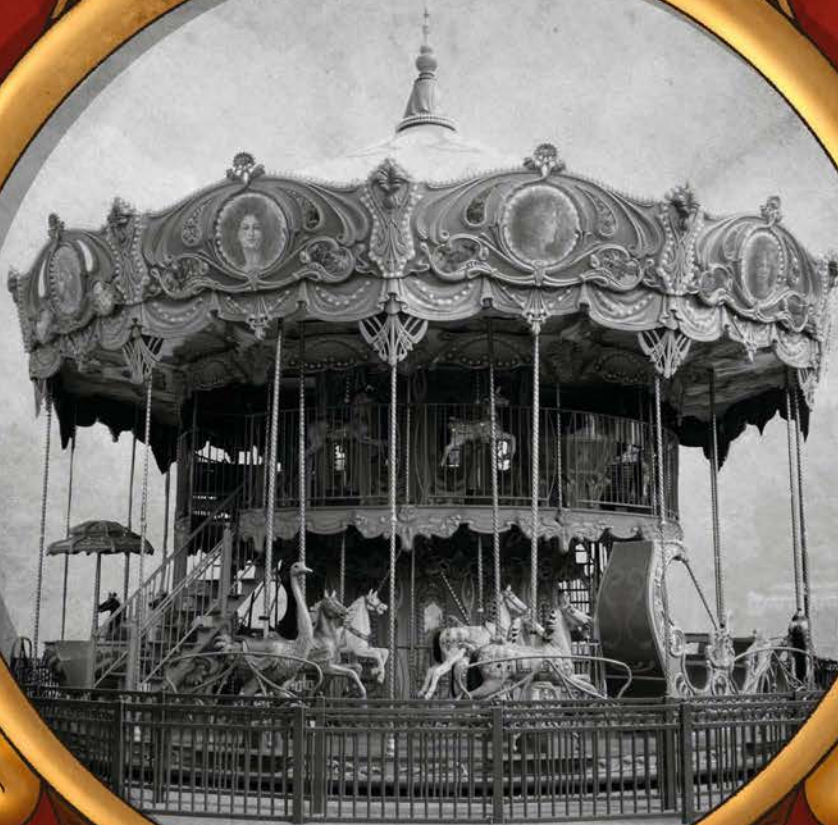
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Protection and Performance (AMPP) underscores his advanced knowledge in coatings inspection and corrosion prevention. His appointment enhances Baynum's ability to deliver durable, visually striking, and safety-focused results across coasters, water-slides, and themed attractions.

With this addition, Baynum reinforces its position as a global leader in attraction restoration and construction, helping operators extend the lifecycle of their assets and meet the challenges of maintaining rides in demanding environments.

Brian Knoebel Named President of Knoebels

Brian Knoebel steps into the role previously held by his father, Richard "Dick" Knoebel, as president of the Pennsylvania attraction. Brian's connection to **Knoebels** runs deep. As a child, he played kickball on the midway and handed out ice cream at company picnics. "There's something magical about Knoebels," he says. "The smiles and the memories that my family provides, you can't put a price tag on that." His early experiences inspired a lifelong passion for the park and its guests. Dick Knoebel is now chairman of the board and president emeritus. Brian's appointment ensures the continuation of Knoebels' legacy, blending tradition with forward-looking stewardship.



Brian Knoebel

LINKEDIN

Donald Spiller Named General Manager at Wild Adventures

Wild Adventures Theme Park & Safari

Campground in Valdosta, Georgia, appointed **Donald Spiller** as its new general manager in advance of its 30th anniversary season. Spiller brings over 30 years of theme and water park operations experience, including leadership roles in guest satisfaction, operations, and team building.

Spiller began his career in 1993 as a seasonal ride operator at Six Flags Magic Mountain and most recently served as general manager of Raging Waters Los Angeles.

"Wild Adventures has a proud history, and I'm honored to be part of its next chapter," Spiller says. "My first step is to listen and learn—what our guests value, what our hosts experience every day, and where we have room to grow. From there, it's about getting to work—making smart improvements now so we're set up to deliver exceptional holiday festivals and a 30th anniversary season that's the best one yet for our guests and season pass families."

Wild Adventures is part of Herschend, and features more than 35 rides, a waterpark, animal habitats, and seasonal events. As the park heads into its milestone year, Spiller's appointment reflects a focus on elevating guest experience and building on Wild Adventures' reputation in the Southeast United States.



Donald Spiller

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Kraftwerk Living Technologies Names Domingo Vergoossen Business Development Global

Kraftwerk Living Technologies (KLT), a leader in integrated media technology solutions and media-based attractions, has announced the appointment of **Domingo Vergoossen** as business development global.

In this new role, Vergoossen will focus on driving KLT's strategic development while supporting the company's international sales and marketing initiatives. His appointment reflects KLT's commitment to strengthening its presence in global markets and building on its track record of delivering large-scale media-based attractions worldwide.

Vergoossen brings more than 25 years of experience in the leisure attractions and entertainment industry, having worked with a range of leading companies across the sector. He has already collaborated with KLT on several successful projects, including multiple Flying Theater attractions. His official integration into the team marks a milestone in what has been a longstanding partnership.

As business development global, Vergoossen will serve as a key international representative, working to expand KLT's network of clients and partners and to foster new opportunities for growth.



Domingo Vergoossen

KRAFTWERK

"We are delighted to officially welcome Domingo Vergoossen to the Kraftwerk Living Technologies team and look forward to shaping the future of our international business together," says Manfred Meier, managing partner and chief executive.

Parques Reunidos Appoints Vicente Bosque as Chief Commercial Officer

Parques Reunidos announced the appointment of **Vicente Bosque** to the position of chief commercial officer. In his new role, Bosque will lead global revenue strategy, oversee ticketing, marketing, sales, eCommerce, market strategy, and revenue management for the operator.

Since joining Parques Reunidos in 2021, Bosque has held leadership positions in commercial management at attractions across Europe, playing a pivotal role in advancing digitalization and park-level integration. The operator based in Spain has attractions spanning nine countries in Europe and Australia that include theme parks, water parks, zoological facilities, aquariums, family entertainment centers, and resorts.

Bosque is a graduate of Autonomous University of Madrid and holds an MBA from IESE Business School. Before joining Parques Reunidos, Bosque worked at PwC and Amadeus.



Vicente Bosque

PARQUES REUNIDOS



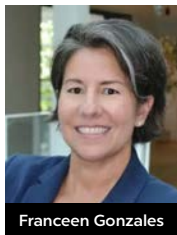
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Franceen Gonzales Provides Advisory Services to Bombay Amusement Ride Limited

Franceen Gonzales, ICAE has joined Bombay Amusement Ride (P) Limited, where she will provide advisory services and training for their clients. The new role marks the latest phase of an attractions industry career that extends over three decades and includes leadership roles with Six Flags, Great Wolf Resorts, WhiteWater, and most recently, Legoland Florida Resort. Franceen also has a long history of service to the industry serving in board roles with IAAPA, AIMS International, ASTM, and the World Waterpark Association. "We are delighted to have her join us in shaping the future of amusement ride solutions with uncompromising safety and unforgettable guest experiences," says Bombay in a LinkedIn post.



FRANCEEN GONZALES

at Portugal's Zoomarine in diverse leadership roles. He was the founder and director of Portugal's first marine rescue center; and is a guest lecturer, mentor, conservation advocate, and spokesperson for environmental causes.

Søren Sandberg Becomes Project Manager at Djurs Sommerland

Denmark's Djurs Sommerland has taken an important step forward in the development of its Holiday Resort by naming Søren Sandberg as project manager to oversee the project. Søren brings 15 years of experience in the tourism industry, most recently as managing director of Landal GreenParks Denmark. The Djurs Sommerland Holiday Resort is scheduled to open in 2028.



LINKEDIN

Elio Vicente Takes Post at Dino Don, Inc.

Dino Don, Inc., a manufacturer of full-sized robotic animals has announced that Elio Vicente has joined the company as European Exhibitions Director. As a marine biologist and postgraduate in Animal Welfare, Elio has worked over three decades



DINO DON, INC.

Megan Gannon Joins Mobaro's Sales Division

Megan Gannon has joined software and consulting firm Mobaro as a solution sales manager. Working out of their Orlando office, she will contribute to Mobaro's growing presence in the North American market. Megan previously worked at Image Engineering



MEGAN GANNON

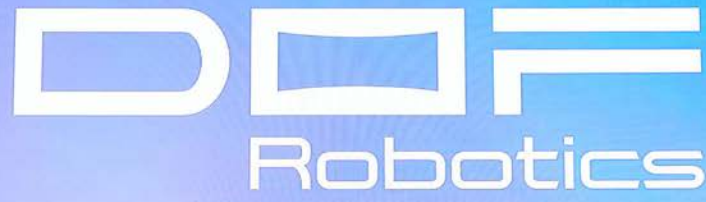


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Winner of the IAAPA Brass Ring Award, Hurricane 360 VR combines roller coaster intensity with cinematic storytelling. Its 360-degree rotational platform, synchronized effects, and immersive visuals have made it one of DOF Robotics' most recognized and celebrated attractions worldwide.



DOF STUDIO



Where Storytelling Meets Technology

Recent highlights from DOF Studio, the company's creative division, showcase how storytelling and technology unite to deliver unforgettable journeys.

Following the world premiere of Phantom City a high-speed cinematic adventure introduced at IAAPA Expo Europe 2025 DOF Robotics continues to expand its content universe with thrilling new productions.

Among the upcoming releases are:

The Smurfs: Gargamel Tower – a playful and family-friendly VR adventure developed in collaboration with IMPS.

Dog Fight – an adrenaline-packed aviation combat experience that puts guests directly in the pilot's seat.

Guardian Challenge – an educational yet action-filled mission combining planetary defense and environmental awareness.

DOF Robotics has also collaborated with world-famous IPs such as Angry Birds, Transformers, Monster Jam, Mission Moon, and Mars Odyssey, each showcasing the company's ability to merge storytelling with technology.

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DOF
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and Universal Destinations & Experiences and is a past IAAPA Foundation Scholarship recipient, and IAAPA Expo Show Ambassador.

Mycotoo Europe Hires Leisha MacDonald

Mycotoo, an entertainment strategy and experience design agency, has announced the appointment of **Leisha MacDonald** as director, business development for Mycotoo Europe. Based out of the company's office in Cambrils, Spain, MacDonald will play a key role in expanding Mycotoo's global footprint. Before joining Mycotoo Europe, she served as a senior leader in Moment Factory's Custom Experiences division, where she focused on developing market strategy and transformative fan experiences including Real Madrid C.F. and the new Santiago Bernabéu Stadium.



LINKEDIN

Leisha MacDonald

New York State Museum Appoints Jennifer Saunders

Jennifer Saunders is the new director of the **New York State Museum in Albany**. A nationally respected museum leader, she brings more than two decades of experience



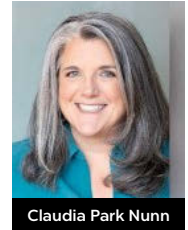
JENNIFER SAUNDERS

Jennifer Saunders

guiding cultural institutions, most recently the Washington State Historical Society and the Washington State History Museum where she doubled the organization's operating budget and expanded statewide services. "I look forward to deepening connections with New Yorkers from all regions and backgrounds, and working together to ensure the museum is a welcoming, vibrant place of learning, dialogue, and discovery," says Saunders.

Claudia Park Nunn Returns to The Producers Group

Claudia Park Nunn has returned to **The Producers Group**, a provider of production and design services, as project director following a three-and-a-half-year stint as senior director, production at Orlando's Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. Nunn previously worked at The Producers Group from 2018 to 2011 and has diverse experience in project management at Universal Beijing Resort, DEC Dynamic Engineering Consultants, Dubai Parks & Resorts, Walt Disney World, and Disney Cruise Line.



CLAUDIA PARK NUNN

Claudia Park Nunn

Oscar Elgarrista Joins RES Rides as Engineer

Ride Engineers Switzerland (RES) has hired **Oscar Elgarrista** as project and safety engineer. Oscar has more than 10 years of experience in various engineering and safety roles with other

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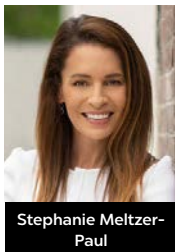
attractions industry companies, including Intamin and Parques Reunidos. Elgarrista heads up the Leisure Engineering Committee in Spain and is also involved with sustainability working groups. "It is great to have Oscar on board. His passion for amusement engineering & safety is a great asset for our team," says Roman Rothe, RES Rides technical director.

Sky Zone Recruits Stephanie Meltzer-Paul

Sky Zone, the indoor trampoline park and family entertainment franchise, has appointed **Stephanie Meltzer-Paul** as its new CCO. Most recently, she served as executive vice president of global loyalty services at Mastercard. Her career also includes senior leadership roles at Inspire Brands, Dunkin' Brands, BJ's Wholesale Club, and Starwood Hotels. "Stephanie's ability to pair innovation with operational excellence will be instrumental as we continue to elevate our growth strategy and deliver exceptional experiences for our guests," says Dave Hoffmann, CEO of Sky Zone.



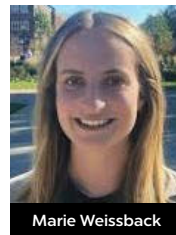
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STEPHANIE MELTZER-PAUL

Marie Weissback Joins WhiteWater in Munich

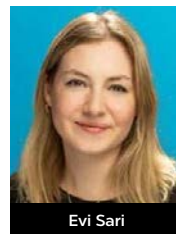
Marie Weissback has joined **WhiteWater** as a project and business development coordinator. Marie is a graduate of the University of Applied Sciences Munich with a Master's in applied business innovation and a Bachelor's in tourism management. With professional experience in consultancy, market research, and business innovation, Marie has worked with attractions such as Disney and MSC Cruises.



MARIE WEISSBACK

WildBrain Promotes Evi Sari and Adds Danielle Tanton to LBE Team

WildBrain CPLG, a licensing partner for leading brands worldwide, has promoted **Evi Sari** to the newly created role of vice president, global location-based entertainment (LBE), as the company continues to expand its LBE business worldwide. Based in Shanghai, Sari will lead WildBrain CPLG's global LBE strategy, in her expanded role, building on her successful track record in Asia-Pacific (APAC). She will now focus on scaling franchise impact and unlocking new licensing opportunities internationally, with an immediate focus on Europe and the Middle East.



EVI SARI

Zierer Promotes Stefan Oswald

Zierer, a supplier of family rides and roller coasters for amusement parks worldwide has promoted **Stefan Oswald** as its head of technical department, succeeding Walter Steininger who has served in this role since 1995. Oswald started his engineering career with Zierer in 2003 and holds a degree in mechanical engineering. He has previously worked both as a project manager and a leading design engineer. In his new role, he will be responsible for all engineering, design and technical processes within Zierer. 



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Gerardo Arteaga Oehninger Sr.

Gerardo Arteaga Oehninger Sr., 81, first became involved in the attractions industry in the 1970s, when he recognized the need for leisure entertainment in Latin America and opening the first bumper car attraction in the region. Following a 1975 visit to Playcenter in Brazil, Arteaga Oehninger became one of the first three IAAPA members in Latin America and began making plans to develop Chile's first modern amusement park. In 1978, he opened Fantasilandia in Santiago, followed by the now-closed Mundo Mágico, a miniature world of Chile, and a Happyland FEC chain.



Oehninger

Bruce Chipman

Bruce "Chippy" Chipman was an experienced professional in the entertainment and technical sectors, most recently serving as technical director at TEG Pty Ltd after stints at Universal Studios Hollywood, SeaWorld Abu Dhabi, DXB Entertainments, and Hill International. Friends remember Chipman for his passion, empathy, and caring nature. He was equally talented outside live entertainment as an accomplished photographer and expert chef.



Chipman

Lucille Cork

Lucille "Lucy" I. Cork, 83, teamed up with her father, Maurice Oler, in 1967 to build the first miniature golf course in Minot, North Dakota, which became the beginning of Lucy's Amusement Park. They followed up with a giant slide and a handful of additional rides. In 1970, she married Norman Cork, who passed away in 2024. The couple operated Lucy's Amusement Park together for 54 years. Cork is survived by two sons.



Cork

Allen Travis Gilliland Sr.

Allen "Big Al" Travis Gilliland Sr., 86, founded Spring Valley Beach water park in Blountsville, Alabama. A native of

Louisville, Kentucky, Gilliland and his wife Jean moved to Alabama in 1972 after purchasing Burgess Lake, a spring-fed swimming pool. In 1980, he expanded it into Spring Valley Beach, which has grown into a 25-acre attraction with 11 water slides. The water park continues to be operated by his family.



Gilliland

David Edward Griffith

David Edward Griffith, 81, began his career in the midway industry before partnering with companies in Colombia and México to manage and operate multiple amusement parks in both advisory and leadership roles. He later expanded into brokering rides throughout South America, and in 2010, joined forces with his son, Chad, to found industry lighting supplier CMD Enterprises. In addition to Chad, Griffith is survived by Maria, his wife of 50 years.



Griffith

Mogen Holmen

In 1975 at the age of 28, Mogen Holmen traveled from his native Denmark to Benalmádena in Spain's Costa del Sol to take the job of director at Tivoli World. He was working in his home country when he was offered the job and turned it down at first. However, the offer "piqued" his curiosity. He accepted it the next day, holding the position for the next 30 years.



Holmen

Gregory Todd Loewen

Gregory Todd Loewen, 54, grew up in Toronto, and joined Emmis Corporation in 2007 as chief strategy officer. In 2014, he became the president and chief executive officer of Digonex Technologies, an Emmis Corp. subsidiary that specializes in dynamic pricing technology solutions. He was known for his



Loewen

civic involvement and was a passionate sports fan. Loewen is survived by his wife, Alexandra, and his daughters, Madeleine and Hannah.

Joseph Pandolfo

Inspired by childhood visits to Uncle Milt's Amusement Park in New Jersey, Joseph "Joe" John Pandolfo, 70, dreamed of opening his own amusement park. That dream was realized in 1993 when he founded Pocono Go Karts and Play Park in Shawnee, Pennsylvania, which he operated for 26 years. Pandolfo also served as an instructor for the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO) and was a devoted husband and father.



Pandolfo

Lawrence Jesse Pope

Lawrence "Buddy" Jesse Pope, 55, spent 25 years working as a lighting designer and senior project manager at 4Wall Entertainment, a provider of entertainment equipment rentals and services. He was considered a mentor to countless colleagues, creating spaces where families everywhere could make lasting memories. In addition to being a devoted husband to his wife, Sharon, and father of Hayleigh and Logan, he loved the outdoors and serving the community in his home of Henderson, Nevada.



Pope

Thomas Frank Woog

Thomas Frank Woog, 84, collaborated with his brother in 1984 to open Free Wheelin', an ATV park in Minnesota. Looking for an attraction to cool off guests during a historic summer heat wave, he invented the Water Wars game in 1988. Woog continued to operate Water Wars, Inc., expanding the product line before turning over operations to his son, Tommy, in 2013.



Woog

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BoldMove Unveils Trackless Dark Ride

BoldMove Nation introduces **Smash & Reload 2.0 Starwood Hotels & Resorts**, an enhanced version of its interactive dark ride, now featuring a Rogue Rides trackless platform, dual boarding stations, and upgraded gameplay technology by Lagotronics Projects. Vehicles maneuver fluidly with precise choreography, boosting capacity and narrative potential. Installation for the first production model is slated for Europe in April 2026.

boldmove-nation.com/rogue-rides

Wavegarden Debuts in North America

Wavegarden, headquartered in northern Spain, enters the U.S. market with the launch of **Atlantic Park** in Virginia Beach, Virginia, operated by Beach Street Development. The facility features a 46-module Wavegarden Cove surf lagoon capable of producing up to 1,000 waves per hour, designed to address the region's inconsistent natural surfing conditions. The \$350 million mixed-use complex also incorporates shopping, dining, residential units, and a live music venue created by Virginia Beach native Pharrell Williams.

atlanticparksurf.com



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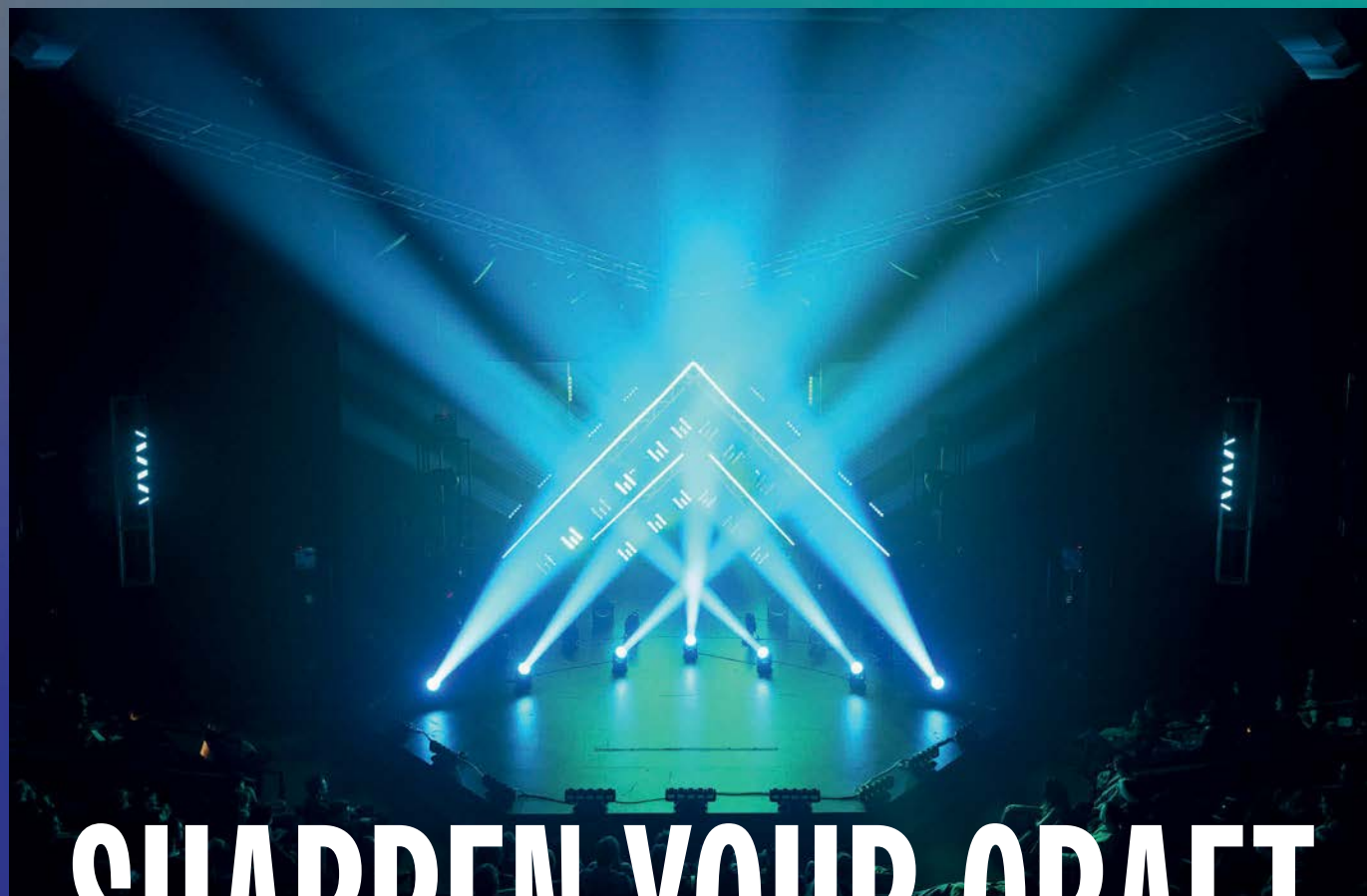
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Industry Insights



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Carl Berni: The Perks of Being a People Person

When I first encountered Carl Berni at the charming, traditional Canobie Lake Park in New Hampshire, he smiled and momentarily waved me off. That's because Berni, who is the park's president, was busy acknowledging staff members as part of an employee appreciation ceremony. He was clearly savoring the moment. Taking care of Canobie's employees, as well as its guests, became Berni's life mission.

Opened in 1902, Canobie is one of the few remaining trolley parks (so named because they were originally built and operated by streetcar companies to boost weekend ridership) in the United States. In 1958, Carl's father, Anthony Berni—along with Lou Captell and Kazmir Ulaki—purchased Canobie. Hailing from New Jersey, the three friends were amusement industry concessionaires who together fulfilled a dream of owning a park. The three families oversee Canobie to this day, with multiple generations lending a hand.

Berni was only 1 year old when his family moved to New Hampshire. One of his earliest memories is accompanying his dad to the park. In addition to going on the rides, Berni recalls seeing his father interacting with staff members and visitors. He noticed the joy it brought him. Through this observation, the seed of interest was planted.

While making the rounds with his dad, Berni would often help restock the prizes for the games. When he was 12, he started working the games himself and discovered he loved interacting with the public and his fellow employees. Berni later worked as a lifeguard at the park's Olympic-size pool and helped his father with hiring, developing work schedules, and other duties.

He studied economics in college and considered pursuing banking, but the lure of the family business was strong.

"It's in my blood," Berni says. "I knew I would eventually come here."

After college, Berni became the park's personnel director. He says that along with



ARTHUR LEVINE



ARTHUR LEVINE

his brother and sister, he hired virtually all Canobie employees through the early 1990s. Berni notes with pride that just about every manager started working at the park as a teenager. In 1999, he took over the reins as president. The park has expanded under Berni's watch; today, a team of 1,200 people operate the rides, staff the water park, and help make Canobie hum.

"You have to treat your employees well and make them feel appreciated," Berni says, explaining the secret to the park's success. "If you do, you don't have much to worry about, right?"

Indeed, Canobie's staff members are remarkably attentive and friendly, and there is a palpably cheerful vibe along its midway.

Now 68, Berni says that he has no plans to leave anytime soon.

"I love coming to work every day," he shares. "How can you walk away from something like this?"

Still, he knows that the next generation is itching to lead the family-run park.

"We passed the love on to them," Berni notes, "and they stand ready to continue Canobie's great tradition." **FW**



TOP: The only remaining wooden coaster in New Hampshire, the Yankee Cannonball, began thrilling guests at Canobie Lake Park in 1936.

INSET: A young Carl Berni (in foreground) aboard the Tanks kiddie ride at Canobie Lake Park.

LEFT: Carl Berni in front of the same Tanks ride today.

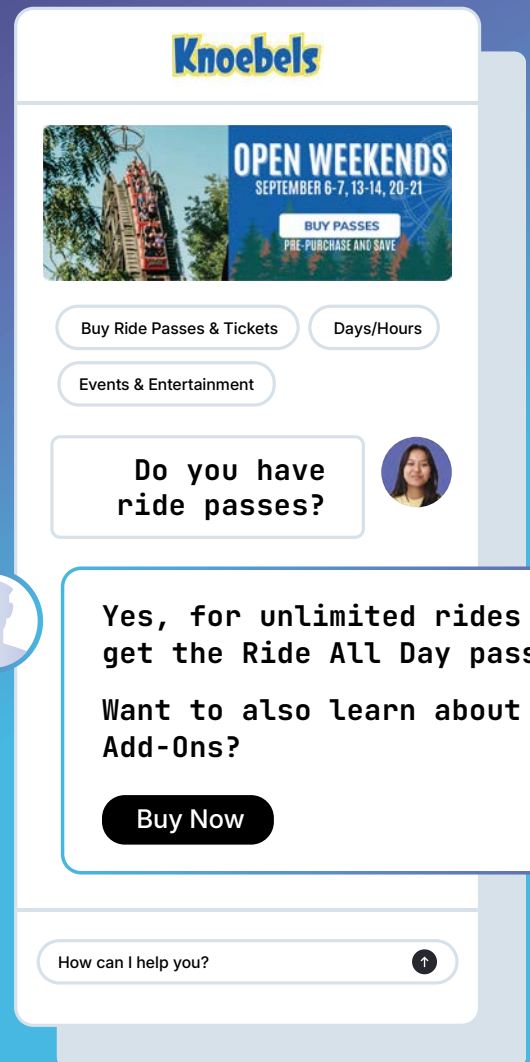


A lifelong park fanatic, **Arthur Levine** first started writing newspaper and magazine travel features about the industry he loves in 1992. He produces his own Substack newsletter, "Arthur's About Theme Parks" at **AboutThemeParks.fun**



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by Scott Fais

Condition Monitoring Allows Rides to ‘Talk’

The era of predictive maintenance arrives

PHOTOS: SCOTT FAIS



LEFT: DMT's sensors attached to Karls Erlebnis-Dorf's new train.

RIGHT: David Bromilow holds one of DMT's sensors that's designed to be mounted on a roller coaster vehicle.

THE FUTURE WAS ON FULL DISPLAY this September at IAAPA Expo Europe 2025 in Barcelona. A keen eye could catch a glimpse of what's called “predictive technology” in the Vekoma Rides booth. The Dutch manufacturer partnered with Karls Erlebnis-Dorf, a German theme park operator, to install new-age sensors on a pair of trains bound for two custom-designed family boomerang coasters the operator will open in summer 2026.

What do the sensors do? Allow an amusement park ride to talk—quite literally.

“We’re using technology to get information out of the ride; They are now talking to us,” says David Bromilow. “These smarter solutions are more efficient as we look at deploying updated maintenance solutions.”

Bromilow would know. He’s spent 40 years on the forefront of ride maintenance and enhancing ride safety systems at both consultancies and theme parks. Today, as a special advisor to Mobaro, Bromilow says the global attractions industry has entered a new era.

“I’ve seen the days when we used to have reactive maintenance: when it broke, we fixed it. Then we moved into preventative maintenance, and that was a great era to be in. But now, we’re moving forwards into predictive maintenance,” he explains to Funworld.

Here’s how the sensors from DMT, a TÜV NORD GROUP company, work: placed on different components—like a

wheel bogie found on Karls Erlebnis-Dorf’s new family coaster—the DMT sensors send information back to a park’s maintenance department, alerting technicians when a problem may be developing.

“It would be really nice to know if the temperature of the hydraulic pump had risen by three degrees. It would be very useful to know if the hydraulic pressure has dipped. Or, if there’s a little vibration in a main gearbox,” Bromilow illustrates. “So, using sensors on the ride sends the maintenance shop a signal and creates a work order.”

The same sensors can also be placed on pumps and filters used at a water park and life support systems found at aquariums, along with older and existing rides found at parks.

“In years gone by, we’d send maintenance guys in the afternoons back to the rides to take temperature readings and to take pressure readings. But of course, today, we’re very conscious of ride enclosure areas,” Bromilow says of low zones and areas underneath a coaster’s chain drive.

The new reporting system works outside of a ride’s existing control system, providing another layer of support.

“They’re not interfering with the control system, which is very, very important. Parks and manufacturers like an airgap between technology and their computer system, rightfully so for security purposes.”

But, wait. There’s more. Like an infomercial on television, the sensors from DMT can provide more insight using machine learning. With an added AI component, DMT RideGuard’s system monitors the technical condition of rides in real time. It can then seamlessly be integrated into the Mobaro CMMS system currently in use at over 300 parks and attractions around the world. Thus, a computer can begin to predict when a mechanical failure could occur—and alert maintenance teams in the field to pay extra attention to an area of concern.

“The system now is now learning about these failures; the frequency of the failures; and then mean time between downtime—It’s so incredible,” Bromilow concludes with an excited grin. 



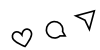
To see a video of how DMT’s sensors work, visit dmt-group.com/rideguard.html

To learn more about Mobaro’s platform, visit mobaro.com



Scott Fais is the senior director of global editorial at IAAPA. The 12-time Associated Press-honored journalist enjoys visiting immersive attractions of all kinds—and meeting the professionals who design and operate facilities. His favorite attraction? The one he’ll visit next. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#):

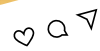
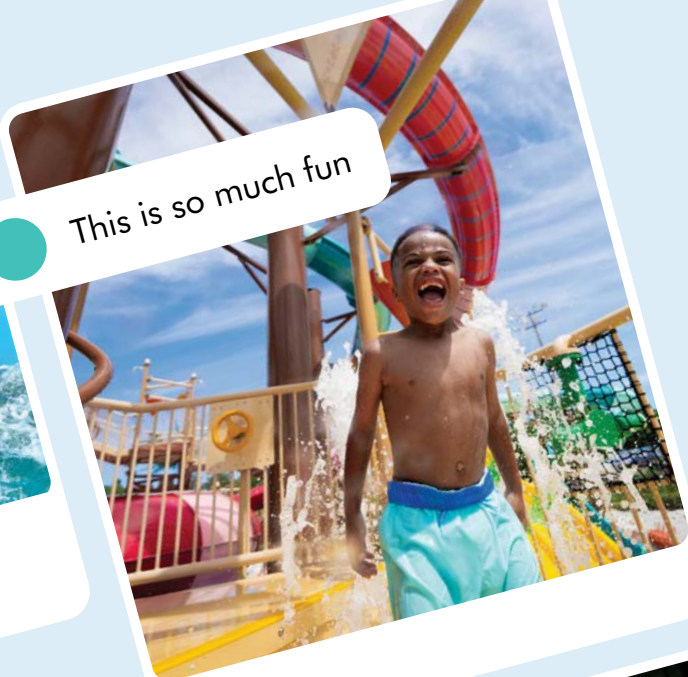




That was wild!



This is so much fun



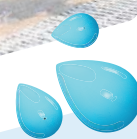
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How Eddie Hamann Develops a Culture of Growth

The managing member of Andretti Indoor Karting & Games shares key differentiators

At Andretti Indoor Karting & Games, Eddie Hamann believes growth extends beyond business metrics to the people who power the brand. As managing member, he has built a culture rooted in mentorship, opportunity, and mission-driven purpose. In a conversation with Funworld, Hamann shares how investing in employees and communities fuels loyalty, innovation, and long-term success.

How is your FEC a developer of people?

At Andretti Indoor Karting & Games, we view ourselves not only as an entertainment company but also as a training ground for future leaders. We develop people by giving them opportunities to grow through cross-training, mentorship, and structured leadership development. Many of our leaders started in hourly roles and advanced into management. We believe that Andretti should be a place where employees can sharpen their skills, gain confidence, and build careers, not just jobs.

Why have you decided to invest in your employees?

Our team members are the heartbeat of the brand. Guests remember the friendliness of their server, the energy of the track crew, and the attentiveness of our event associates just as much as they remember the attractions themselves. By investing in our team members with training, growth opportunities, and recognition, we create a team that is motivated and engaged. That investment pays back in loyalty, guest satisfaction, and ultimately, stronger performance for the business.

Your attraction seems more like a mission than a business. Has this served you well?



ANDRETTI INDOOR KARTING AND GAMES



We have always believed Andretti Indoor Karting & Games is about creating memorable experiences that bring families, friends, and teams closer together. When you treat the business as a mission to bring joy and connection to people's lives, it elevates the entire culture. That approach attracts team

members who believe in something bigger, and it resonates with guests who feel the difference in the level of care we put into every interaction.

How can attractions and suppliers develop a work culture that is rewarding for all?

It starts with mutual respect. Attractions and suppliers both play critical roles in the guest experience. By being transparent, collaborative, and consistent, you can build relationships where both sides feel like true partners. Internally, fostering recognition, providing advancement opportunities, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance are keys to ensuring a culture that feels rewarding to team members at all levels.

How do you select new markets to move into and construct a new facility?

We carefully analyze demographics, market demand, and complementary entertainment in the area. We look for regions where families and young professionals are underserved in terms of high-quality entertainment options. Beyond data, we also consider community fit, how our brand can contribute to and thrive within the local culture. We strive to find communities that share our values, which are God, family, work—in that order. Once we decide on a market, we approach construction with the mindset of creating not just a building, but a destination that can serve the community for years to come. **FW**

Hamann (center) smiles above the Andretti Indoor Karting & Games go-kart track with his team.



Eddie Hamann is the managing member of Andretti Indoor Karting & Games, a family entertainment company he co-founded in 2001 alongside John Andretti. Hamann has been instrumental in expanding the brand nationwide, integrating cutting-edge attractions like virtual reality to enhance guest experiences. Connect with him on **LinkedIn**:



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Answers by Megan Burtch, edited for clarity by Avery Matteo

Unlocking New Revenue Streams

The case for adding an arcade to an attraction facility

Funworld consults Megan Burtch, merchandising manager of Redemption Plus and IAAPA FEC Committee member, on key strategies for operators considering an arcade addition—how to start, what to expect, and why the investment can drive lasting results.

Why should operators consider adding an arcade?

Cinemas and other single-attraction venues have faced declining attendance since the pandemic, leaving many with underused space. An arcade can turn a party room, empty auditorium, or even a corner into a profit center. It extends guest visits, increases spending, and attracts new audiences—even those not interested in a movie.

What kind of arcade experience works best?

While some arcades focus on retro or bar-style setups, the most successful model is a modern arcade. These feature ticket redemption games, self-merchandisers like claw machines, and high-tech video games, such as Mario Kart or virtual reality. This mix draws families and younger audiences while keeping repeat visits strong.

How do these games generate profit?

About 65–70% of a high-performing arcade is redemption-based. Guests win tickets to redeem for prizes, which motivates continued play. Video games account for 15–20% of the mix, offering longer playtime without prizes. The remaining 10–20% are instant-win merchandisers. Together, they create variety and keep guests engaged.

What role do prizes play?

Prizes drive gameplay. Guests often look at what's available before playing and set ticket goals. Strong displays encourage



MEGAPLEX DAYBREAK

them to add funds or save tickets for future visits. The mantra “Winners Make Players” is true—visible wins inspire others to join in, building energy and excitement.

ABOVE: The Megaplex Daybreak facility.

INSET: Pizza Ranch Fun Zone

How should operators set up redemption?

Two common formats are counters and stores. Counters suit smaller arcades, while larger spaces benefit from store-style setups, which let guests browse independently. Automated options like Prize Hub (a self-service prize vending system) can also work. Whatever the model, redemption is often a guest's final impression, so staffing and prize selection must be strong.

What about space and placement?

Modern games are big—about 65 square feet each. Operators should allocate around 125 square feet of redemption space per 1,000 square feet of arcade. Place the arcade where traffic is high.

What does it take to keep an arcade running?

Arcades aren't “set it and forget it.” Maintenance is critical—having in-house staff ensures games stay online and generate revenue. Operators should also reinvest 5–10% annually into new titles to keep the experience fresh.

What kind of returns can operators expect?

On average, operators should aim for at least \$200 per game, per week. At that rate, most machines pay for themselves within 12–18 months. Arcades often boost other revenue streams too—restaurants, for instance, may see a 10% sales lift from added visits. 



Megan Burtch is passionate about continuous improvement and education, creating training tools, videos, webinars, and other resources to help operators run successful redemption programs. Burtch oversees the merchandising, design, and service programs for Redemption Plus.



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*by Katja Mack*

The Benefits of Talent Development

How Europa-Park contributes to the sustainability of live entertainment

The IAAPA Entertainment Task Force is an international working group dedicated to the well-being of the entertainment industry and advancing the impact of live entertainment. Rather than viewing performances as a supplementary feature, the task force sees artistic talent as a strategic resource—essential for guest engagement, brand identity, and long-term innovation. Its goal is to position live entertainment not merely as performance, but as a core business element—focusing on talent development, the exchange of best practices, and the creation of sustainable training structures.

Now is the time to bring this topic to the forefront, as many venues are facing increasing challenges in recruiting qualified performers. Early, structured talent development—as implemented by Europa-Park's Talent Academy—not only addresses the talent shortage, but also fosters artistic excellence and long-term brand loyalty.

A Sustainable Answer to the Live Performer Shortage

From musicals and acrobatics, to character performances and street shows, live performers bring themed worlds to life. But behind the curtain, concern is growing—new talent is becoming scarce. The global shortage of trained performers presents a strategic challenge for parks worldwide.

Addressing the Challenge

Industry data paints a clear picture. According to a study conducted by the U.K.-based Professional Lighting and Sound Association of 40 countries in 2021, 69% of companies in the live events business report severe staffing shortages—not just in technical fields, but in performer roles. In Germany, similar analyses show a structural decline in new entrants to the stage and event sectors, even as demand for talent continues to rise.



EUROPA-PARK



Europa-Park's Talent Academy develops promising talent to address—and stay ahead of—the performer shortage in the live entertainment sphere. Learn more:



A Structured Response

One approach is the Talent Academy at Europa-Park in Rust, Germany. Established in 2014, the academy was designed to give children and teens early, professional access to stagecraft. It now operates across more than 2,000 square meters, offering over 100 weekly classes led by more than 30 coaches in disciplines like dance, acrobatics, music, art, and mindset. What began as an extracurricular space has evolved into a recognized training pipeline. Students are guided by industry professionals and encouraged to build confidence, creativity, and discipline. Ten percent of Europa-Park's 300 international artists were trained at the Talent Academy and now perform in show ensembles and feature acts.

A Potential Blueprint for the Global Attractions Industry

Could similar programs work elsewhere? The answer is yes—provided there's infrastructure, staffing, and a long-term vision. Other sectors are already moving in this direction. In the U.K., the National Theatre is funding skill centers for stage jobs after seeing a 68% decline in drama students in public schools. In Australia, initiatives like Industri Education are building bridges between training and live music production to counter similar shortages. The evidence is clear: structured talent development works—especially when aligned with real-world needs and backed by sustained commitment. **FW**



Katja Mack is the creative director of Eatrenalin at Europa-Park, where she blends gastronomy, technology, and storytelling into award-winning immersive experiences. In 2014, she founded the Talent Academy, a creative platform helping individuals of all ages develop skills in dance, acrobatics, music, art, and mindset.



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IAAPA Quarterly Outlook Survey: Q3 2025 Highlights

The IAAPA Quarterly Outlook Survey delivers timely, data-driven insights into how the attractions industry is navigating change. Since launching in 2023, the survey has tracked business sentiment and operational confidence among global attractions facilities, with manufacturers and suppliers added to the study in 2025. Conducted four times per year, the survey highlights economic forecasts, workforce trends, and emerging challenges to provide members with actionable intelligence for the next six months. The most recent survey, fielded July 31–Aug. 25, 2025, drew 286 responses (173 attraction facilities, 113 manufacturers/suppliers). To explore the full set of findings, visit [IAAPA.org/research/quarterly-outlook](https://iaapa.org/research/quarterly-outlook)

Economic Sentiment

Global economy optimism

Attractions: 5.3



Manufacturers/Suppliers: 5.6



Local economy optimism

Attractions: 5.8



Manufacturers/Suppliers: 5.9



Top Business Concerns

Attraction Facilities

Economic uncertainty 63%

Price inflation 57%

New/potentially
changing tariffs by
U.S. government 54%

Attendance 49%

Manufacturers/Suppliers

Economic uncertainty 61%

New/potentially
changing tariffs by
U.S. government 60%

Price inflation 56%

Business Performance Expectations

Attraction Facilities (next 6 months vs. last year)

55% revenue to increase

53% attendance to increase

45% per capita spending to increase

Manufacturers/Suppliers

44% revenue to increase

Tariff Impact

Half of respondents anticipate negative effects from U.S. tariff changes in the next six months.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

Attractions: new products, attendance growth, revenue management

Manufacturers/Suppliers: innovation, market expansion, partnerships

Challenges

Attractions: economic uncertainty, staffing, demand fluctuation

Manufacturers/Suppliers: staffing, tariffs, economic uncertainty



Kelly Repass serves as IAAPA's vice president of global research. Her interest areas include strategic assessment, primary and secondary research, data analytics, and actionable insights to drive business performance and growth. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).



Elaine Mathis, Ph.D. is IAAPA's senior research analyst, where she helps IAAPA members leverage research to improve their businesses and explore consumer personalization through co-creation and the experience economy. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).





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EVENTS
CALENDAR

IAAPA Expo
Europe 2025
begins with
a bang in
Barcelona. Read
more on p. 58

IAAPA NEWS

IAAPA Expo Europe 2025 Showcases the Best in the Global Attractions Industry



FIRA BARCELONA GRAN VIA PLAYED HOST TO IAAPA EXPO EUROPE 2025, where the global attractions industry brought professionals from across the world together for five days of education, networking, and exploration of the latest innovations. Leisure and attractions professionals in the Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) region gathered Sept. 22-26 at Fira Barcelona Gran Via.

The trade show floor showcased innovations and welcomed attendees representing a diverse range of attractions, including amusement and theme parks, water parks, entertainment centers, eco and adventure attractions, zoos, aquariums, museums, science centers, and resorts.

“IAAPA Expo Europe continues to serve as a vital meeting point for our industry, bringing together passionate professionals to share knowledge, explore trends, and build lifelong connections,” says Peter van der Schans, executive director and vice president of IAAPA EMEA. “We are proud to see the industry come together once again in Barcelona.” Whether sourcing new products, gaining knowledge from EDUSessions and during EDUTours, or building connections at networking events, attendees departed Barcelona with a newfound inventory of insights.



Make plans to attend IAAPA Expo 2025 at the Orange County Convention Center, Nov. 17-21. Learn more at IAAPA.org/Expos

IAAPA EXPO EUROPE 2025 BY THE NUMBERS



20,700
square-meters of exhibition space



15,877
Verified Attendees



11,477
Qualified Buyers



9,370
Buying Companies



700
Exhibiting Companies



170
Speakers



153
Exhibitors taking the Sustainability Pledge



121
Countries Represented



60
Learning Opportunities



In addition to the trade show, IAAPA Expo Europe’s education conference featured EDUSessions led by industry leaders, offering insights on topics such as sustainability, guest experience, safety, technology, and emerging trends.

Several special events, including an EDUTour at PortAventura World, Water Park Day, Safety Day, Sustainability Day, and Indoor Entertainment Day, sold out after offering curated educational content tailored to key operational and strategic topics across the attractions industry.

“It was great to see all our friends, colleagues, peers, learning from each other, being inspired and having fun,” says IAAPA President and CEO Jakob Wahl.

IAAPA Expo Europe 2026 will take place Sept. 21-25 in London, continuing the tradition of bringing the global attractions industry together. **FW**



Experience Innovation, Connection, and Transformation at IAAPA Expo 2025



AS THE MOST EXCITING WEEK OF THE YEAR IN ORLANDO APPROACHES, attractions professionals can expect an engaging week of innovation, connection, and transformation at IAAPA Expo 2025. Hosted once again at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, the education program is scheduled for Nov. 17–20, while the trade show floor will be open Nov. 18–21.

“IAAPA Expo 2025 is set to bring unmatched value to our global attractions community. With more than 170 learning opportunities, receptions, networking opportunities, and more than 1,100 exhibitors, attendees will discover opportunities to learn, connect, and grow. It’s where groundbreaking

ideas meet real-world solutions, and there truly is value for everyone,” says Michael Shelton, chief operating officer of IAAPA.

Recognized as the premier event for the global attractions industry, IAAPA Expo brings together operators, manufacturers and suppliers, thought leaders, young professionals, and beyond—and represents a range of constituencies, including theme parks, water parks, family entertainment centers, museums, aquariums, zoos, and adventure parks.

Here’s what attendees and exhibitors can expect to see this year at IAAPA Expo.

South Concourse

The South Concourse will serve as a hub for networking

and professional development. Highlights include a secondary registration area, the IAAPA Member Lounge sponsored by Storibox, and the EDUTalk and Innovation Stages. IAAPA Member Central and the IAAPA Foundation Booth will also be located here, offering members and attendees direct access to resources and information.

North Concourse

The North Concourse brings together new experiences and technology showcases. This side of the convention center will feature the IAAPA Theater sponsored by Simtec Systems, Digital Signage Lab, IAAPA Expo Street Market, and Haunting Grounds. An attendee lounge, sponsored by SEGA, provides a dedicated space for conversations and downtime between sessions and exhibits, balancing immersive programming with opportunities to recharge.

IAAPA Member Lounge

Located in the South Concourse, the IAAPA Member Lounge offers members a private space to connect with colleagues and pause during a busy week. Sponsored by Storibox, the lounge reflects IAAPA’s ongoing effort to provide dedicated networking areas for its members.

Education Conference

Running Nov. 17–20, the Education Conference at IAAPA Expo 2025 will present EDUSessions focused on operational strategies, business



improvement, guest experience, and beyond. Programming will feature insights from industry leaders and provide attendees with perspectives they can bring back to their own organizations.

IAAPA Member Gift

IAAPA members are encouraged to collect a gift at Member Central. The booth also serves as a point of entry for prospective members, who can learn more about year-round benefits and opportunities.

IAAPA Best New Product Awards

The IAAPA Best New Product Awards recognize innovations introduced to the attractions industry between Sept. 7, 2024, and Aug. 15, 2025. Judging criteria include originality, impact on guest experience, and operational efficiency. A concept category also highlights emerging ideas through prototypes, models, or renderings. All applicants must be exhibiting at IAAPA Expo.

Leadership Breakfast with Mark Woodbury

On Wednesday, Nov. 19, the Leadership Breakfast at the IAAPA Theater sponsored by Simtec Systems will feature remarks from Mark Woodbury, chairman and CEO of Universal Destinations & Experiences. The event will convene industry leaders for insights and conversation on the global future of themed entertainment.

Sky Elements Drone Show

Tuesday evening, Nov. 18, will feature a new drone show outside the convention center, presented by Sky Elements. The display will combine drone technology with pyro effects and narrative elements, bringing an aerial perspective to the Expo's programming.



Buckle Up for the Game of LIFE

Attendees can pick up an Expo Insider Booklet and journey through a custom version of the classic board game, reimagined with an attractions industry twist. With the guide, participants can interact with leading global manufacturers and suppliers on the trade show floor.

Give Kids The World Events

IAAPA Expo 2025 will again support Give Kids The World Village through two annual fundraising traditions—the IAAPA International Charity Golf Tournament on Sunday, Nov. 16, and the Footprints from the Heart 5K Fun Run and 1-Mile Walk on Thursday, Nov. 20. Both events bring together participants to raise funds for the nonprofit.

Exclusive Member Experiences

Beyond the EDUSessions and show floor, IAAPA Expo also hosts unique member-only events designed to inspire and celebrate the industry. The Opening Ceremony offers an energetic kickoff with live performances and stories that highlight global innovation and creativity.

Members can also attend IAAPA Celebrates: Universal Epic Universe,



an exclusive evening event at Universal Orlando Resort's new theme park. With limited capacity, this event allows industry professionals to experience groundbreaking attractions mere months after the park's official opening.

Looking Ahead

With its combination of valuable EDUSessions, expansive exhibitor space, and exclusive experiences, IAAPA Expo 2025 continues to position itself as the launchpad for connection within the attractions industry. For those seeking to understand where the sector is headed—and how to stay ahead—IAAPA Expo offers the ideas, connections, and tools to make it possible. 



Visit **IAAPA.org/IAAPAE expo** to learn more and register.

PLATINUM



As of October 4, 2025

GOLD



SILVER



First-Time Exhibitors

COMPANY NAME	BOOTH NUMBER
Aqualand Industries.....	4078
ARCCER Amusement Technology Co. Ltd.	3884
ARROWY RACING.....	4080
Color Image Designs.....	3583
Cube Escape Box.....	4278
CQ Attractions.....	3280
Crazy Socks Crazy Skates.....	3679
Extreme Lightscares.....	4380
Family Entertainment Group (FEG).....	3282
Fever.....	4083
FLX Shade.....	3882
Full Stop Productions and Costume Studio.....	3481
Haiber Play Equipment Co. Ltd.	3478
Henan Dinis Entertainment Technology Co. Ltd.....	3581
Liebman Leisure Group.....	4180
MT-Electronic.....	3483

COMPANY NAME	BOOTH NUMBER
MultiBall.....	3878
OES Global Inc.	3779
Oplay Solution (Shanghai) Co. Ltd.	3381
ProKarting.....	3484
Shanghai Besa Industry Co. Ltd.	4283
Shanghai JEGOPLAY Facilities Group Co. Ltd.	4384
SimVenture GmbH.....	3681
Squatch ETS.....	4383
SwipeTrack Solutions.....	4284
TIS Insurance Services Inc.....	3781
Turbo Air.....	4280
X-Cube.....	3278
XR Mission Battle World 2045 / Tokyo Dome City.....	3684
Xtract One.....	4178
Zhengzhou Limeiqi Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.....	3380

As of October 4, 2025



Thank you, 2025
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As of October 8, 2025

Thank you, 2025 Global Exhibitors!



COMPANY NAME	BOOTH NUMBER
abc rides switzerland.....	3924
accesso.....	5131
ACE Amusement	1329
Adler.....	2781
Aerophile S.A.S.....	4606
Alterface	862
Altus/Koala Equipment	3917
Ankam Water Park Equipments.....	1888
Aquakita	1340
Arihant Water Park Equipment.....	2051
Arrowy Racing	4080
Avius.....	3400
Axess.....	5440
Bertazzon.....	3220
Black Light Unity: Blacklight Print & Design.....	4075
Bolliger & Mabillard Inc.....	4806
Brogent Technologies, Inc.....	5431
BRUNSWICK BOWLING PRODUCTS.....	4831
Cheer Amusement (Nanjing) Co. Ltd.	4072
Concept 1900	3728
Delta Strike International Ltd	4483,4486
DOF Robotics.....	1369,1671
Domerry Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd	1360
Dongguan Unistar Industrial Limited.....	4102
Dotto.....	2831
Elephant Sculpture Art Company Ltd.....	1386
Ellis & Associates.....	2660
Embed.....	1040
entertainment resource GmbH.....	475
ETF Ride Systems.....	4229
Fabbri Group.....	4820
FAGOO	3753
Funlandia Play Systems Inc.....	4886
Gengu Dinosaurs Technology Co. Ltd.....	3027
Gibbons Inflatable Blowers.....	6078
Gosetto	4231
Great Coasters International, Inc.....	2273
Guangdong Dream Catch Recreation Equipment Co. Ltd.....	3081
Guangdong H-FUN Water Recreational Articles Co. Ltd.....	3439
Guangzhou Colorful park Animation Technology Co. Ltd.....	140
Guangzhou Dudu Sugar Animation Technology Co. Ltd.....	3817
Guangzhou EPARK Electronic Technology Co. Ltd.....	457
Guangzhou Ifun Park Technology Co. Ltd.....	4473
Guangzhou Infinity Technology Co. Ltd.....	1789
Guangzhou Jiuyou Animation Technology Co. Ltd.....	247
Guangzhou Leqi Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.	659
Guangzhou Movie Power Technology Co. Ltd.....	635
Guangzhou Sea Animation Technology Co. Ltd.....	680
Guangzhou Wahlap Technology Corporation Limited.....	240
Guangzhou Wahlap Technology Corporation Limited./Bright Strategy	240

COMPANY NAME	BOOTH NUMBER
Guangzhou Yinghua Technology Co. Ltd.....	5400
HAFEMA Water Rides GmbH.....	4631
HAIBER PLAY EQUIPMENT Co. LTD.....	3478
Hangzhou Hogwood Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.....	686
Hangzhou Trains Equipment Co. Ltd.....	4438
Haystack Dryers Limited.....	3717
Henan Dinis Entertainment Technology Co. Ltd.....	3581
Holovis.....	1678
Hualong Dino Works	4435
Huaxia Amusement Co. Ltd.....	4684
Huss Park Attractions	4424
HY Technology Ltd.....	6103
I.E. Park S.r.l./Amusement Rides & SOLI Bumper Cars.....	2869
Immersive Planet.....	662
Industrial Frigo Ice srl.....	3726
Intamin.....	3825
Intelligent Entertainment.....	3673
Intercard Inc.....	2206
InterPark Magazine.....	4135
JB-Tagsolutions BV.....	5147
Jinma Rides	4811
KristallTurm GmbH & Co.KG.....	4474
Lagotronics Projects	2075
Laserforce.....	2878
LDP.....	2064
Lefunland Recreation Equipment Co. Ltd.	5145
Leisure Activities.....	5653,8020
Liben Group Wenzhou Toy Co. Ltd.	4478
LightUpToys.com.....	5715
MACK Rides.....	2269
Martin & Vleminkx Ltd	4827,4844
Maurer Rides	4815
Mich Playground Co. Ltd.....	3231
Moser's Rides.....	5106
MURPHYS WAVES LTD	4213
Neofuns Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.....	212
Nets Tribe	2880
Neveplast	2871
Oplay Solution (Shanghai) Co. Ltd	3381
Pokiddo Active Entertainment.....	1691
Polgun Waterparks & Attractions	1381
Polin Waterparks	1091
Premier Rides.....	5104
Preston & Barbieri.....	2600
ProSlide Technology, Inc.....	2156,2254
Purr Play.....	3490
Qilong Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.....	3084
QubicaAMF.....	1000,1306
RCI Adventure Products	5424
Reverchon / SAMC.....	4615
Rides and Fun.....	4039
RMC.....	4221,4800
Rover International.....	139

COMPANY NAME	BOOTH NUMBER
S&S Worldwide	5118
SACOA CASHLESS SYSTEM	806
SARTORI.....	4824
SBF - Visa.....	5404,5406
Semnox Solutions LLC.....	1047
Severn Lamb & Trams International.....	3824
Shanghai JEGOPLAY Facilities Group Co. Ltd.....	4384
Simtec Systems.....	1354
Simworx Limited.....	1862
Sindrax Technology Co. Ltd.....	2751
SKIDATA	4252
Sub Sea Systems, Inc.....	2854
Sunkid GmbH	2689
SUNZEE.....	3254
Synergy Waterpark Rides Pvt. Ltd.	3045
Technical Park.....	3429
Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)	669,NC9110
Themics Philippines Inc.....	1875
Triotech	1031,1331
TÜV NORD.....	2806
Unique Animation	483
Unis Technology (H.K) Limited	1035,1335
Uremet Corporation.....	3813
Vekoma Rides	5124
VENU+.....	2219
VIVATICKET.....	5100
Walltopia	3606
Water Technology Inc.....	2247
WhiteWater.....	2236
WhiteWater Surf.....	2240
Wibit Sports	2838
Wider Matrix (GZ) Technology Co. Ltd	3562
Wiegand Josef GMBH & Co. KG	3211
Wiegand.Waterrides GmbH	3212
World Waterpark Association.....	2643
WOW Company International	3233
X-Kart.....	1683,1783
YPFuns Global	886
Yuehua Industry Co. Ltd.....	810
Yuto(Guangzhou) Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.....	109
Zamperla Group	2024
Zhengzhou Prodigy Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.....	4328
Zhengzhou Tonle Inflatables Co. Ltd.....	8310
Zhengzhou Winsun Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.....	5789
Zhongshan Cheer Entertainment Technology Co. Ltd.....	1735
Zhongshan Luck & Jinying Amusement Machine Co. Ltd.....	2000
Zhuji Yinuo Weite Knitting Co. Ltd	3182
ZIERER.....	4624
Zone Laser Tag, Inc.....	4467

As of October 8, 2025

IAAPA Announces New Partnership with Licensing International

IAAPA FORGED A NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH LICENSING INTERNATIONAL, the trade association for the \$370 billion global brand licensing industry. This relationship aims to foster deeper collaboration and unlock new opportunities for the global members of both associations.

The agreement unites two influential industries that increasingly overlap—allowing IAAPA to enhance member access to exclusive events, curated educational content, and high-impact business opportunities across the global licensing and attractions landscapes.

“Attractions are no longer just about rides or exhibits, they’re about creating unforgettable moments, often powered by beloved brands,” says Jakob Wahl, president and CEO of IAAPA. “By aligning with Licensing International, we’re helping our members tap into new ideas, deepen guest engagement, and expand the creative potential of the attractions industry. This partnership represents a powerful step forward for both sectors.”

President of Licensing International Maura Regan also shares the value she sees in the collaboration with IAAPA. “As consumer expectations evolve and experiences become more central to brand engagement, collaboration between the licensing and attractions sectors has never been more important,” says Regan.

“This partnership with IAAPA reflects a shared commitment to innovation and to equipping our members with the tools, insights, and relationships needed to thrive in a fast-changing marketplace.”

IAAPA and Licensing International are already looking to the future, with plans to co-develop content, cross-promote key events, and illuminate thought leadership across both industries. Members can also expect to benefit from expanded educational offerings, access to new global platforms, and the opportunity to engage with emerging trends that are shaping the future of entertainment, intellectual property, and guest experiences.

The partnership is set to launch at the end of 2025. For more information on the collaboration and its upcoming initiatives, visit IAAPA.org and LicensingInternational.org 



Learn About Sustainability Through IAAPA's New Digital Training

WHAT DOES SUSTAINABILITY REALLY MEAN—and why is it important for the global attractions industry? IAAPA's new digital training aims to help answer those questions. The training is an interactive course that introduces the basics of sustainability in a way that's easy to understand and useful for individuals across all disciplines.

The training explains key ideas, such as the three pillars of sustainability (environment, social, and economic), what sustainable development is, and the global challenges currently affecting the attractions community. It also gives an overview of important but lesser-known topics, including the United Nations Global Goals, new legislation, and relevant regulations.

This training is designed for all IAAPA members—no matter the size of the



organization, attraction, or role. It's a good fit for those who are new to sustainability, want a quick refresher, or are looking for something to use in onboarding or team meetings.

The course is free and included in IAAPA membership. Learn more and register at IAAPA.org/sustainabilityfundamentals 

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Brass Ring Award Winner Spotlights



Brian Wainwright, CEO of Fantasy Island Amusement Park, accepts the IAAPA Brass Ring Award from 2025 IAAPA Chairman Massimiliano Freddi.

Fantasy Island Amusement Park— Fantasy Island's Midway

Best Collective Visual Merchandise Display: Limited Operation

The redesigned Midway transformed the Beach Haven, New Jersey park's entrance into an immersive, high-energy hub, improving guest flow, enhancing theming, and boosting overall engagement. It truly created a visually cohesive, branded experience that elevates both profitability and guest satisfaction.

What does it mean to you and your team to receive a Brass Ring Award?

Receiving one of the highest honors in our industry is both profoundly humbling and deeply gratifying. It represents a meaningful acknowledgment of the dedication, creativity, and passion our team pours into every aspect of the guest experience. While we don't do this work for accolades, being recognized with a Brass Ring Award reinforces that our efforts are resonating. It inspires us to continue pushing boundaries, refining our craft, and striving for excellence in everything we do.

How did it feel to be recognized on the global stage during IAAPA Honors?

Being recognized on a global stage among so many talented and respected peers was an incredibly special experience. There's something truly uplifting about being in a room filled with individuals who share the same passion, challenges, and commitment to this unique industry. Rather than intimidating, it felt energizing and affirming. We were honored to be part of such a warm and supportive community, and to celebrate the accomplishments of so many remarkable leaders and organizations.

What advice would you offer to someone thinking about applying for a Brass Ring Award this year?

The application process itself is a valuable exercise—it invites you to reflect on your business and ask, "Where are we truly excelling?" and "What sets us apart?" While our industry is rich with best practices, a Brass Ring nomination should highlight where you've gone above and beyond—where you've created something exceptional that elevates the guest experience in a meaningful way. Take the time to tell your story thoughtfully. Use visuals, details, and data to bring your nomination to life. Most importantly, don't be afraid to take pride in what you've accomplished. Sharing your work is not just about seeking recognition—it's about contributing to a collective spirit of innovation and excellence in our industry.

—Brian Wainwright, CEO



Marcos Michan— Young Professional Award

What does it mean to you and your team to receive the Young Professional Award?

For me, it was an honor to receive the Young Professional Award. I truly love being part of this generous and joyful industry, and having my work and journey recognized in this way fills me with pride.

How did it feel to be recognized on the global stage during IAAPA Honors?

At first, I was extremely nervous. I'm not someone who usually enjoys being on stage or speaking in public, but hearing the applause from such influential people in the industry was deeply moving and made me feel incredibly proud.

What advice would you offer to other young professionals in the attractions industry?

To all young professionals, I encourage you to volunteer with IAAPA. Whatever you can give to this amazing association, IAAPA will give even more back to you. You'll meet so many people who are willing to teach and share knowledge as colleagues. Without a doubt, there is no other industry like the attractions industry—take the leap and dare to nominate yourselves.

PortAventura World— Sustainability Excellence Award

What does it mean to you and your team to receive a Brass Ring Award?

Receiving this recognition is a tremendous honor and a reflection of the commitment, passion, and teamwork that define PortAventura World. Sustainability is part of our DNA and at the core of our purpose.

How did it feel to be recognized on the global stage during IAAPA Honors?

Having the opportunity to receive the award in the incredible theater of Europa-Park, surrounded by all the representatives of our industry, is the equivalent of receiving an Oscar in Hollywood.

What advice would you offer to someone thinking about applying for a Brass Ring Award this year?

Authenticity and passion go a long way.

—**Choni Fernández**, Director, Customer, Sustainability, and Communication



PortAventura World's
Vanessa Rodríguez
(left) and Choni
Fernández (right).



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IAAPA Elects 2026 Global Board of Directors

DURING THEIR MEETING AT IAAPA EXPO EUROPE 2025 in Barcelona, Spain, The IAAPA Global Board of Directors elected nine new board members who will begin their terms in 2026.

IAAPA's global board collaborates with the IAAPA team to establish and ultimately approve the strategic priorities of the association. The board approves IAAPA's annual business plans, oversees the association's finances, provides feedback on IAAPA products and services, and advocates for IAAPA members. Board members also serve as global goodwill ambassadors.

The slate of new board members was developed and recruited by the IAAPA Governance Committee, which reviewed 47 applications for nine open positions. Each applicant was carefully evaluated based on industry experience, areas of professional expertise, prior IAAPA volunteer service, and the knowledge and skills needed to advance IAAPA's mission.

"The selection process was both thoughtful and thorough," says IAAPA Governance Committee Chair Ken Whiting. "This year's board reflects a diverse cross-section of global leadership, experience, and passion for our industry. I am confident these leaders will guide IAAPA forward with meaningful impact and innovative vision."

The new board members include the following:

Chris Herschend

Second Vice Chair, 2026–29

Chair, Herschend Family Entertainment (North America region)

Chris Herschend is chair of Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE), one of the largest family-owned themed attractions companies, now in its 75th year. A lifelong contributor to the attractions industry, Herschend has guided his family business since 1997 through strong governance, operational excellence, and people-centered leadership. Beyond his leadership at HFE, he has been an active IAAPA volunteer, serving on numerous committees and task forces, including those focused on strategic planning, governance, government relations, and the North America regional advisory committee. Herschend's term begins in 2026, when he will serve as the board's second vice chair. In 2027, he will advance to first vice chair, and he will chair the global board in 2028.



Luis Felipe Arteaga,

ICAE, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Advisory Board Chair Director, 2026–28, CEO, Happyland Perú (Latin America, Caribbean region)

Luis Felipe Arteaga is CEO of Happyland Perú, where he oversees 20 family entertainment centers (FECs) and has contributed to the company's expansion into one of Latin America's leading family entertainment businesses. Arteaga has overseen major organizational transformations, the launch of flagship entertainment centers, and the implementation of world-class management systems that enhance guest experience, operational efficiency, and team development. As an active IAAPA volunteer, he served as a speaker at IAAPA events, along with being a member of the global family entertainment center committee, the global education and member services task force, and the Latin America Caribbean regional advisory board.



Andrew Bolstein

Asia Pacific Regional Advisory Board

Chair Director, 2026

President and General Manager, Shanghai Disney Resort (Asia-Pacific region)

Andrew Bolstein is a 30-year Disney veteran. He was part of the Shanghai Disney Resort opening leadership team and has held executive roles at Walt Disney World, Hong Kong Disneyland, and Tokyo Disney Resort. Known for his operational expertise, strategic insights, and strong partnerships with government, business, and community stakeholders, Bolstein drove innovation and operational excellence at Disney destinations across Asia. He has effectively chaired the IAAPA APAC regional advisory board since 2023, and this election represents a one-year extension of that term. His extensive international experience positions him well to provide key strategic leadership in the APAC region and on the IAAPA Global Board.



Amber Christopher

ICAE, Facility Director, 2026–27

General Manager, Harley-Davidson Museum and Milwaukee Experiences (North America region)

Amber Christopher has more than 20 years of leadership experience in attractions, museums, zoos, and tourism. She is recognized for driving revenue growth, elevating guest engagement, and building high-performing teams. At the Harley-Davidson Museum and Milwaukee Experiences, she oversees a 20-acre campus, delivering record revenues and implementing innovative guest programs. Prior to joining the Harley-Davidson team, Christopher worked in a variety of leadership roles at the Denver Zoo, including serving as chief operating officer. She has presented webinar programs and spoken at IAAPA Expos, served as an IAAPA mentor, and chaired both the IAAPA Zoo and Aquarium Committee and the animals in human care toolkit task force. Her expertise in strategic planning, partnerships, and operations, coupled with her commitment to advancing the global attractions industry, brings a dynamic perspective to the IAAPA Global Board.



Matt Eckert, ICAE

Facility Director, 2026–28

President and CEO, Holiday World & Splashin' Safari (North America region)

Eckert joined the family-owned Holiday World & Splashin' Safari theme and water park in 2000. Since then he's helped to grow the park's annual attendance to more than one million guests, and is leading the parks' expansion into lodging. A graduate of Indiana State University with experience in public accounting as a Certified Public Accountant, Eckert brings financial expertise, operational leadership, and strategic vision to the IAAPA Global Board. He also serves on multiple local, state, and national boards—including the U.S. Travel & Tourism Advisory Board—and has been an active IAAPA volunteer for more than 25 years, including serving on the global human resources committee, the amusement parks and attractions committee, and the drone task force. As an Expo speaker, he facilitated webinars, and is currently serving as the chair of the IAAPA North America Government Relations Committee.



Jeremy Hoyum

Facility Director, 2026–27

Owner/Operator, Urban Air Goodyear (North America region)

Jeremy Hoyum is the owner and operator of two family entertainment centers. He brings extensive executive-level experience in attractions franchise leadership and operations. Previously, he was senior vice president of park performance and led a team at Jake's Unlimited to win the IAAPA Top FEC of the World award. Hoyum has served IAAPA as a member of the family entertainment center (FEC), education, and food and beverage committees. He has also spoken at every IAAPA Expo since 2017 and at several IAAPA FEC Summits. A mentor, consultant, and active IAAPA volunteer, Hoyum is recognized for strategic growth, team development, operational leadership, and elevating guest experiences across the attractions industry.



Thomas Mack

ICAE, Facility Director, 2026–28

Managing Partner, Europa-Park (Europe, Middle East, Africa region)

Thomas Mack is managing partner of Europa-Park in Germany, where he oversees hotels, food and beverage, entertainment, and park operations at Europa-Park and the water world Rulantica. He introduced innovative concepts including the award-winning immersive dining experience Eatrenalin. Mack has spoken at IAAPA events and served on the IAAPA EMEA Education Committee. As a leader of one of Europe's most celebrated



theme parks, Mack combines tradition and innovation, and his international reputation, unique perspectives, and operational excellence position him as a key contributor to IAAPA's strategic vision.

Michael Collins

ICAE, Manufacturer/Supplier/Consultant (MSC) Director, 2026–28

Senior Partner, Leisure Development Partners LLP (Europe, Middle East, Africa region)

Michael Collins is senior partner and cofounder of Leisure Development Partners. He is an economist with more than 25 years of experience leading consulting projects for theme parks, visitor attractions of every kind, museums, resorts, and entertainment venues worldwide. He has advised major operators, investors, and licensors, including PortAventura, Liseberg, Miral, Blackstone, Universal Studios and Qiddiya. Collins served on several IAAPA Committees and Task Forces, including the global awards task force and committee, the EMEA regional advisory board, and the global education committee. He chaired the EMEA education committee and the IAAPA Hall of Fame and Archives committee and has spoken at numerous expos and the IAAPA Institute for Attractions Managers.



Jane Cooper

Past Chair Director, 2026–28

Business Advisor (North America region)

Jane Cooper was the president and chief operating officer of Herschend Family Entertainment (HFE), where she oversaw 14 attractions across six states and expanded the portfolio with acquisitions including Adventure Aquarium, Newport Aquarium, and Wild Adventures. She retired from the company in 2020. Prior to HFE, Cooper spent 25 years at Kings Entertainment Company/Paramount Parks, ultimately serving as president and CEO and increasing profitability by 50%. Cooper served on the IAAPA Global Board several times, including as chair in 2005. She is currently the vice chair of the IAAPA Foundation board and served on the strategic planning committee. Most recently she served on the Board of Parques Reunidos and served on the Hershey Entertainment and Resorts Board from 2020-2024. 



2027 Board Applications

The application process for the 2027 global board will open in Q1 2026 and will be available at www.iaapa.org/boardofdirectors. Interested applicants are encouraged to volunteer for the association by serving on IAAPA task forces and committees, speaking at IAAPA events, and guiding young professionals as an IAAPA mentor.



The Power of IAAPA Membership

2025 Membership Options

IAAPA caters to the varied needs of industry stakeholders and offers three membership categories:

- **Attractions Facilities:** Designed for amusement parks, water parks, entertainment centers, museums, zoos, natural attractions, resorts, and more, this membership provides comprehensive coverage for entire facilities, irrespective of size.
- **Manufacturer/Supplier/Consultant:** Tailored for companies engaged in manufacturing, supplying, or consulting within the attractions sector, this membership extends across the entire organizational spectrum.
- **Individual/Student:** Crafted for professionals operating within the attractions industry, this membership offers tailored categories catering to diverse career stages, including young professionals, retirees, educators, and students.

Member Benefits

IAAPA membership affords unparalleled advantages aimed at driving strategic growth and fostering professional development.

News and Publications

- **Funworld Magazine:** Gain access to the industry's preeminent source of information, covering trends, innovations, and best

practices, delivered in print and digital formats.

- **IAAPA News Daily:** Produced by Funworld's editorial team, this daily e-newsletter delivers headlines and insights from accredited news sources across the globe.
- **IAAPA.org Access:** Seamlessly navigate industry news, event information, educational resources, and regional updates via IAAPA.org, the association's centralized online platform.

Connections

- **Expos and Events:** Experience premier networking, innovation, and knowledge-sharing opportunities at IAAPA's flagship events, where members enjoy exclusive perks and savings on registration fees, exhibit spaces, and event tickets.
- **IAAPA Regional Events:** Network with industry peers and stakeholders at discounted rates through a comprehensive calendar of regional networking events.
- **IAAPA Connect+:** Enhance your event experience with an interactive platform providing easy access to schedules, exhibitor information, wayfinding tools, and the chance to connect with fellow attendees.
- **IAAPA Connect+ Marketplace:** Access a virtual hub for year-round networking and business opportunities, connecting buyers and sellers across the globe.

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- **IAAPA Job Board:** Source top talent and explore career opportunities within the global attractions industry through IAAPA's dedicated job board.

Research and Resources

- **Reports and Industry Data:** Tap into the premier source of global attractions research. Explore operational benchmark reports, regional economic impact studies, quarterly outlook reports, and an annual global theme and amusement park outlook study.
- **Crisis Communications Support:** Ensure your organization is ready for a crisis. Download IAAPA's Crisis Communications Template from the IAAPA Bookstore. In a crisis, call the 24/7 support line: +1 321-319-7602.
- **Business Solutions Partnership Program:** Provides the resources and support to create new and proven revenue streams, reduce costs, and optimize operational efficiencies.
- **Hosted Buyer Program:** Meet with a wide range of IAAPA Expo exhibitors to learn about new products and trends, network with leaders, and stay up to date with the latest industry developments.

Education

- **Certification Programs:** Elevate professional credentials with esteemed certification programs, including the IAAPA Certified Attractions Professional (ICAP) and IAAPA Certified Attractions Executive (ICAE) designations.

- **Webinars, Webcasts, and Online Learning:** Engage in monthly live webinars, archived sessions, and online learning resources covering industry-specific topics, which are available in multiple languages.

Safety Standards and Training

- **Facility Excellence Self-Assessment:** Leverage IAAPA's safety tool to measure progress and assess the health of safety procedures.
- **Safety Guidance:** Prioritize safety and compliance with IAAPA's global efforts to establish industry-leading safety standards and comprehensive training initiatives.

Public Affairs

- **Industry Advocacy:** Benefit from IAAPA's advocacy efforts aimed at shaping industry regulations and legislation to ensure a conducive business environment for attractions professionals worldwide.

IAAPA membership serves as a catalyst for professional growth and industry advancement, offering a wealth of benefits tailored to meet the diverse needs of attractions professionals worldwide. Join IAAPA today and unlock the full spectrum of advantages poised to elevate success within the global attractions industry.

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This is a partial listing of upcoming IAAPA events. Event details are as of October 4, 2025, and subject to change. For the most up-to-date information, visit [IAAPA.org/Events](https://iaapa.org/Events)

NOVEMBER

IAAPA Live Chat: Autumn Reflections

4 | Online

IAAPA Legends: A Hall of Fame Celebratory Affair

17 | Orlando



18-21 | Orlando

IAAPA Explores: Brazil at IAAPA Expo 2025

18-20 | Orlando

DECEMBER 2025

IAAPA Meetup: Guadalajara

3 | Guadalajara, México

IAAPA Presents: Universal Studios Japan

3 | Osaka, Japan

IAAPA Presents: Poland

11 | Łódź, Poland

IAAPA Live Chat: End of the Year

18 | Online

JANUARY 2026

IAAPA Morocco Summit

19-21 | Marrakesh, Morocco

FEBRUARY 2026

IAAPA FEC Summit 2026

1-3 | Glendale, Arizona

MARCH 2026



30-April 2 | Abu Dhabi, UAE

APRIL 2026

IAAPA Institute for Attractions Professionals – Abu Dhabi

3-4 | Abu Dhabi, UAE

IAAPA Safety Institute – Abu Dhabi

3-4 | Abu Dhabi, UAE

IAAPA Institute for Indoor Professionals – Abu Dhabi

3-4 | Abu Dhabi, UAE



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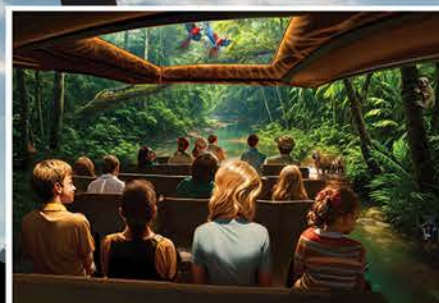
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Luciana Periales: The Trailblazing Dynamo

BOWLING

IAAPA's incoming chair of the
Global Board of Directors leads
with passion, authenticity, and
heart

by Avery Matteo
photos by Neverland Park



ON A THURSDAY MORNING, NEVERLAND CEO LUCIANA PERIALES TURNS THE CORNER to enter the family entertainment center group's Buenos Aires, Argentina, offices—situated in a sleek corporate park just north of the city's center. Behind her are wooden shelves featuring memorabilia lovingly collected from a variety of attractions community events. She smiles warmly at a group of team members working intently at parallel wooden tables and greets them all individually with a kiss on the cheek before focusing her energy on the tasks ahead.

While Periales has a wealth of day-to-day responsibilities to attend to, her priority is connecting with people—a throughline within her family, friendships, and professional life. Funworld spent two days with Periales in Buenos Aires and her home city of Córdoba, learning about her personal leadership journey and plans for Neverland amid the anticipation of her incoming role as chair of the IAAPA Global Board of Directors.

From Curiosity to Calling

From a young age, Periales was intrigued by the attractions industry. “When I was 16, because I was very curious, I would go with my uncle to Neverland and do some work,” she says. Periales’ uncle, Marcelo Periales, led the company at the time. She found joy and inspiration in the collaboration—and they developed a close bond since she was the only other family member directly involved with Neverland. “We were great friends. We laughed a lot,” she reminisces with a smile.

Periales’ time at Neverland came to a brief pause when she chose to explore opportunities outside the family business, studying marketing and working at a car dealership in a marketing role before moving into real estate. She then relocated to San Francisco for two years. Ultimately, she decided to return to Argentina and rejoin Neverland, where her career quickly gained momentum. “I started first being in charge of one of the restaurants, and then in two years, I was in charge of the whole food and beverage business,” Periales says of the now-defunct business division. “After that, I worked in the innovation and development department until my uncle became sick and began preparing me to take on the CEO role.”

When Marcelo passed away, it was time for Periales to rise to the rewarding but daunting occasion of becoming Neverland’s new leader. “I had to step into the CEO role at the age of 38 ... At that time, my kids were very little. It was one of the most difficult moments of my life. And it was then that I made a conscious decision to strengthen myself, not just as a professional, but as a person,” she says. “I knew I had to lead not only the company, but also my family, through a moment of deep transition.”

Marcelo’s steady guidance before his passing helped ease the transition process, and he instilled in Periales the importance of passion, diligence, and—most importantly—caution. “One tiny but very important lesson he



“Over time, I’ve come to understand that leadership is not about me; it’s about us. That simple idea has become my personal motto.”

taught me was: never sign anything before reading,” Periales jokes. “But beyond that, he was very passionate about the industry, entertainment, and IAAPA.” His years of preparation to ensure Periales felt well-poised to sit at the helm of the company helped shape her people-focused leadership style. “Over time, I’ve come to understand that leadership is not about me; it’s about us. That simple idea has become my personal motto,” she concludes.

Staying Grounded

Periales’ people-focused approach bears fruit within her day-to-day life as well. During two days of visits across Buenos Aires and Córdoba, she was frequently greeted by familiar faces that included restaurant servers, Neverland team members, and even passersby—each pausing to share a smile, hug, or conversation. While seated at a restaurant in Córdoba, two restaurant employees even engaged in a lighthearted battle about who loves Periales more. “They used to work for our restaurants,” she says to Funworld following the encounter.

Outside of the office, Periales finds balance by listening to music on early-morning walks through her neighborhood. “It’s my favorite time for inspiration and introspection. I really enjoy exercising—it gives me energy and helps me start the day with clarity.” She also enjoys reading books and spending quality time with her friends (she belongs to a close-knit friend group of

women she met in kindergarten) as well as with her teenage daughter and son.

Periales sticks to the basics in terms of the media she consumes. “I don’t watch TV or listen to podcasts,” she shares. “And I love history books, because you can learn a lot from other people doing things in other times. And I share what I learn—with my kids, with my colleagues, and with my friends. Sharing, mentoring, and teaching are things I try to do as much as I can.”

Since taking over the company, Periales has also learned the value of prioritizing her mental health. “My journey has been shaped by deep introspection, self-awareness, and yes, many years of therapy,” she says. “That inner work has been just as important—if not more—than any professional experience or training.”

Guiding Neverland

Under Periales’ leadership, Neverland has evolved into a dynamic network of family entertainment centers, blending creativity, safety, and innovation. “When I took over Neverland, we had 18 FECs, and now we have 27, with plans to open two more in 2026,” she shares. Though the company previously peaked at 36 locations before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Periales has scaled the business over the last decade, guided by a commitment to expanding Neverland’s market presence in key locations and regions.

These successes, however, have not been without their challenges. One of the most significant roadblocks occurred in 2015, when a devastating flood impacted Argentina. “It completely destroyed our headquarters. It took over two years to fully rebuild our infrastructure, all while maintaining operations and business continuity,” she says. More than a year of strict lockdowns during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic also took a toll, and those pressures were compounded by Argentina’s economic and institutional volatility. “We operate in a highly unstable environment, with frequent regulatory changes, inflation, and shifting political landscapes,” Periales transparently shares. “This reality demands constant reinvention, as we continuously adapt to new challenges without losing sight of our long-term goals.”

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“We want to meet families where they are.”

Despite the constantly shifting priorities in response to challenges, one thing remains constant—Periales’ focus on providing positive guest experiences. During Funworld’s visit with Periales to a popular Neverland FEC in a Córdoba shopping mall, she steps aside from her work for a moment to speak with a young team member. They greet one another warmly, and Periales asks her to assist with getting a crack in the ceiling repaired. When asked about the interaction, Periales says, “I’m pretty picky and particular about quality.” She shares that she wants parents to feel that their children are playing in a safe, well-maintained space—and every small detail contributes to making a positive impression.

Periales poses with a Neverland bear mascot at the entrance of a Neverland Sport & Play location in Buenos Aires.



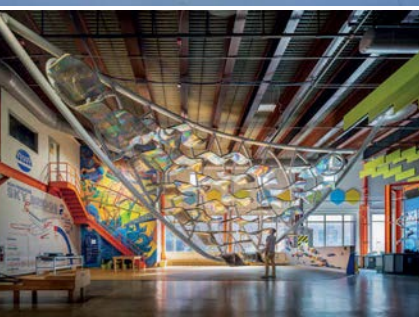
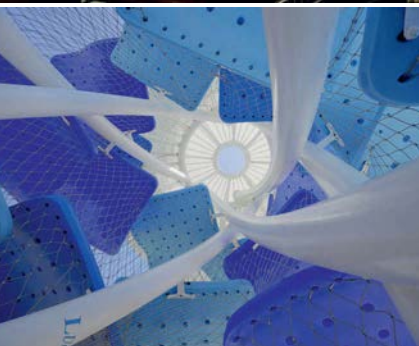
Periales lives up to her trailblazer reputation, developing entertainment concepts designed to appeal to broad age ranges. “We’ve diversified our offerings to meet evolving customer expectations—introducing innovative experiences, digital integrations, and a more sustainable approach across our operations,” she says. The Neverland Sport & Play concept targets tweens and teens, offering active, sports-oriented activities, while a gaming center—named G-Bunker—taps into the growing e-sports trend. “The space is entirely dedicated to e-sports, online gaming, streaming, and dance, and it’s tailored for a digitally native audience looking for immersive experiences,” explains Periales.

Periales also notes that, when it comes to designing or remodeling facilities, she loves to take a hands-on approach. “Designing new parks or remodeling the existing ones is my favorite part,” she says. An in-house team of designers and technicians often complete projects—but the company will sometimes work with external vendors if a project requires niche expertise. To maintain brand image, the Neverland design team adheres to detailed manuals that specify everything from signage guidance to color coordination. Adaptations are made only when necessary, such as for the Sport & Play concept, which now has its own separate color scheme and a distinct brand guide.

Aside from selecting paint colors and facility imagery, Periales is responsible for addressing a variety of high-stakes business considerations. When planning a new facility, Periales evaluates demographics, location size, competition, and local economic factors. Her facilities are also often strategically located within malls. Periales shares that many Argentinian families consider malls to be among the safest recreational environments within the country, so the placement of Neverland FECs in malls allows the company to leverage a crucial market. “We want to meet families where they are,” she explains.

A Vision for a Stronger Industry

For Periales, leading Neverland is only one part of her professional journey. Just as central is her engagement with the





Avery Matteo is the associate editor of Funworld at IAAPA. She is an Orlando-based writer and editor with more than five years of experience supporting educational institutions, nonprofits, and associations. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#):



global attractions community through IAAPA, where she will soon step into her role as chair of the IAAPA Global Board of Directors at IAAPA Expo 2025. Her path with the association has been defined by both curiosity and commitment, growing steadily from regional participation to international leadership.

She credits her uncle for introducing her to IAAPA. “He always told me, ‘You have to get involved—you’ll learn a lot, and you’ll meet people who care about the same things we do.’” She took that advice to heart by serving on many committees over the years, attending regional events across Latin America, and participating in IAAPA expos.

Periales has an eye toward expanding opportunities for others as chair of the Global Board of Directors and believes IAAPA is at its strongest when it functions as a connector. “My vision is built around one clear and shared purpose: We are all IAAPA—united as members. As chair, I will focus on global expansion, deepening our presence in emerging markets and strengthening connections across regions. At the same time, safety will remain a top priority

as we work to raise standards and foster a culture of continuous improvement,” she says. “Above all, my goal is to drive greater synergy among all industry stakeholders—operators, manufacturers, suppliers, local associations, and regulatory bodies—to build a more resilient, innovative, and sustainable global attractions ecosystem.”

Periales is attentive to IAAPA’s other key priorities as well, some of which include sustainability, inclusivity, and global collaboration. Sustainability particularly resonates with Periales, and she puts her passion into practice at the Neverland offices. “We are growing olive and lemon trees,” she says as she gestures to the saplings growing outside the corporate headquarters. “I’m focused on implementing more sustainable practices in Argentina by integrating best practices from other countries.” She adds that Neverland is erecting solar panels behind the building.

Periales also embodies inclusivity. As one of few female CEOs in the Latin American attractions sector and now the fourth woman to serve as IAAPA chair—only Gina Romano (2005), Jane Cooper (2005), and Amanda Thompson (2020–2021) come before her—she provides crucial gender representation and a unique perspective that will move the needle forward for the association.

Her upcoming term also represents a bridge between Latin America and the broader attractions community. By sharing the lessons she’s learned as a business leader in Argentina, she hopes to inspire others in emerging markets while strengthening IAAPA’s global voice. “I think leadership is about being there,” she says. “It’s about showing up, listening, and helping people grow.”

As Periales prepares to step into the role of IAAPA chair, she appears to do so with the same warmth and curiosity that first drew her into the family business as a teenager. From strong relationships with her team to pondering high-impact questions about the direction of Neverland and IAAPA, she leads with both head and heart. In doing so, she embodies the kind of association IAAPA strives to be—a place where passion, professionalism, and people come together to help shape the future of the attractions industry. **FW**





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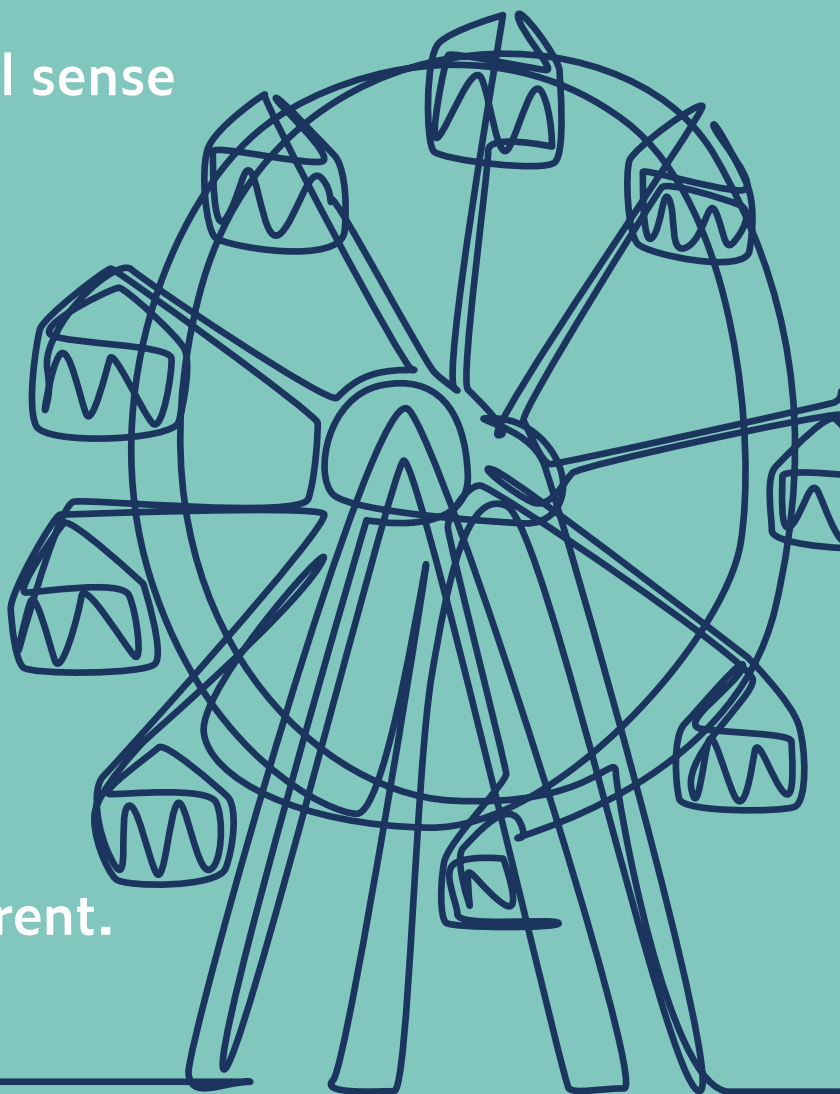
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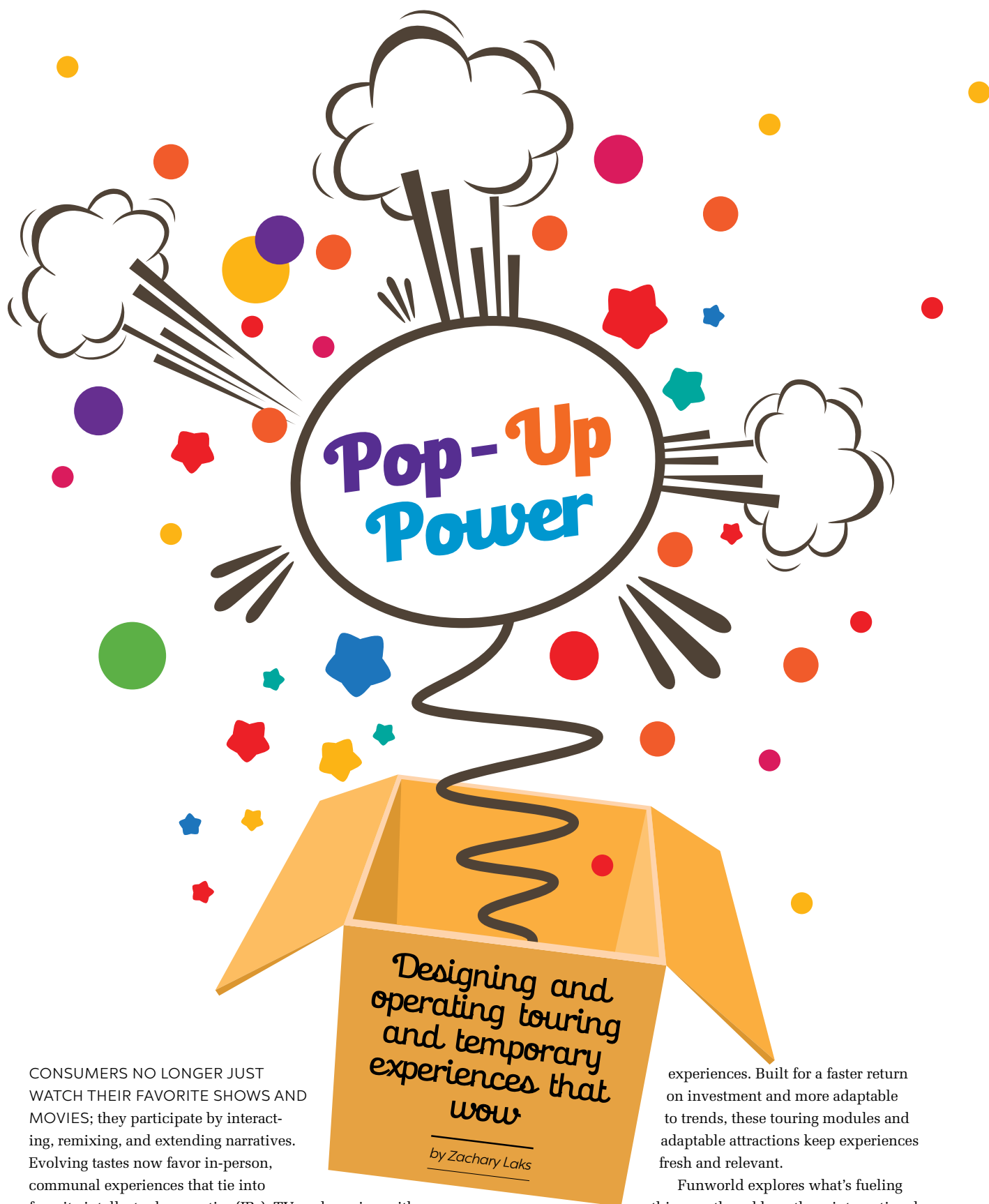
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CONSUMERS NO LONGER JUST WATCH THEIR FAVORITE SHOWS AND MOVIES; they participate by interacting, remixing, and extending narratives. Evolving tastes now favor in-person, communal experiences that tie into favorite intellectual properties (IPs), TV, and movies, with a high-gloss factor for social media appeal. Add the flexibility of real estate in a post-pandemic era, such as local malls eager to draw back crowds lost to the conveniences of online shopping, and you have the ideal match for temporary and touring

experiences. Built for a faster return on investment and more adaptable to trends, these touring modules and adaptable attractions keep experiences fresh and relevant.

Funworld explores what's fueling this growth and how three international IAAPA members are leveraging short-term and touring experiences to stay fresh in an ever-evolving market, complete with strategies and tools for others looking to do the same.



Netflix House: The Streaming Giant Sets Down Roots

Netflix's concept art provides a sneak peek at what visitors may experience at the permanent Netflix House entertainment venue in Philadelphia.

Are you still watching? Audience trends are signaling an eagerness to put down streaming devices and experience the story in person. As a global leader in streaming and original content production, Netflix is extending its brand into the physical world through a new, permanent entertainment format: Netflix House.

After launching more than 40 unique experiences that have attracted more than 10 million guests in 300 cities worldwide,



Netflix House will be its first large-scale entertainment complex. Netflix House is Netflix's most ambitious permanent entertainment venue to date, spanning over 100,000 square feet per location. Netflix has announced three initial venues, with two set to open by the end of this year: King of Prussia Mall in Philadelphia and the Galleria in Dallas. The third venue, scheduled to open on the Las Vegas Strip in 2027, will include indoor retail, dining, and entertainment.

Netflix Experiences have included global tours of *Stranger Things: The Experience*, the *Bridgerton*-themed *Queen's Ball*, and *Squid Game: The Experience*. These three destinations invite guests to step into the worlds of Netflix's most beloved titles.

"[Netflix House] is fandom coming to life, where you can step inside the worlds you've been watching and loving for years—

whether going on an epic adventure with the Straw Hats, taking a journey into Hawkins, Indiana, or grabbing a cocktail inspired by your latest obsession," says Marian Lee, Netflix's chief marketing officer.

Netflix House will create modular spaces that will host touring exhibitions and attractions, featuring regularly updated experiences with the latest stories trending worldwide. "With fresh experiences dropping regularly, there's always a new reason to come back," Lee says.

Universal Horror Unleashed: Universal's Expansion into New Regions

Universal Horror Unleashed builds upon the momentum and cultural resonance of its long-running Halloween Horror Nights brand, transforming it into a year-round immersive offering. The premier Halloween event has evolved into an annual holiday highlight, attracting millions of visitors and generating substantial revenue for Universal Destinations & Experiences with its expanded offerings and immersive experiences. At Funworld press time, the first Universal Horror Unleashed was scheduled to debut in Las Vegas, with a second location set to debut in Chicago in 2027.

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“What we’re doing with Universal Horror Unleashed is the culmination of 100 years of horror in the making; this is really at the core of Universal, and because of that, it is so absolutely important to us,” says Sean Chung, the show producer for Universal Horror Unleashed in Las Vegas.

“In addition to Universal Horror Unleashed’s four main mazes, there is also 7,000 square feet of flexible space that’s going to be rotating in its seasonal events that’ll be at the same level that you can expect from a big pop-up in a Universal park. There are events already planned for that space, which will be seasonal and rotating [at times with the Chicago location],” Chung notes. “We will continue to push the limits by experimenting with even more different types of activation and seeing what works and blending that into the base program.”

Chung adds that Universal Horror Unleashed will focus on “experiences with even more modularity that allow for even quicker rotations so that we can keep it as fresh as possible.”

Ripley’s Believe It or Not! World Entertainment

Modular design became a core element of Ripley’s Believe It or Not! World Entertainment when it began touring exhibitions in the 1950s. The international entertainment company has reinvigorated its touring model in recent years to capture what John Corcoran, director of traveling shows at Ripley’s Believe It or Not! World Entertainment, calls the “experience economy.”

“There are a lot of tricks we use in the physical build of a traveling exhibit,” Corcoran discloses. “You want to be able



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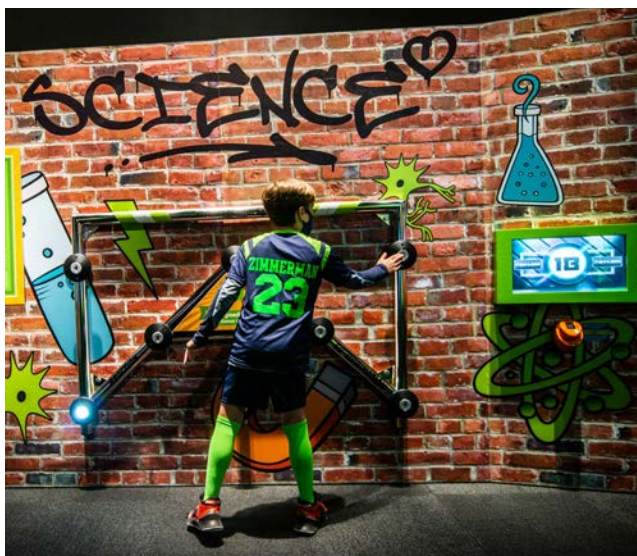
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A young boy engages with Ripley's science-based interactive exhibit.



Zach Laks is a travel writer and editor based in New York City with 10+ years of experience and bylines in 20 publications covering theme parks, cruises, resorts, and travel news. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#):



to get the exhibit in and out quickly. We utilize simple elements like cabinetry with molding at the base, where, when you pull it away, you'll see a spot that's the exact fit for a pallet jack or a fork-lift. That allows it to be lifted and taken away. That's something we would never consider for a permanent exhibition."

When dealing with artifacts, Corcoran knows about the importance of staging them for durability. When building traveling exhibitions, he says facilities "need to mount artifacts permanently. You don't want people handling them every three, six, or 12 months when they're in the field. Most of our traveling artifacts are permanently mounted in displays with a museum-quality mount."

There is also the consideration of flexibility with power access, as everything becomes modular. Corcoran draws from decades of experience, asking, "Where is the power coming from? Is it coming from the ceiling? The floor? The back wall? Your cabinets need that kind of flexibility as well."

Ripley's reinvigorated touring programs "allow us to explore a market without making a major investment," shares Corcoran. He imparts, "With a temporary exhibit, you don't have high infrastructure costs, so we can go in and dabble in a market and see how the brand plays there, see how people react to it, learn about pricing."

Corcoran suggests planners work with other IAAPA members, such as Museum EXP, who provides consulting services for touring exhibitions. "They're experts at matchmaking for touring exhibitions and projects."

The Road Ahead

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SOUTHWEST SHOWSTOPPERS

How Arizona FECs differentiate themselves

Story and photos by Avery Matteo

AMID THE CACTI AND MOUNTAIN RANGES that line central Arizona's highways, family entertainment centers (FECs) also pepper the landscape, offering accessible fun for residents and tourists alike. These facilities provide air-conditioned escapes from the intense summer heat—but many also challenge themselves to deliver dynamic entertainment experiences year-round.

From towering indoor playgrounds and immersive arcade zones to mini-golf, bowling, and water slides, a diverse range of facilities in the greater Phoenix area reflect the innovation and adaptability that today's vibrant FEC scene is known for.

In February, IAAPA FEC Summit 2026 will take place just outside Phoenix in Glendale, Arizona, from Feb. 1–3. As the premier event for FEC professionals, the summit allows attendees to continue the learning after programming concludes by exploring Arizona's beloved attractions—many of which are ripe with opportunities for inspiration, connection, and strategy development. Funworld spotlights a handful of the region's FEC standouts.

IAAPA FEC SUMMIT 2026

In addition to the networking and education sessions that highlight IAAPA FEC Summit, this IAAPA Connections event is a prime opportunity to tour and experience a wide variety of attractions of interest to FEC owners and operators.





Castles N' Coasters

9445 N Metro Pkwy E.
Phoenix, Arizona 85051
castlesncoasters.com

For nearly 50 years, Castles N' Coasters has stood as a cornerstone of family entertainment in Phoenix. "We get a lot of comments [from guests] saying, 'I came here when I was young, and now I'm bringing my son and my grandchildren,'" says Gail Comer, general manager of Castles N' Coasters. The 14-acre park blends timeless attractions with ongoing updates, offering roller coasters, thrill rides, miniature golf courses, and a large arcade. Its mix of indoor and outdoor experiences allows the property to serve a wide audience and remain resilient in a competitive leisure market.

"Our strength has always been offering something for everyone," says Comer. "Whether guests come for a quick round of mini golf, an afternoon in the arcade, or a full day of rides, we want them to feel they can create their own experience."

The park first opened in 1976 as a miniature golf center before expanding into a multi-attraction destination. Today, signature rides like Desert Storm, a double-inversion steel coaster, and Sky Diver, a 120-foot freefall tower, draw thrill seekers, while a lineup

of family rides keeps younger visitors engaged. The arcade, featuring classics and cutting-edge releases, remains a consistent driver of attendance, particularly during Arizona's hot summers.

Balancing the mix of attractions is a core part of operations. "If the rides are busy, great—that drives visitors across the park. If weather keeps people indoors, the arcade continues to perform," Comer explains. "That balance helps us remain steady year-round."

Reinvestment is also central to the park's long-term strategy. Recent projects include arcade upgrades, refreshed theming on key attractions, and expanded options for group outings. Schools, companies, and parents seeking a location for a child's birthday party are increasingly turning to Castles N' Coasters for packages that combine rides, games, food, and private event space.

Even as the property evolves, Comer underscores the importance of its founding values. "We've built our reputation on being a safe, welcoming place where families can make memories together," she says.



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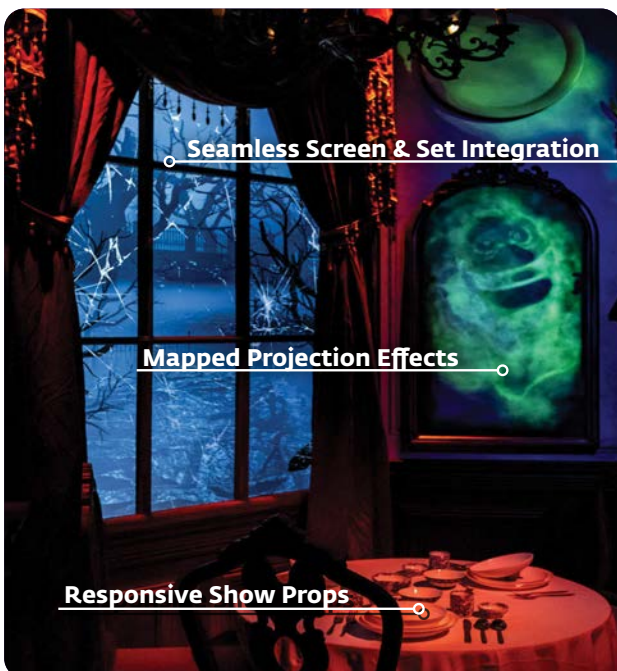
Small Footprint, Big Impact

Ghostly Manor, The Gameplay Theater at Paultons Park

The ride, launched on 17 May 2025, is already receiving recognition as one of the most ambitious dark ride experiences in the UK and combines advanced storytelling and gameplay in a compact format.

In a first for the sector, the ride introduces the 'S' size layout of the innovative Gameplay Theater concept, reimagining the park's former 4D cinema into an exciting new attraction.

Developed by Lagotronics Projects and Mack Rides, the attraction introduces a brand-new format to the industry: the Gameplay Theater. Compact, scalable, and fully interactive, this ride concept offers a new blueprint for high-capacity, small-footprint dark rides that are as engaging as they are immersive.



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Game Show Battle Rooms

6909 W. Ray Rd. Suite 29
Chandler, Arizona 85226
gameshowbattlerooms.com/phoenix/



At Game Show Battle Rooms in Tempe, Arizona, corporate groups and private parties can step into the spotlight for an immersive, fully hosted game show experience. General Manager Chad Blue explains that every event is private, with bookings starting at six guests and increasing to 40 maximum participants in a single room, with the facility capable of hosting as many as 150 guests at once by utilizing rotating sessions and catering options.

The experience blends a series of themed games—such as Survey Battles, Match Up Wars, Spin and Solve, and What's That Cost?—each designed to spark competition, laughter, and team engagement. The venue's lighting, sound, and set design mimic a television game show, while professional hosts—many with backgrounds in stand-up comedy or emcee work—keep energy levels high and ensure that every guest participates.

Flexibility is a key differentiator for the attraction. In addition

to in-house events, Game Show Battle Rooms offers a mobile roadshow option, bringing the full production to corporate offices, hotel ballrooms, stadiums, and even backyards. Recent activations have included events for the Arizona Cardinals and the Phoenix Suns on their home court.

For corporate clients, the venue offers on-site games in meeting rooms, audiovisual support, and customizable catering packages. Game play pricing runs \$36.95 to \$39.95 per participant, depending on day and time, with event durations and formats tailored to client needs. With 16 locations nationwide and plans to reach 20 by year-end, Game Show Battle Rooms is expanding its footprint while keeping the focus on adaptable, high-quality experiences. As Blue notes, “Being adaptable with corporate clients is key—understanding their approval processes and customizing to fit their team dynamic ensures an event that’s memorable and effective.”



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Golfland Sunsplash

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Golfland Sunsplash offers a dynamic blend of water park thrills, classic mini golf, and dry attractions designed to appeal to families, parties, and even corporate groups. Alex Filenko, general manager, and Tony Jones, director of marketing, provided Funworld a tour and offered insight into the facility's evolution, popular features, and strategic operations.

"Golfland started in 1983. It was just the castle and the mini golf," Jones explains. The water park followed in the 1990s, with slides, a lazy river, and a wave pool opening. Over the years, additional attractions, such as go-karts, bumper boats, laser tag, and bumper cars, have been added. "Every couple of years, we try to build something new," says Jones.

The water park remains a cornerstone, especially during Arizona's extended tourist season. "We actually get a really good water park season in March because we have a lot of the tourists come in for spring training baseball," Jones notes. This influx balances attendance, as many locals feel that spring weather is too cold to swim in, creating a robust visitor base outside peak summer months.

While the water park is popular, the entrance previously directed visitors straight into the water park. However, this meant the facility's other offerings were being overlooked. To solve the issue, the park's layout had to evolve. "We changed the entrance to ensure that the public gets accustomed to the fact that we have all the dry attractions in addition to the water park. They're not separate entities," says Filenko.

Golfland also offers elevated experiences, such as cabanas with VIP parking and dedicated check-in kiosks. "We have seven cabanas right now. Once our new water slide is done, we'll have more cabanas and even VIP cabanas, which will come with even more perks," Jones says.

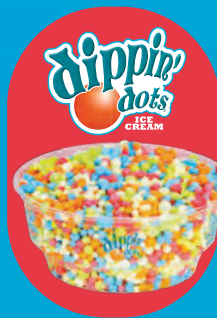
The park's most anticipated new addition is the aforementioned ProSlide, which is currently under construction and will be Arizona's tallest water slide upon opening, according to Jones. The ride features colors inspired by Arizona State University, contributing to a sense of place and reflecting local pride.



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Makutu's Island

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makutuisland.com



Makutu's Island is a piece of family entertainment history. Originally built in the 1990s as a Club Disney location—one of several family entertainment centers developed by the company across the country—the indoor play center brought a unique form of engagement to children. While Disney eventually phased out the small-scale concept, the Arizona facility's infrastructure remained, which owner and general manager Lacey Hall proudly embraces.

"This is the only one standing, which is pretty neat," says Hall. "Now we have grandparents, who used to bring their kids here, bringing their grandkids. It's generational—it's really special."

The facility retains many of its original Club Disney features, including its massive, Disney-designed indoor tree structure. "All of the structure, the play stuff—it's all Disney. It's quite the beast to upkeep," she explains.

Hall, who grew up visiting the attraction, took over the space with her mother three years ago when they noticed it slipping into disrepair. "It was looking rough and feeling 30 years old," she says. "We swooped in, and it's been a monster—but a fun one. Bringing back the magic has made a huge difference."

Makutu's Island targets children ages one to 13, though the design encourages whole-family participation. "Kids will get a little nervous going into the high areas, so the adults go with them—parents, older siblings, cousins," Hall shares. "Even if a toddler isn't climbing yet, they're

walking and watching everything. I tell parents they'll have fun just doing laps around the tree."

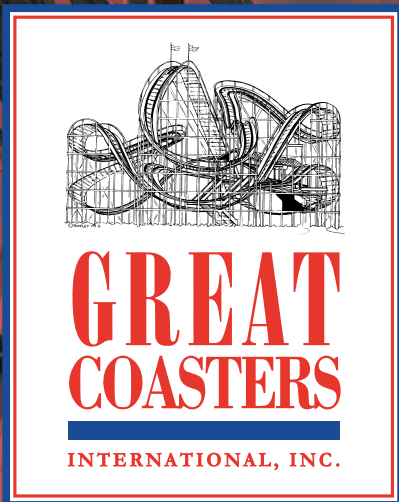
The team keeps programming fresh with rotating themes and seasonal events. "Right now, we're doing Shark Week, and the whole facility is decorated," Hall says, while aptly adorning a shark head hat, earrings, and T-shirt. The team also brings themed offerings to the café menu, such as an Icee flight developed for Shark Week—a sampler of flavors designed for parties and group visits. "It's like a flight of margaritas but kid-friendly," Hall says. "We change [the theme] all the time—for summer, Halloween, everything."

Birthday parties are a cornerstone of the business, with customizable packages that include decor provided by the facility—something that Hall believes isn't offered at other FECs locally and differentiates the facility. "Kids pick their theme, and we handle the rest," says Hall. "Parents love it—it takes a huge weight off their shoulders."

Makutu's Island even uses a behind-the-scenes "balloon room" to store decorations for future use. "If parents don't take them home, we save them and reuse them," she explains. "You'd be surprised how often we get requests like 'dinosaur princess'—and we make it happen."

The serene café space also sets the FEC apart. Beyond kid-friendly snacks, guests can enjoy wings, pizza, and adult beverages like beer and seltzers. "We want this to be a place where parents can relax, too," Hall says.





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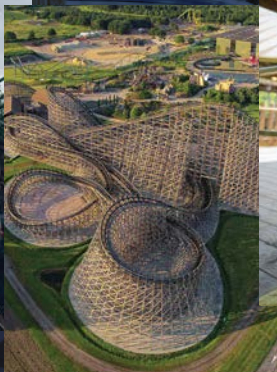
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Uptown Jungle Fun Park Mesa

5741 E. McKellips Rd.
Mesa, Arizona 85215
mesa.uptownjungle.com



Uptown Jungle Fun Park in Mesa is a high-energy haven built for younger kids. With climbing walls, trampolines, and spider towers, the park is designed to encourage exercise and imagination—no arcade required.

“We’re quite a bit different from most family entertainment centers,” says Brad Collins, CEO and president of Uptown Jungle Fun Parks. “We focus heavily on active play and cater to a younger demographic. Most of our guests are between the ages of two and 10.”

Mesa was the second location for the growing brand, which now operates 10 parks across Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. While newer locations offer updated features, the Mesa location still embodies the core of Uptown Jungle’s mission. Inside, there’s a gated toddler area for children five and under, a tall Stairway to Heaven climbing tower, and an inflatable obstacle course. Party rooms host weekend celebrations, and summer STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) camps often fill the space during weekdays.

One standout is the climbing wall section, where kids can scale vertical challenges using auto-belay systems—chosen for both their reliability and safety. “We also use self-locking carabiners to make sure kids stay securely connected,” Collins says.

Collins and his team constantly evaluate and evolve the facilities. One

major change has been the transition to full in-house kitchens across various locations. Mesa’s kitchen is the latest to undergo renovation, shifting away from outside catering to serve in-house, kid-friendly foods like cheese and pepperoni pizza. “We tried tons of vendors, doughs, and cheeses,” Collins says. “We wanted something that was affordable, consistent, and appealing to kids.”

Uptown Jungle also offers a unique value proposition through its unlimited membership program. “For \$19.99 a month or \$200 a year, members can visit as often as they like,” says Collins. Another differentiator Collins highlights is the brand’s Tot Time programming, held Monday through Thursday mornings. “It’s not just open play. We have directors leading planned, education-based activities,” he explains. “It gives younger kids something more meaningful and structured.”

There’s also Uppie, the park’s mascot and star of an educational YouTube series designed to engage kids both online and in person. “We didn’t want a mascot just to have one,” Collins says. “We made sure it had purpose. Now a lot of kids come in already knowing who Uppie is.”

Even the smallest touches, such as themed grip socks, pizza slices, dinosaurs, and mythical creatures, speak to the brand’s thoughtful attention to the guest experience. “It’s all part of making it fun, memorable, and safe for families,” Collins says.





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Tilt Studio Arizona Mills

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tiltstudio.com/tempe/



Blending classic arcade charm with modern attractions, Tilt Studio at Arizona Mills offers a multi-level indoor experience for groups of all ages. Located inside a popular mall in Tempe, the attraction spans more than 40,000 square feet and is part of the larger Tilt Studio and Tilted 10 brand operated by Nickels and Dimes Inc.

This Arizona location delivers a robust mix of games and entertainment zones tailored to both nostalgia seekers and today's younger, digitally oriented guests. The arcade lineup spans hundreds of pieces—from retro favorites like Skee-Ball and air hockey to flashy, interactive video games and ticket-redemption machines that light up the space.

In addition to its arcade, Tilt Studio offers a range of mid-size attractions designed to keep guests playing longer. A blacklight mini-golf course winds through themed sets, while a laser tag

arena invites friendly competition among friends and families. Guests can also try their hand at a mini bowling lane or test their reflexes in the laser maze challenge.

Birthday parties and group outings are another core part of the business model. Tilt Studio offers customizable packages that include arcade game cards, food, and reserved party space—making it a convenient option for both local families and tourists passing through the area. Its central location in Arizona Mills Mall draws steady foot traffic, particularly from families looking to extend their shopping day or beat the Valley's extreme summer temperatures.

With its bright aesthetic, wide game selection, and variety of play options, Tilt Studio offers a comprehensive one-stop experience.



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FatCats Entertainment continues to build momentum in Arizona, offering a unique mix of attractions under one roof. With locations scattered across the Phoenix area, the company combines movie theaters, bowling, arcade gaming, mini golf, and dining—creating a multifaceted destination that appeals to a wide demographic.

“FatCats originally started as a bowling center in Salt Lake City,” explains Jason Reicks, general manager of FatCats Mesa. “Two friends got into the business together—one focused on the food side, the other on bowling. Over time, they added arcade games, mini golf, and movie theaters. That mix has really become our identity.”

The model has allowed FatCats to scale across Utah, Idaho, and Arizona, with both ground-up builds and adaptive reuse projects. “Our last opening was actually an old Macy’s that we

retrofitted with theaters and bowling,” Reicks says. “But most of the newer centers have been built from scratch.”

Balancing multiple entertainment offerings creates resilience. When movies aren’t strong, the bowling and arcade businesses often pick up and carry the extra weight.

Programming keeps the facilities active throughout the week, with promotions like half-off arcade days, discounted movies, and bundled bowling packages. Attractions also evolve with guest interest—recent additions include AR darts, enhanced Atmos sound auditoriums, and themed glow-in-the-dark mini golf.

Corporate business is also on the rise. “We’re seeing more team-building events and big screen buyouts,” Reicks says. “Groups can rent a theater for a movie, presentation, or even video gaming on the big screen. It’s been a hit.” **FW**





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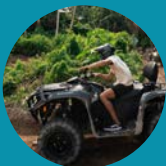
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WHAT'S NEW

2025



Funworld's What's New 2025 special section celebrates the ingenuity shaping the industry's future across all IAAPA regions. From theme parks and water parks, to family entertainment centers and museums, IAAPA aims to highlight how diverse member constituencies bring new experiences to life. This section honors the creative collaboration between operators, manufacturers, and suppliers that make these bold concepts possible. Together, these global stories showcase the innovation, collaboration, and global reach defining today's attractions industry.

ALTERFACE



Action League Popcorn Revenge

Suzhou Paradise Forest World, Suzhou, Jiangsu, China

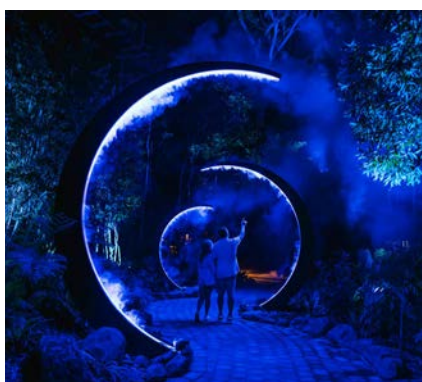
Alterface, Jiangsu Boren Culture Technology

Alterface collaborated with Jiangsu Boren Culture Technology to pop this ride into Suzhou Paradise Forest World—the third iteration of the original Popcorn Revenge concept. “Our partnership with Boren has been instrumental in bringing Action League to life in China,” says Stephane Battaille, CEO of Alterface. “Through this collaborative approach, we’ve delivered a world-first attraction, and we’re excited to see its potential for replication in markets around the globe.”

A semi-open layout with a turntable platform maximizes limited space and budget to its fullest potential to create a satisfying ride for all ages, both on and off the ride itself. Guests compete on teams that change between rounds, keeping the ride experience fresh and unique. It’s a different ride every time, with a tasty theme.

szal.cn

CURRUMBIN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY



Astra Lumina Gold Coast

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, Currumbin, Queensland, Australia

Moment Factory

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, always a popular attraction during the day, now comes alive at night. A magical light and projection walkthrough experience awaits guests in 2025. Guests stroll through the natural Australian bushland as it comes alive with cosmic lights, lasers, and sounds. Different sections of the experience have themes like Stardust Rays, Cosmic Choir, and Celestial Trail. The experience is produced by Moment Factory, which has produced similar Lumina Night Walks all around the world.

“With almost 600,000 guests visiting the Sanctuary from all over the world each year, customer insights informed us that guests were looking for an immersive nighttime experience,” says Travis Couch, general manager of Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. “We witnessed first-hand how well Astra Lumina attractions were received in other parts of the world and, combined with the beautiful natural landscape of the Sanctuary grounds, saw a fantastic opportunity to bring this experience to Queensland.”

currumbinsanctuary.com.au/visit/astra-lumina/

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS SINGAPORE



Despicable Me: Minion Mayhem, Silly Swirly, and Buggie Boogie

Universal Studios Singapore, Sentosa, Singapore

Genting Singapore

“Bello!” Universal Studios Singapore unveiled Illumination’s Minion Land for 2025. These happy yellow Tic-Tac-shaped characters are popular with all ages, and it’s little wonder that Universal capitalized on this IP with what is now the fifth Minion Land worldwide. The iteration that opened at Universal Studios Singapore features three areas themed to the Despicable Me franchise: Gru’s Neighbourhood features Despicable Me Minion Mayhem, a simulator taking guests into Gru’s lab on a quest to become a Minion; Super Silly Fun Land is based on the park from the first “Despicable Me” movie and features two family rides: Silly Swirly and Buggie Boogie. Silly Swirly takes guests in whirling, twirling buckets above the park’s lagoon, and Buggie Boogie is a Minion dance party-themed carousel; Minion Marketplace is the third section of Minion Land, which sells themed food and gifts.

rwsentosa.com/en/play/universal-studios-singapore/zones/minion-land

Dream Space Water Park

Bishan, Chongqing, China

WhiteWater

Dream Space Water Park opened in June with one of the largest sets of imported attractions in southwest China—all supplied by WhiteWater. From the Thrill Tower—featuring six AquaLaunch capsule slides—to more family-friendly attractions like FusionFortress 17, one of the world’s largest aquatic play structures—Dream Space Water Park includes something for everyone. Guests can experience a totally different park at day and night. When the sun sets, Dream Space Water Park comes alive with thrumming music, glowing lights, and dazzling fireworks displays.

“Every attraction embodies WhiteWater’s craftsmanship and expertise as a global leader in water attractions,” says China Green Development Investment Group Co. General Manager Jin Binban. “From design to functionality, each reflects the highest standards, delivering an unparalleled experience for our guests.”



WHITEWATER

H2O Xtream Aquatic Center Slides

Upper Hutt, New Zealand

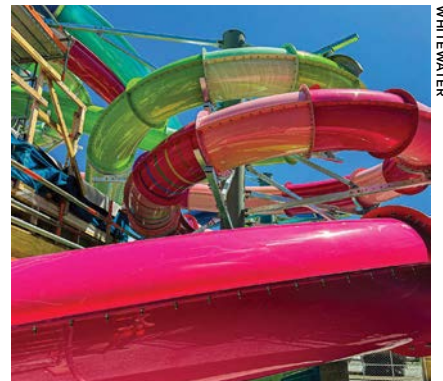
WhiteWater

A community aquatic center for 26 years, H2O Xtream was recently renovated—an expansion that included the addition of three new AquaTubes slides from WhiteWater. These slides add a new high-energy feel to the Aquatic Center roster.

“For the guest experience, WhiteWater’s signature interactive AquaLucent technology has been incorporated, making the high-speed ride not only intensely thrilling but also visually mesmerizing with dazzling light effects inside the fully enclosed tubes,” says Doug Smith, head of sales for WhiteWater.

These colored lights and twisting tubes create a uniquely memorable experience for the community to cherish.

h2oxtream.com/Facility/Waves-and-Slides#section-2



WHITEWATER

Jurassic World Experience: Singapore

Cloud Forest, Singapore

Neon

No need to travel back in time—to experience when dinosaurs ruled the Earth. Neon’s Jurassic World: The Experience opened at Cloud Forest in Singapore, and London’s Battersea Power Station, in May. Tying in with the release of the latest Jurassic World motion picture, Jurassic World: The Experience is a fully-interactive immersive exhibition. Guests can get up close and personal with dinosaurs of all different species and sizes as seen in the film series, including the iconic Blue the velociraptor and the terrifying T. rex.

Guests of all ages have been thrilled by this experience that allows them to walk through the gates and into the universe of Jurassic World. “Jurassic World: The Experience is the perfect extension of the popular film franchise, offering the fusion of entertainment, science, and cutting-edge technology, and allowing fans to step into the awe-inspiring Jurassic World like never before,” says Ron Tan, CEO and executive chairman of Neon.



NEON

jurassicworldexperience.com/sg/

DREAMWORLD



Jungle Rush and Murrissipi Motors

Dreamworld, Coomera, Queensland, Australia

Coast Entertainment Holdings

The Rivertown-themed precinct opened in December 2024 as the latest expansion to Dreamworld. Designed by EarthStory, with theming fabricated by PicoPlay, Rivertown offers new attractions for the entire family to experience.

“When we first imagined Rivertown, we didn’t just want to build another ride or add a new area—we wanted to create a place that felt like stepping into a whole new world,” says Greg Yong, Dreamworld CEO.

The star of the show—or rather, the jewel of the temple—is Jungle Rush, a Switchback Coaster from Vekoma, the first installation of its kind. “Riders can leave the station forwards or backwards, depending on the ride cycle, and can experience a different track layout, depending on the ride program selected by the park on any specific day,” says Ricardo Tonding Etges, vice president of sales and marketing for Vekoma Americas. Murrissipi Motors is another family attraction in the area, a refurbishment of their Vintage Cars attraction that opened with the park in 1981. With the re-introduction of Rivertown for 2025, Dreamworld shows that reimagining the past is a viable way to bring a park into the future.

dreamworld.com.au/our-worlds/rivertown/

VEKOMA



Kansas Twister and Flight of the Wicked Witch

Warner Bros. Movie World, Oxenford, Queensland, Australia

Vekoma

When Dorothy first sang “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” she dreamed of a place where bluebirds fly. Yet at Warner Bros. Movie World in 2025, guests found a place where roller coasters fly—three of them, in fact. Theming by PicoPlay and coasters from Vekoma allow guests to follow the yellow brick road to the Wizard of Oz, bringing to life the world of one of the most beloved movies of all time. Kansas Twister is a double-track Vekoma family boomerang undulating through the arid Kansas plains. The darker side of Oz is revealed in Flight of the Wicked Witch, a Vekoma family suspended coaster. The train, decorated to look like her Flying Monkeys, takes guests of all ages on a journey through the new precinct. The three coasters provide family-friendly thrills in a small footprint. The precinct also features facsimiles of other iconic locations from the film, such as the Emerald City and the Wizard’s Chamber, along with roaming live entertainment where guests can interact with some of the most memorable Ozians.

movieworld.com.au/attractions/the-wizard-of-oz

JUMA COMPANY



Polar Light - Qingdao Sea Ferris Wheel

Qingdao Polar Ocean Park, Laoshan District, Qingdao, China

Juma Company

One of the latest Ferris wheels manufactured by Juma Group is the 66-meter-high Polar Light - Qingdao Sea Ferris Wheel. This Ferris wheel offers a panoramic view of Shilaoren Beach with its 360-degree glass cabins. Over 100,000 LED lights offer a dazzling light show to attract visitors. “The lighting effects can change according to seasons, festivals, or specific themes, sometimes flowing dreamily like auroras, and sometimes presenting a festive atmosphere, complementing the night sky and the sea, which can create a highly infectious romantic scene,” says Jian Ma, general manager of the Juma Group.

haihegroup.com/en/h-col-404.html

Rainbow Storm

Aloha Water World (VinWonders Vu Yen), Hai Phong, Vietnam

WhiteWater

A burst of color now brightens the sky above Aloha Water World in Vietnam. The WhiteWater-designed slide tower offers seven intertwined body slides at four levels, from mild to wild. Two of the seven slides even offer an AquaLaunch capsule drop experience. The tallest slide stands at just over 41 meters, and the smallest stands at nearly eight meters.

“Beyond delivering thrills, our vision is to help create landmarks that guests carry in their memories—icons that shape skylines and add lasting cultural and economic value to a destination,” says Doug Smith, head of sales at WhiteWater.

vinwonders.com/en/diem-den-vinwonders-vu-yen-en/



WHITEWATER

Rainforest Wild Asia

Mandai, Singapore

Mandai Wild Life Group

It's a jungle out there! Or at least at Rainforest Wild Asia. Mandai Wild Life Group opened Rainforest Wild Asia in March. More than 35 species of animals roam in a natural environment through eight different habitats. An elevated boardwalk and trails weave in and out of the Entrance Gorge, the Karst, the Outpost, the Forest Floor, the Rock Cascade, the Canopy, the Watering Hole, and the Cavern.

The unique features of Rainforest Wild Asia have allowed for additional revenue-generating opportunities. The Cavern section features the Cavern Restaurant, allowing guests to dine in a completely unique setting. High ropes courses and canopy jumps also are additional upcharges that maximize the one-of-a-kind location.

mandai.com/en/rainforest-wild-asia.html



MANDAI WILDLIFE GROUP

Snoopy's Flying Ace Adventure

Universal Studios Japan, Konohana-ku, Osaka, Japan

Vekoma

Guests at Universal Studios Japan can now feel like they're flying alongside Snoopy in his fight against the Red Baron on the new Snoopy's Flying Ace Adventure family coaster from Vekoma. This coaster is the replacement for another family coaster that previously occupied the same location, Snoopy's Great Race. This custom-designed roller coaster is the anchor for a newly refreshed Snoopy Studios, which also includes the new Beagle Scout Campground character meet-and-greet. The addition allows Universal Studios Japan guests to step into the world of the Peanuts gang like never before.

usj.co.jp/web/en/us/attractions/snoopys-flying-ace-adventure



VEKOMA



PLAYMONDO

Snoopy Bounce Adventure

Thailand

Playmondo

Families can run, jump, and play with the beloved Peanuts characters in a new, bouncy form in Thailand with Playmondo's new Snoopy Bounce Adventure.

Playmondo collaborated closely with Peanuts Worldwide to understand the intellectual property (IP) and create an engaging experience. "We combined Playmondo's deep understanding of our customer base with market insights to design an experience that is not only engaging but also accessible at a competitive price point in Thailand," says Vichatchaya Pleegluay, business development director at Playmondo. "I would encourage operators to engage closely with both licensors and their customer base to understand which intellectual properties truly resonate within their market. Rather than simply following global trends, it's critical to focus on how specific brands and characters connect with local audiences."

Snoopy Bounce Adventure is touring across Thailand, proving the successful marriage between IP and product.

playmondo.com



SBF-VISA

Spinning Coaster

Japan Monkey Park, Inuyama, Aichi, Japan

SBF-Visa Group

The popular SBF-Visa Figure Eight spinning coaster model found a new home in 2025 at Japan Monkey Park. "We considered manufacturing a coaster that had to be for the family, with reduced space, not noisy, not expensive, with good sensation and with no foundation needed," says Michele Frison, general manager of SBF-Visa. Decorative pink and blue monkeys on the ride cars help establish this common model as a distinctly Monkey Park installation.

japan-monkeyparks.jp/attraction

Tiger Island

Dreamworld, Coomera, Queensland, Australia



DREAMWORLD

Dreamworld is home to nine Sumatran and Bengal tigers, which first became a popular part of the park in 1995. Thirty years later, it was time to refresh their habitats. Dreamworld added elevated walkways, new viewing areas, themed landscaping, and rockwork.

One of the highlights is an expanded Up Close encounter area, where guests can get face-to-fang with the tigers. Elevated walkways allow these majestic creatures to be on the prowl right above the heads of guests.

Dreamworld is using the upgraded facility to help promote animal conservation through their Dreamworld Wildlife Foundation which helps promote conservation efforts of endangered species such as Sumatran and Amur tigers.

The renovations breathed new life into the enclosure, while creating a more immersive, safe environment for both tigers and guests. "These improvements offer guests a more immersive experience while reinforcing the importance of tiger protection," says Chantel MacLachlan, general manager of operations at Dreamworld.

dreamworld.com.au/our-worlds/tiger-island/

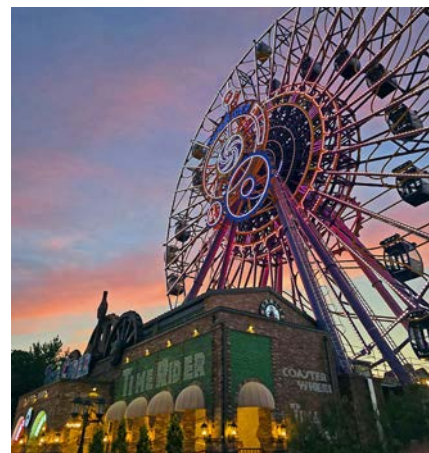
TimeRider

Gyeongju World, Gyeongju, Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea

Intamin

The traditional Ferris wheel experience is supplemented with rollicking back-and-forth motion on one of the latest Coaster Wheel installations from Intamin. Guests can choose between a standard suspended cabin or a gravity-powered cabin that moves back and forth along a track. A custom LED lighting package beams out across the night, making this a new icon for Gyeongju World. “This meticulously themed Coaster Wheel offers a dual experience catering to both families and thrill seekers,” says a spokesperson from Intamin. “The unique thrill factor draws strong visitor interest.”

gjw.co.kr/Contents/eng_contents.php?cmsNo=ENG100/view/57



INTAMIN

Water World

Shanghai L+Snow Indoor Ski Resort

Lin-Gang Special Area, Shanghai, China

WhiteWater

If you have ever wanted to experience skiing and water park attractions in the same day, Shanghai L+Snow Indoor Ski Resort is the place for you. Their Water World waterpark features 20 water slides, two AquaPlay structures, 54 AquaSplash toys, and a 13-meter-wide wave pool, which were all provided by WhiteWater along with the waterpark's layout and theming. Water World spans both inside and out—the outdoor section is built on the rooftop. Striking blue AquaTube body slides extend from the indoor portion out over the heads of visitors before twisting back inside.

“Water World combines adventure, relaxation and a setting pulled directly from the imagination and will provide a memorable experience for visitors of all ages,” says Rob Miksza, design team lead at WhiteWater. “Our team is proud to have contributed to a destination that not only entertains but also creates that special ‘wow factor!’”

artyzen.com



WHITEWATER

Zuluu Hill

Waterbom Bali, Kuta, Bali, Indonesia

WhiteWater

Six new WhiteWater slides provide pint-sized fun in Indonesia. Mini open flume and mini body slides allow children to have new thrills, or they can ride along with their parents for a true experience that spans generations.

This area is the latest in a long collaboration between Waterbom Bali and WhiteWater. “My goal is to make people happy, and working with WhiteWater West supports that goal,” says Waterbom Bali CEO Sayan Gulino.

waterbom-bali.com/wbrides/wbrides/?cat=1



WHITEWATER

Legoland Shanghai: Dragon, Dragon's Apprentice, and Big LEGO Coaster

Quinpu, Shanghai, China

Bolliger & Mabillard, Forrec, Merlin Magic Making, Zamperla

"Everything is awesome" at the newest Legoland resort in Quinpu, Shanghai, China. It features three roller coasters aimed at kids ages 2-12 and their families: Dragon, Dragon's Apprentice, and Big LEGO Coaster.

Dragon is the seventh Zierer Force coaster built at a Legoland park. Like the other installations worldwide, it includes a dark ride section before the roller coaster. "We built the first Dragon Coaster for a Legoland installation for the first time in 1999," says Marine Ernst-Weiderer, marketing and sales director of Zierer. "Due to the success of this family coaster, there was a kind of rollout in the following Legoland Parks up to Legoland Shanghai."

For smaller guests, the Dragon's Apprentice is a Zamperla Family Coaster that can train future knights. The third coaster at Legoland Shanghai is the Big Lego Coaster, which is a B&M family inverted coaster. The open-air restraints with feet dangling combines the feeling of flight found on this family B&M model with gentle curves and no inversions, making it an ideal ride for all ages.

legolandshanghai.cn

PHOTOS: LEGOLAND SHANGHAI



Evan Ponstingle is the author of *Kings Island: A Ride Through Time*. He has worked in a variety of roles across the industry. Evan is a recent graduate of the Bowling Green State University Resort and Attraction Management program and is passionate about attractions industry storytelling. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).



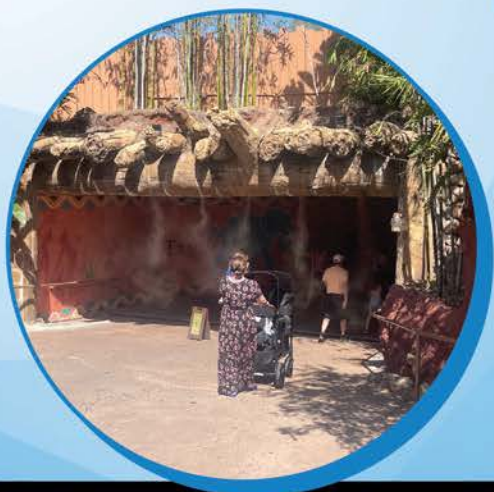
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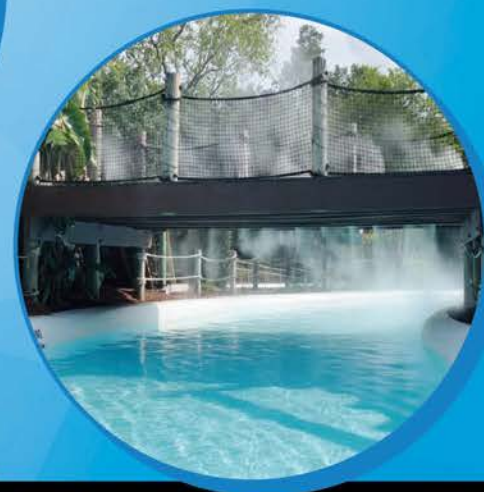
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ZOOLOGICO LA AURORA



African Savannah Renovation

Zoológico La Aurora, Guatemala City

The Zoológico Nacional La Aurora in Guatemala City has completed the renovation of its African Savannah area, enhancing both animal welfare and visitor experience. The redesign, finalized in April, focuses on creating a more natural environment for the species native to Africa.

The updated layout eliminates previous perimeter walls, facilitating greater interaction among giraffes, zebras, ostriches, lions, and other species. The integration of what was once a safety moat has expanded the available space, promoting natural behaviors and social dynamics. Additionally, the transformation includes theming of the perimeter walls and the replacement of metal roofing with concrete covers in animal resting areas.

The Guatemalan Association of Natural History (AGHN), which has managed the zoo since 1963, led the project as part of its master plan to evolve the park's infrastructure, enclosures, gardens, and recreational areas. The renovation was executed entirely by Guatemalan professionals, including engineers, architects, artists, biologists, gardeners, and veterinarians.

aurorazoo.org.gt

XCARET



ATV Xperience

Xcaret, México

Xcaret has introduced the ATV Xperience, a new attraction that allows visitors to drive all-terrain vehicles along designated jungle trails. The experience combines off-road adventure with direct contact with the natural surroundings of the Riviera Maya, catering to adventure enthusiasts seeking a blend of excitement and nature.

The ATV Xperience is presented as an addition to Xcaret's portfolio of outdoor attractions, which already includes aquatic activities, wildlife exhibits, and cultural performances. By adding this off-road component, the park expands the range of experiences available to guests, from family-friendly shows to adventure-oriented excursions.

The new activity complements Xcaret's positioning as a multifaceted destination, where visitors can combine culture, nature, and recreation within a single visit.

xcaret.com/en/parks-and-tours/atv-xperience/

AZTLÁN PARQUE URBANO



Aztlán Parque Urbano: Serpentikha, Laka Laka, Malacatonche, Vuela México Por El Mundo

Chapultepec Park, Mexico City

Vekoma, Fabbri Rides, Zamperla, Brogent Technologies

Aztlán Parque Urbano in Chapultepec Park, Mexico City, has opened four new attractions, expanding its offerings with a mix of family-friendly, thrill, and immersive experiences.

Serpentikha, a suspended family coaster by Vekoma, features a 569-meter track with a maximum speed of 64 kph. It includes a dark ride section, a horseshoe element, and multiple twists, combining coaster thrills with themed storytelling.

Laka Laka, a spinning wild mouse coaster by Fabbri, runs on a 420-meter track with spinning gondolas. The ride delivers dynamic movement and tight turns, providing a fun and engaging experience.

Malacatonche, a pendulum ride by Zamperla, swings riders back and forth in a high-intensity motion, offering an adrenaline-focused experience for thrill-seekers.

Vuela México Por El Mundo, developed by Brogent Technologies, is a flying theater featuring motion seats, 4D effects, and immersive media that transports guests through global destinations.

aztlanparqueurbano.com

BattleKart Cancún

Plaza Malecón Américas, México

BattleKart

BattleKart, the European-born concept blending electric karting and interactive projection gaming, has made its Latin American debut with the opening of BattleKart Cancún earlier this year. Located in Plaza Malecón Américas, the 2,500-square-meter venue introduces the first BattleKart franchise in México, combining go-kart racing with digital overlays projected on the track. Popular game modes like BattleRace, BattlePool, and BattleColor allow players to compete using both driving skills and strategic in-game moves.

Sessions run for approximately 15 minutes, with groups of two to 12 players navigating virtual challenges while maintaining real-world racing dynamics. A minimum height of 1.45 meters is required to participate, ensuring broad accessibility while maintaining safety.

battlekart.com/en/cancun



PLAZA MALECÓN AMÉRICAS

Beyond The Club

São Paulo, Brazil

Wavegarden

Beyond The Club is set to open in São Paulo as a new concept combining surf, sports, leisure, and social club amenities. The facility is set for an official opening later this year on a 70,000-square-meter site about 15 minutes from Avenida Faria Lima and involves an investment exceeding R\$1.1 billion.

The centerpiece is a 62-module Wavegarden Cove surf lagoon, claimed to be the largest in its class. The surf lagoon is complemented by amenities that include over 20 wave types, a sandy beach with landscaping inspired by the Atlantic Forest, indoor ski and snowboard simulators, an extensive spa and wellness center, and sports courts for tennis, padel, squash, and more. It's designed as a full sport and lifestyle club.

"Beyond The Club is much more than beach and surfing; it is a high-end experience club that combines the best of leisure, sports, wellness, and business in one place," says Oscar Segall, CEO of KSM Realty.

The club was developed by BTG Pactual Asset Management, KSM Realty, and Realty Properties in partnership with surfing champions Gabriel Medina and Filipe Toledo.

beyondtheclub.com.br



WAVEGARDEN

Car City

Fantasilandia, Santiago, Chile

SBF-Visa Group

Car City is a family-friendly steel coaster manufactured by SBF-Visa Group that opened in December 2024. The ride features a booster-wheel lift hill and runs a single train of five cars, seating 20 riders per dispatch. With smooth ride dynamics and no inversions, it offers an engaging experience suitable for children, parents, and younger thrill-seekers alike.

Inspired by a colorful race car city theme, the attraction includes clever design details on small vehicles, covering a total track length of 140 meters. Riders encounter two lift hills and corresponding gentle descents, reaching speeds of up to 28 kph. The combination of fun and safety makes Car City an accessible option for younger guests and those seeking a less intense coaster experience.

With its addition, Fantasilandia contributes to a well-rounded mix of thrill and family attractions at the park.

fantasilandia.cl/car-city-nueva-atraccion-familiar.html



FANTASILANDIA

HECTOR STUDIOS



Fogo do Dragão

Alpen Park, Canela - São João, Brazil

Hector Studios

On April 12, Alpen Park unveiled its refurbished steel roller coaster, now named Fogo do Dragão, featuring a completely new theme and visual identity. Originally introduced in 2012 as Alpen Blizzard, the attraction underwent a major refurbishment in collaboration with Hector Studios, which provided storytelling elements and IP integration for the rebranded experience.

The coaster offers guests an exhilarating ride at speeds of up to 55 kph along a 438-meter track, set against the scenic backdrop of the Serra Gaúcha. It operates with one or two trains, each accommodating up to 12 riders, ensuring high capacity and smooth throughput for visitors.

The ride was originally manufactured by S&MC (Italy) and engineered by Stengel Engineering (Germany), combining international engineering expertise with creative thematic design. The refurbishment transformed the attraction into an immersive experience, featuring visual and sensory elements that transport guests into the world of Hector Dragon, allowing them to feel as if they are flying through the dragon's fire.

alpenpark.com.br/atracao/alpen-blizzard/

REINO ANIMAL CONSERVATION CENTER



Glamping Reino Animal

Reino Animal Conservation Center, México

Glamping Reino Animal opened this year and provides a distinctive overnight experience within the Reino Animal Conservation Center near Teotihuacan, México. Guests stay in safari-style luxury tents equipped with air conditioning, heating, private bathrooms, and terraces that overlook giraffes, zebras, and ostriches. The concept extends the park's offering beyond day visits, creating a new revenue stream through accommodations while enhancing the overall guest experience. From a B2B perspective, this investment reflects a strategic response to growing demand for immersive eco-tourism and family-oriented lodging in the region. By combining wildlife encounters with comfort, Reino Animal differentiates itself from other conservation or theme parks in México and positions the property as a multi-day destination. The glamping units are designed to maximize occupancy while maintaining exclusivity, and the park can leverage overnight stays to increase engagement with guided tours, educational programs, and exclusive dining experiences.

glampingreinoanimal.com.mx

MICHAEL COSTELLO



Inflandia Quack Metepec

Metepec, México

Inflandia Quack opened in 2025 inside Galerías Metepec Mall in Metepec, Estado de México. The 4,000-square-meter facility includes a wide variety of inflatables, obstacle courses, slides, interactive play areas, climbing walls, air bikes, and arcade-style table games like pool and bowling. A food area offers snacks and casual dining options, complemented by a candy and ice cream shop.

Inflandia Quack exemplifies the growing trend of family-focused indoor entertainment centers inside urban malls. The attraction offers families and groups a convenient, active entertainment alternative that blends affordability, variety, and location-based leisure.

inflandia.mx/metepec



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INSPARK FORUM BUENAVISTA



Inspark Forum Buenavista

Mexico City, México

FuninVR, Triangle Factory, Caveman Studio, Beat Games, Ubisoft

Inspark Forum Buenavista has opened in Mexico City's Forum Buenavista mall, offering guests more than 30 digital and immersive experiences under one roof. The venue features interactive attractions under a credit-card play model, allowing flexible access to games and simulators. Highlights include VR Racing and motion simulators from FuninVR, as well as a variety of VR experiences, such as Hyper Dash (Triangle Factory), Contractors VR (Caveman Studio), Beat Saber (Beat Games), Mansion of Terror, Fobia Xperience, Speed Race, Just Dance (Ubisoft), and Ala Delta (hang-gliding simulator). Additionally, the venue offers an escape room titled Viaje al Futuro.

Inspark promotes "El parque del futuro," emphasizing virtual reality, augmented reality, digital art, and skill/dexterity-based experiences as core components of its offering.

inspark.com.mx/pages/forum-buenavista

WHITEWATER



Palm Rattler & Selva Loop

Jungala Aqua Experience, México

WhiteWater

At Vidanta's Jungala Aqua Experience, two major slides from WhiteWater opened: Palm Rattler and Selva Loop, a trap-door looping slide. Palm Rattler is a family raft slide, while Selva Loop offers a thrilling trap-door looping experience. These additions enhance the park's appeal to both families and thrill-seekers by broadening the mix of water attractions available.

"It has always been our goal to offer the most extraordinary vacation experiences for guests, and the opening of the Jungala Aqua Experience luxury water park at Vidanta Riviera Maya will further enhance that by providing another entertainment outlet with deluxe touches," says Iván Chávez, executive vice president of Grupo Vidanta.

The decision to introduce the new slides reflects both guest research and Jungala's broader strategy of enhancing premium water experiences. The expansion is designed to enrich the overall guest experience, encourage longer stays, and strengthen the park's competitive positioning.

jungala.com/en/

RADICAL PLAY PARK



Radical Play Park

Olímpia, São Paulo

Güven Amusement Rides Factory, Fabbri Rides

Radical Play Park, a new fixed dry amusement park in Olímpia, São Paulo, officially opened its doors in August. Strategically located on Avenida Aurora Forti Neves, the park aims to enhance the city's tourism appeal.

Spanning approximately 25,000 square meters, the park offers a diverse range of attractions, including the 20-meter-high Ferris wheel, the Evolution ride, bumper cars, a pirate ship, and the Brucomela roller coaster. Designed to cater to a variety of audiences, from adrenaline-seeking adventurers to families looking for some downtime, the park also features a children's play area, a food court with brands like McDonald's and Giraffas, and ample parking facilities. Ilson Alves Moreira Jr., the park's founder, emphasized that most of the equipment is brand new, with only a few pre-owned items, all hand-picked to provide a high-quality experience. This vision underscores the park's commitment to becoming a significant player in Brazil's entertainment sector.

radicalplaypark.com.br/

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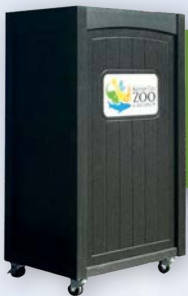
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SÃO PAULO ZOOLOGICAL PARK



Simba Safari

São Paulo Zoological Park, São Paulo

Simba Safari, part of the São Paulo Zoological Park Foundation complex, has reopened to the public after more than two decades, following R\$50 million in investments. The 150,000-square-meter park, located next to the São Paulo Zoo, now houses over 200 animals from around 40 species, including lions, hippos, jaguars, and dromedaries. The renewed safari offers an immersive, guided experience for visitors of all ages. Guests travel in nine Euro 6 safari trucks, each carrying up to 40 people, along a four-kilometer trail that allows close encounters with animals while preserving habitats. Kiko Buerger, CEO of Reserva Paulista, which manages the park, explains, “The reopening of Simba Safari represents not only a revival of many São Paulo residents’ fond memories, but also a new chapter for tourism and environmental education in the city.” Originally inaugurated in 1972 as Parque dos Leões, Simba Safari has become a cultural and environmental landmark, blending sustainable tourism, education, and innovation in wildlife management.

simbasafari.com.br/en

WHITEWATER



Surreal

Beach Park, Aquiraz, Ceará, Brazil

WhiteWater

Beach Park, located in Aquiraz, Ceará, Brazil, has introduced Surreal, a new water roller coaster at its Aqua Park. This attraction utilizes WhiteWater’s Master Blaster Fusion technology, combining elements of the Constrictor and Rattler slides to deliver a dynamic ride experience. Riders in two-person inner tubes are propelled through a series of steep drops, uphill blasts, and high-banking turns, reaching speeds up to 42 kph. The 343-meter course also features AquaLucent effects and sound elements to enhance the experience.

The ride’s design draws inspiration from the surfing culture of the nearby Porto das Dunas Beach, aiming to evoke the sensation of catching a wave. Murilo Pascoal, CEO of Beach Park, comments, “Surreal is the biggest and most exciting attraction ever created in the history of Beach Park. We are thrilled with this unmissable novelty, which will certainly delight both the visitors who are already part of our trajectory and those who will come to discover and honor us from now on.”

beachpark.com.br/en/atracoes/surreal/

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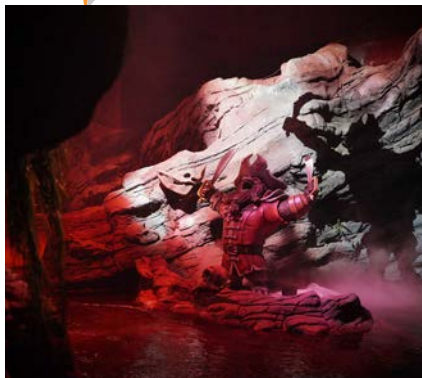
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GARDALAND RESORT



Animal Treasure Island

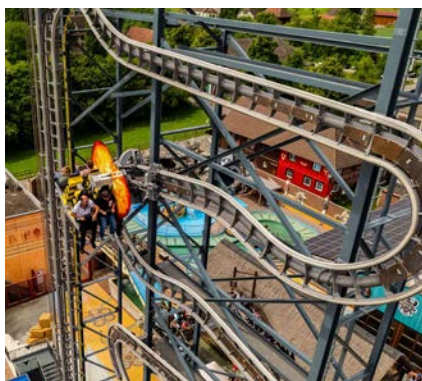
Gardaland Resort, Castelnovo del Garda, Italy

Merlin Magic Making

Gardaland spent €10 million and more than a year transforming its flagship I Corsari water ride, creating a fresh adventure for the park's 50th anniversary. Guests set sail with Captain Nine Lives and her animal crew in search of gold. Together, they outwit their rivals, Captain Blackbear and his Beastly Bandits. Merlin Magic Making—the company's creative division—reimagined the 6,000-square-meter dark ride, using 20 themed sets, projections, animatronics, integrated multimedia, a bespoke soundtrack, and audio and lighting effects. "The park's 50th anniversary was the perfect opportunity to renew one of our most iconic attractions," says Luisa Forestali, head of marketing at Gardaland Resort. "It is essential to reinterpret great classics without fear, while maintaining an emotional bond with what the public knows and loves. For us, innovation means embracing change while building on the past and looking to the future with new and memorable experiences."

gardaland.it/en/animal-treasure-island/

RES RIDES



Antares

Conny-Land, Lipperswil, Switzerland

RES Rides, David Theming Works

Cosmic exploration inspired Conny-Land's newest attraction. Antares—named after the brightest star in the Scorpius constellation—is the world's tallest Roller Ball, according to RES Rides. David Theming Works created the ride storyline about ancient space travelers from Antares who landed on Earth. Humans saw them as gods and built a temple in their honor. Today's guests can fly toward the stars, climbing 34 meters high before zig-zagging down to Earth. Conny-Land already had a close relationship with RES Rides; this is the Swiss park's third ride from the manufacturer. Roby Gasser, Conny-Land's CEO, liked the vertical family roller coaster's small footprint. Antares is also cleverly positioned above the park's bumper cars. The ride's height restriction starts at 115 centimeters, offering wide demographic appeal. "The feedback from all ages is great," Gasser says. Many of Conny-Land's rides cannot be found at any other park, and that's by design. "We want to keep it that way as long as we can."

connyland.ch/en/attraktionen-details/antares/

VEKOMA/MANDORIA



Aquila

Mandoria, Rzgów, Poland

Vekoma

Aquila, a Vekoma Family Launch Coaster, joins a growing collection of rides at indoor park Mandoria, including Gerstlauer's Bob Coaster (named Merkant), MACK Rides' Carrara powered coaster, and the Mroczny Dwór spinning coaster from SBF-Visa Group.

Accelerating from zero to 70 kph in three seconds, Aquila offers thrills while remaining accessible to younger riders through its 95-centimeter minimum height requirement.

Located in the park's Arkady zone, Aquila takes inspiration from an experimental battering ram developed by Mandoria's guards. Aquila's entertaining layout includes a double pass with a second launch, creating a 900-meter ride experience. Riders can expect high speeds, tight turns, and several pops of airtime.

Aquila headlines a wider expansion that also includes a classic Zierer carousel, a themed miniature Ferris wheel produced by WD Amusement Rides, and new food and beverage outlets. "Aquila is a serious step up in excitement," says Leroy Koevoets, Mandoria's creative director. "Kids are challenging their parents to join them."

mandoria.com/en/aquila/

Cétautomatix

Parc Astérix, Plailly, France

Gerstlauer Amusement Rides

Parc Astérix's new family-oriented Gerstlauer spinning coaster is based on Cétautomatix, the Gaulish village's blacksmith character. Cétautomatix invites guests to try out his winged chariots on a test track from his workshop. "We wanted a family ride that everyone could enjoy—even kids of a young age," explains Parc Astérix CEO Delphine Pons. "Children one meter tall can ride it (accompanied by an adult), offering 4- and 5-year-olds their first thrills." The park unveiled the ride in a themed area inspired by Cétautomatix, brimming with charm and humor. Riders on the Gerstlauer roller coaster spin around the 420-meter track, experiencing steep inclines, tight bends, and unpredictable acceleration. The coaster features a midsection drive tire launch. Four passengers sitting in pairs face each other, sharing in the excitement. "Cétautomatix creates a real intergenerational experience and eases the transition between children's attractions and big coasters," Pons says.

parcaterix.fr/en/parc/attractions/family/cetautomatix



STYVAIN CAMBON

Crocodile Island

Suntago Water World (Park of Poland), Wręcza, Poland

CSB - Creative Studio Berlin

Polish indoor water park Suntago Water World has upped the ante in playful entertainment with the debut of Crocodile Island. The tropical and Aztec-themed expansion adds a large, dry, and interactive play zone for kids three to 14 years old, complementing the park's water attractions.

"Crocodile Island is a place created to inspire families to spend time together, support bonding, and develop creativity and physical activity," says Idan Greidinger, CEO of Park of Poland, the larger resort that Suntago resides in.

The development answered a need for a dedicated space tailored to younger children. Suntago turned to CSB - Creative Studio Berlin to translate its dream into reality.

Crocodile Island features four adventure areas, along with more than 20 attractions across 1,200 square meters. Several distinctly themed areas encourage visitors to captain a ship, mold kinetic sand, learn the secrets of a magical tree, and face crocodiles. Families can also meet Suntago's mascots and enjoy unique programming all year.

parkofpoland.com/en/crocodile-island



SUNTAGO WATER WORLD

Danse Macabre

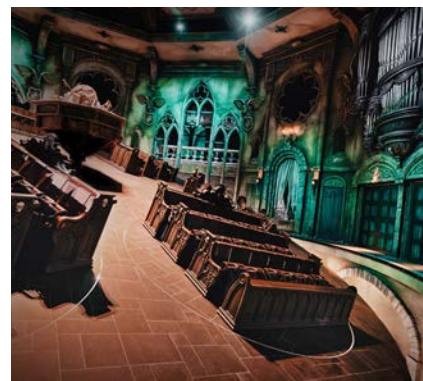
Efteling, Kaatsheuvel, The Netherlands

Intamin

A haunting melody entralls Efteling guests as Danse Macabre, an immersive thrill ride, spins them around to the famous tune. "We wanted our visitors to dance to the music," says lead designer Jeroen Verheij. Guests step into the chapel where conductor Joseph Charlatan and his orchestra vanished after performing the spooky score on a Friday the 13th in 1876. Inside, visitors encounter a 3.5-minute paranormal performance where music, myth, and motion intertwine. Efteling's team worked with Intamin to create a bespoke attraction, using Intamin's Dynamic Motion Stage technology to sync the music with waltz-like movements.

Danse Macabre is the heart of a fully immersive themed zone, where retail, food, and performance blend seamlessly in the eerie Huyverwoud Forest setting. Built over two years while the park remained open, the 17,000-square-meter project represents an investment of around €35 million. "A unique ride system comes with challenges," Verheij says, "but the end result is thrilling and beautiful."

efteling.com/en/park/attractions/danse-macabre



EFTELING

See the full report in Funworld's March/April 2025 issue.



PLOPSA

Die Schlümpfe Abenteuer (The Smurfs' Adventure)

Plopsaland Deutschland, Haßloch, Germany

Jora Vision and LF Studios

The Smurfs bring their chaotic fun to the former Burg Falkenstein (Falkenstein Castle) dark ride at Plopsaland Deutschland with Die Schlümpfe Abenteuer (The Smurfs' Adventure). Plopsa's rebranding of the park (previously Holiday Park) provided "the perfect moment to open this lovely, new dark ride," explains Bernd Beitz, a director with Plopsa.

Plopsa reimagined the classic ride by bringing in characters beloved by every generation. "The Smurfs are the perfect additions to our other characters in the park, like Maya the Bee, Vik the Viking, and Heidi," Beitz says. Eagle-eyed guests can spot 43 Smurfs on the ride, which includes video projections, LED lighting, nine synchronized soundtracks, and four fresh scents. The MACK Rides ride system, in service for almost 40 years, received an overhaul. Jora Vision and LF Studios handled the design/build and animatronics. Beitz believes parks should prize originality, investing in attractions that set them apart. "Ours is unique; we love it," he says.

plopsa.com/de/plopsaland-deutschland/attraktionen/die-schluempfe-abenteuer



PAULTONS PARK

Ghostly Manor

Paultons Park, Hampshire, England

Lagotronics, MACK Rides

The Mancey family had always wanted a dark ride at Paultons Park. They previously hesitated because of the significant capital investment required for a large building and complex ride system. However, when the park's 4D Cinema was retired, it freed up an indoor space that made the project feasible. "After seeing the Gameplay Theater from Lagotronics and MACK Rides, we knew it was the perfect option. Being able to include eight scenes in a fairly small building was really attractive for us," says Lawrence Mancey, marketing and technology director at Paultons Park. Besides the eight gameplay scenes, Paultons Park has packed three pre-show scenes into the highly themed attraction, which features physical sets, animatronics, and media. "Our guests are demanding longer and more immersive experiences and that is what we hoped to achieve with Ghostly Manor," Mancey explains. Since opening in May, Mancey shares that the ride has consistently been one of Paultons' most popular attractions.

paultonspark.co.uk/rides/17675/ghostly-monor



EUROPA-PARK

Grand Prix EDventure

Europa-Park, Rust, Germany

MACK Rides

Europa-Park's mascots, Ed and Edda, hit the road in this easy-going interactive 3D family dark ride. MACK Rides uses its Gameplay Theater to let guests join the mice as they zip around Europe. The compact attraction combines dark ride technology, animation, multimedia, projections, themed design, interactive gameplay, and animatronic elements. Guests enter through a TV broadcast truck to find Edda preparing for the race of her life. Riders join Ed and Edda's racing crew, taking a seat in one of 18 gondolas. The gondolas wheel around to reveal 10 different scenes, inspired by European cities and "Grand Prix Of Europe," MACK Magic's first animated movie released in cinemas this year. Grand Prix EDventure adds to the broader story, alongside a video game and an audio story. "The attraction fits perfectly into our mission to expand the Europa-Park experience beyond the borders of the park," says Patrick Marx, head of new development and masterplanning at Europa-Park.

europapark.de/en/theme-park/attractions/grand-prix-edventure

Heart of Africa

Chester Zoo, Upton-by-Chester, Cheshire, England

Chester Zoo has launched its Heart of Africa habitat, a 22-acre addition that integrates African landscapes, species, and cultural elements into its existing conservation framework. The habitat includes a mixed savannah where giraffes, zebras, ostriches, and antelope share space, observable from elevated platforms. "Visitors consistently told us they wanted closer connections with animals and more immersive experiences, but equally valued green spaces, play, and moments of reflection. Accessibility and inclusivity were also strongly emphasized in our consultations," says Dominic Strange, chief operating officer. This expansion supports Chester Zoo's broader conservation goals and is expected to contribute to regional engagement and job creation.

chesterzoo.org/explore-chester-zoo/zones-habitats/heart-of-africa



CHESTER ZOO

Jurassic World: The Experience

Battersea Power Station, London United Kingdom

Neon

Jurassic World: The Experience opened at Battersea Power Station in May, marking the launch of Neon's new entertainment venue in Central London. Developed in collaboration with Universal Pictures, the exhibition offers a walk-through experience based on the Jurassic World franchise, featuring life-sized dinosaurs, interactive, themed environments inspired by the films, and educational elements. Guests can observe species like Velociraptor Blue and Tyrannosaurus rex, visit a genetics lab, and interact with baby dinosaurs and fossil displays across two floors in 3,200m² of space. The exhibition coincides with the release of Jurassic World: Rebirth and includes community outreach initiatives such as complimentary tickets for schools and charities. Ticketing is managed via Fever, with presales beginning 29 April. This launch supports Battersea Power Station's positioning as a mixed-use destination and reflects ongoing efforts to integrate cultural programming into urban redevelopment.

jurassicworldexperience.com/uk/



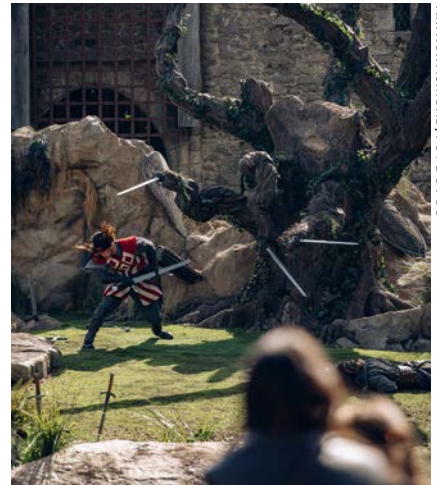
NEON

L'Épée du Roi Arthur (King Arthur's Sword)

Puy du Fou, Les Epesses, France

With its universal and timeless appeal, King Arthur naturally found a place at Puy du Fou. A previous production inspired by this legend had run its course and was ready for renewal. Puy du Fou reimagined the show for 2025 with bold new staging and creative direction, breathing fresh life into the story with a dramatic production. "At Puy du Fou, there must always be a central effect that, by its spectacular nature, leaves a lasting impression on the audience and shapes the memory they will keep of the show," says Nicolas de Villiers, chairman of Puy du Fou. At L'Épée du Roi Arthur (King Arthur's Sword), technological trickery uproots the ground, lifting it into the air to reveal a hidden lake beneath it—a lake that holds a secret. "This allows us to create two stages, one above the other. We are literally doubling the stage space, which is a unique phenomenon," de Villiers says.

puydufou.com/france/fr/lepee-du-roi-arthur



ARTHUR AUMOND, PUY DU FOU

SYLVAIN BACHELOT



Le Défi du Dragon (Dragon Challenge)

Le Jardin d'Acclimatation, Paris, France

Gerstlauer Amusement Rides

Le Défi du Dragon (Dragon Challenge), a Gerstlauer Family Coaster, replaces the park's classic Chinese Dragon roller coaster. "The Défi du Dragon was born from a desire to bring together emotion, storytelling, artistry, nature (so important for Le Jardin d'Acclimatation), and technology," explains Chief Operating Officer Guillaume Tiffreau. However, the park faced a challenge: the ride could not rise above the treetops because of Paris' strict urban planning rules. "This constraint became both a test and an inspiration for our engineers and ride designers," he says. "One of Le Défi du Dragon's most striking features is its unique technical achievement: a rotating platform unlike anything seen before in France. Midway through the ride, the train comes to a sudden stop, then pivots a quarter turn to the left or right, completely at random. This clever mechanism means the train can set off again either forwards or backwards, creating four possible ride combinations and a fresh surprise every time," Tiffreau explains.

jardindacclimatation.fr/attractions/le-defi-du-dragon-paris-rollercoaster

WALIBI BELGIUM



Mecalodon

Walibi Belgium, Wavre, Belgium

Gerstlauer Amusement Rides

Mecalodon is making waves at Walibi Belgium. Themed to look like a mechanical shark, Gerstlauer's first Airtime Coaster fits right into the Belgian park's new Dock World zone.

For years, Walibi Belgium has introduced innovative roller coasters, from Europe's first boomerang coaster in the 1980s to the Kondaa megacoaster in 2021. "Yet one key element was missing: a true family coaster, designed to bring parents and children together in a shared thrill," says Jean-Christophe Parent, general manager of Walibi Belgium. Mecalodon delivers on that promise with smooth ride dynamics, striking theming, launch elements, and high entertainment value—all in a maritime-inspired setting. Built as part of the park's long-term development strategy, this latest ride is a powerful draw in Dock World. Originally envisioned on a smaller scale, Dock World has grown into a fully themed zone complete with attractions, dining, and retail. The investment reflects Walibi Belgium's ambition to raise the bar in quality and guest experience.

walibi.be/en/explore-the-park/attractions-family/mecalodon

JL AUDY



Mission Bermudes (Bermuda Mission)

Futuroscope Xperiences, Poitiers, France

MACK Rides

Futuroscope dives into the mystery of the Bermuda Triangle with the world premiere of a revolutionary ride system. Mission Bermudes is powered by a brand-new hybrid ride system—part roller coaster, part water ride—developed by MACK Rides and customized for Futuroscope.

Guests have to find a missing team of scientists and make it home safely. Riders board MACK's Rocking Boats for a rescue mission into the Bermuda Triangle. The nine boats (each holding 10 passengers) appear to float freely but are guided by underwater rails. Powerful acceleration, sudden turns, reverse movements, ascents and descents, and pitching and rolling sensations are possible. With whitewater rapids, physical sets, storytelling, special effects, and a climactic 16-meter drop through a space-time portal at speeds of over 60 kph, Mission Bermudes is one of the park's most ambitious additions. Mission Bermudes provides the park with a much-needed water ride, according to project managers Camille Boulay and Adrien Pereyrol.

futuroscope.com/en/xperiences/futuroscope/mission-bermudes



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LEGOLAND BILLUND RESORT

Pirate Lagoon Playground

Legoland Billund Resort, Billund, Denmark

Shiver me timbers! Legoland Billund has launched an accessible new playground in its Pirate Land. Wheelchair users and guests with limited mobility are equally welcome aboard the Pirate Lagoon playground. “It’s been important for us to create an inclusive playground where all children can take part. Pirate Lagoon will be a fantastic addition to Pirate Land and is guaranteed to provide hours of fun and play,” says Michael Ottesen, managing director at Legoland Billund Resort. Delighting Lego pirate ship fans, the anchor attraction of the 900-square-meter playground is a swashbuckling pirate ship that’s ready for adventure. The 22-meter-long ship is inspired by The Brick Bounty Lego set. Children can play across three decks, aim cannons, climb, slide, and much more. Guests can also meet the treasure-seeking Captain Redbeard at the park’s Lego character meet and greets.

legoland.dk/en/explore/the-park/attractions/pirate-lagoon/



RABKOLAND

Pofyrtany Las (Wicked Trees)

Rabkoland, Rabka-Zdrój, Poland

Designed for curious climbers and energetic explorers, Rabkoland’s elevated adventure playground—complete with nine towers, 19 bridges, and 120 meters of winding trails—continues the park’s mission to bring families closer through shared experiences.

“It’s an attraction that helps children develop their motor skills and burn off energy, while also being designed so that parents can complete the path together with them. This is especially important to us,” says Agnieszka Bednarczyk, social media manager and marketing specialist at Rabkoland. The Pofyrtany Las (Wicked Trees) attraction blends beautifully into the park’s natural surroundings. Built above ground level, the play structure allows room for a train ride to run beneath it, doubling the area’s fun. Rabkoland, an amusement park designed primarily for families with children up to 10 years old, turned to its long-time collaborator, Braty i Kompany, to build Pofyrtany Las. The partners are already collaborating on “another exciting project,” according to Bednarczyk.

rabkoland.pl/pl/atracje/pofyrtany-las



SEAWORLD ABU DHABI

SeaSub

SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi

Doer Marine

Beginning in May, guests of SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, began taking a deep dive among sharks, rays, and schooling fish in an innovative SeaSub experience. Four guests at a time can join the submersible’s pilots for a 30-minute underwater tour of the colorful marine life right inside the region’s largest multi-species aquarium. The attraction’s vehicles, designed to reach depths exceeding 20 meters, are the world’s first classed submersible designed, built, and certified for an aquarium setting. “Our goal is to make SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, a unique and exciting destination. We strive to balance the elements of education, conservation, and entertainment all in one place and offer our guests one-of-a-kind experiences that resonate with them for a lifetime,” says Rob Yordi, general curator at SeaWorld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi. “We are delighted to add the SeaSub experience to our repertoire for our inquisitive guests and hope it leads to more unforgettable memories for families.”

seaworldabudhabi.com/en/explore/seaworld-encounters/seasub



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LA MER DE SABLE

Wild Buffalo

La Mer de Sable, Ermenonville, France

Great Coasters International (GCI)

Wild Buffalo, a wooden roller coaster, has stamped into La Mer de Sable, bringing family-friendly thrills and frontier-themed fun to the French park. Antoine Lacarriere, director of La Mer de Sable, knew the park needed to boost capacity, excitement, and guest satisfaction, especially on busy days. A priority was finding an attraction that could handle between 500 and 700 visitors an hour. "The Wild Buffalo actively contributes to the smooth flow of the park and the preservation of a high-quality visitor experience," he says. Lacarriere felt Great Coasters International (GCI) would fit well with the park's team and had the monitoring and maintenance skills to make the project a success. The €5.5 million ride was built in seven months on a challenging sandy slope. Wild Buffalo welcomes families with children at least 1.1 meters tall and satisfies both older and younger guests. Carefully selected to meet budget, sustainability, and maintenance considerations, the all-wood coaster blends into the Natura 2000-protected landscape while staying true to the park's Far West aesthetic.

merdesable.fr/attraction-details/buffalo-ween



WHITEWATER

Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

WhiteWater

Yas Waterworld Yas Island, Abu Dhabi is expanded its offerings with a new section that opened in July. Developed by Miral, the 13,445 square-meter addition introduces over 20 rides, slides, and experiences, bringing the park's total to more than 60 aquatic attractions. Themed as the "Lost City," the expansion continues the story of The Legend of the Lost Pearl. New features include Al Falaj Race, a dueling tube raft race; Al Sahel Junior, a mini zero-gravity boomerang; and Bahamut's Rage, a log flume ride. Families can explore Al Mafras, Red Dunes, and the interactive Bandit's Playground in Bandit's Village. CEO Dr. Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi notes the expansion supports Yas Island's development as a destination for entertainment and leisure. With a mix of storytelling and water-based activities, the updated park layout offers a broader range of experiences for guests of different ages and interests.

yaswaterworldyasisland.com



WALIBI HOLLAND

YOY

Walibi Holland, Biddinghuizen, Netherlands

Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC)

YOY is sparking joy at Walibi Holland. This dueling roller coaster experience from Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC) thrills, surprises, and connects guests. Riders can choose between two separate but interwoven Raptor coasters, 655 meters long and 29 meters high.

The bold can enjoy the green YOY Thrill track, featuring six inversions and speeds of 80 kph. The blue YOY Chill track offers a family-friendly ride that is accessible yet still exciting, reaching 80 kph with a smooth, non-inverting layout. "This ride is the embodiment of Walibi Holland's strategy: to retain the target group of teenagers and young adults and to grow family audiences," says Mascha Taminiau, general director at Walibi Holland. Guest satisfaction surveys and brand tracking revealed that investing in additional offerings for these target groups would be beneficial. "This ride offers the best for both, with a Thrill and Chill version, and lots of interactions between the rides," Taminiau says.

walibi.nl/en/park/attractions/yoy

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CANADA'S WONDERLAND



AlpenFury

Canada's Wonderland, Vaughan, Ontario, Canada

Premier Rides



Following a successful run of attractions—water park attractions, seasonal events, and rides like Snoopy's Racing Railway—geared towards families with young children, Canada's Wonderland knew it was time to add a thriller of a roller coaster. Public Relations Director Grace Peacock encourages operators of other parks to invest extra time and thought early on: "In the design phase, consider how you may elevate the ride experience with creative integration in your park and the addition of unique ride elements." Premier Rides delivered with AlpenFury, whose launch, dives, and nine inversions on a track that "spans the length of our main thoroughfare," gives it a "massive presence in our park skyline."

canadaswonderland.com/rides-experiences/alpenfury

WHITEWATER



AquaTubes and Splash Pad

Carnival Cruise Line Celebration Key

WhiteWater

Celebration Key, Carnival Cruise Line's private island in the Bahamas, opened two AquaTube water slides and a splash pad decked with Life Floor safety flooring in July. Jordanna Bower, WhiteWater's vice president, business development, says that "it is exciting to be part of creating a spectacular destination for Carnival Cruise Line together with great partners. The meticulous work integrating two thrilling slides and supports into the Suncastle successfully made it an iconic water park landmark in the Bahamas."

celebrationkey.carnival.com

WAVEGARDEN



Atlantic Park Surf

Atlantic Park, Virginia Beach, Virginia, United States

Wavegarden

Since 1994, the former site of the Virginia Beach Civic Center sat empty as multiple redevelopment plans came and went. In 2019, the Spain-based surfing lagoon design and installation firm Wavegarden saw the location's potential to build their first surf park in North America. Combining ideas and feedback from community members with a concept highlighting the region's rich surfing heritage, Wavegarden proposed a surf park that "serves as a unique anchor for the entire development" at Atlantic Park, according to Marketing and Communications Manager Guillermo Díaz del Río. With nine other Wavegarden Cove installations open worldwide, Díaz del Río says the company is positioned "to guide our clients through this unique niche and help ensure the long-term success of their facilities," including personalized surfing experiences, wave frequency and variety, and energy sustainability through the application of electromechanical technology that "requires significantly lower lagoon construction costs" and dramatically lower energy costs.

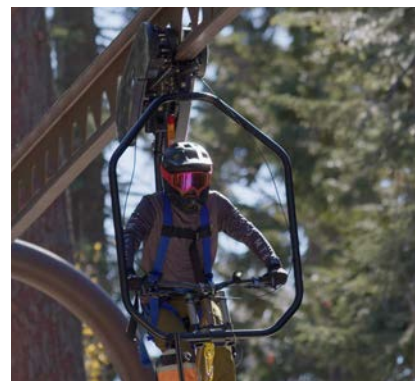
atlanticparksurf.com

B-Rail

SkyPark at Santa's Village, Skyforest, California

Suspended 25 to 45 feet above the park, the B-Rail lets guests pedal single-rider bicycle cars along a 1,000-foot track that once hosted the original Bumble Bee Monorail attraction that was installed at the park in 1961. The new attraction vehicles were designed and built by park co-owner and operator Bill Johnson, who, as a bicycling enthusiast, modeled the cars after bicycles while aligning the attraction with the park's mountain biking focus. "So obviously, we're into bikes. It took us a really long time, but my husband Bill is like, 'I'm going to build this bike [attraction],'" and it obviously took a lot of years of us doing this other stuff and that on the side," says park co-owner and operator Michelle Johnson, while reflecting on years of her husband designing the new attraction while seeking insight from engineers. The vehicles are self-powered with bike pedals and chains, offering an opportunity for riders to combine nostalgia with adventure and panoramic views of the San Bernardino Mountains.

skyparksantasvillage.com/activities/b-rail/



SKYPARK AT SANTA'S VILLAGE

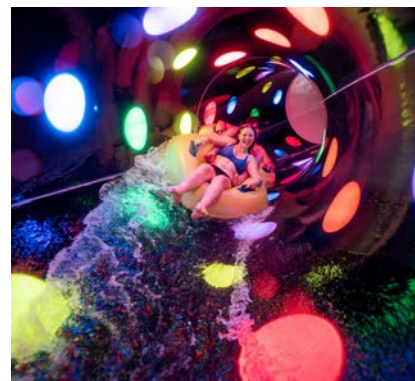
Bavarian Blast Waterpark at Bavarian Inn

Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn, Frankenmuth, Michigan

WhiteWater, Open Aire

For Bavarian Inn's latest major expansion, the Lodge's founding owners, the Zehnder family, returned to WhiteWater for an ambitious package of 16 slides, a 300-foot lazy river, a 5,130-square-foot wave pool, and Michigan's first adult swim-up bar. The slide offerings are diverse, incorporating "themed attractions for young children, thrilling slides for adrenaline seekers, a family raft ride for group adventures" and more, says Onno Meeter, president of water parks at WhiteWater. Bavarian Blast's colorful German alps aesthetic is enhanced using "veiling," a customization process that "adds a patterned layer to close-molded slide parts, allowing parks to use imagery on fiberglass to enhance their narratives," Meeter continues. Guests can enjoy the park's amenities no matter the weather, thanks to an energy-efficient over 20,000-square-foot Double Slope Skylight roof by Open Aire. Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn Lodge President Michael Keller Zehnder describes Bavarian Blast as "a testament to our [family's] continuous dedication to creating enjoyable experiences [for all guests]."

bavarianinn.com/bavarian-blast-indoor-waterpark



BAVARIAN INN

Beach Rescue Racer

SeaWorld San Antonio, San Antonio

Zierer

Thinking about roller coaster design priorities, factors like height, speed, thrill intensity, and capacity leap to mind. For Rescue Beach Racer at SeaWorld San Antonio, the park's top priority "was to have a smooth ride for the whole family, especially for children, to enjoy the ride," says Zierer Senior Project Manager Klaus Gaek. Rescue Beach Racer is the flagship coaster at Rescue Jr., the park's new kid-friendly play area.

Gaek shares that the manufacturing process was an international affair, with the tracks coming from Slovakia, while the trains, seats, restraint systems, the decoration, the station, unloading and loading platform were all done by Zierer itself in Germany. All told, from the project's inception to its unveiling, the process, including design of the attraction's custom layout of the track and the in-house fiberglass theming work Zierer is known for, took just over a year.

seaworld.com/san-antonio/rescue-jr/



SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO

WIEGAND



Brush Creek Holl'r Mountain Coaster

Princeton, West Virginia

Wiegand

Brush Creek Holl'r Mountain Coaster opened in April in Mercer County, West Virginia, introducing a new alpine attraction built by German manufacturer Wiegand. The installation features 3,400 feet of track with a 700-foot uphill cable lift and rider-controlled braking systems. Designed to operate year-round, the coaster accommodates single and tandem riders and integrates LED lighting for nighttime operation. The project was developed to expand Brush Creek Holl'r's offerings and support regional tourism growth. "Getting it built wasn't easy. Local authorities weren't familiar with this type of attraction, so there were definitely some learning curves during construction. But the end result was absolutely worth it," says Jessica Wedel of Wiegand. Operators worked closely with Wiegand to adapt the layout to the Appalachian terrain.

brushcreekhollr.com

COLUMBUS ZOO



Conservation Tower

Zoombezi Bay and Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Powell, Ohio

ProSlide

Zoombezi Bay's Conservation Tower is the water park's first major new attraction to open since 2018 and is at least the fifth major collaboration between the park and ProSlide. As Anthony Sabo, vice president of Zoombezi Bay explained, the tower needed to be "a significant investment that had both immediate and long-term positive impacts on attendance and revenue." The park was looking for a proposal that "checked the boxes for our guests, featuring high capacity and a minimum high requirement of 42 inches for all three of the tower's water slides."

That vision aligned neatly with guidance from ProSlide. Conservation Tower, combining fun with learning about the Zoo's Ohio-specific conservation projects, shows "how ride design can go beyond entertainment to reinforce brand purpose, spark curiosity, and connect with guests on a deeper level," ProSlide Senior Vice President of Global Strategic Partnerships Jeff Janovich says.

zoombezibay.com/conservation-tower

NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MUSEUM



National Medal of Honor Museum

Arlington, Texas

The 100,000-square-foot facility, opened in March, features 102,000 square feet of exhibition galleries dedicated to the legacy of Medal of Honor recipients. The museum's immersive exhibits chronicle the stories of over 3,500 Medal of Honor recipients. Interactive galleries, archival footage, and personal artifacts provide a compelling narrative of courage, sacrifice, and patriotism. Designed to serve as a national center for reflection and learning, the museum integrates immersive exhibits, a dedicated theater, and interactive storytelling. The facility was developed with support from corporate partners, including Boeing. "In an evening filled with fireworks, nothing will shine brighter than the Medal of Honor Recipients. It is because of their service and sacrifice that we can gather for celebrations like these. I am so proud to open our doors and share their stories of courage, commitment and selflessness with the nation. At the National Medal of Honor Museum, we are stewards of their legacy and vow to uphold the values represented by the Medal," says Chris Cassidy, president and CEO of the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation. The museum is expected to attract both leisure and group travel markets, with opportunities for school programs, corporate events, and civic engagement.

mohhc.org



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DISNEY



Disney Treasure

Disney Cruise Line

Port Canaveral, Florida

Disney Cruise Line marked the arrival of its newest vessel, Disney Treasure, with a water-front christening event on the Hudson River. The ship integrates themed experiences inspired by Disney, Pixar, Marvel, and Star Wars. Disney Treasure blends themed dining and entertainment with immersive storytelling, offering guests experiences inspired by “Coco,” Marvel, and “Moana,” and lounges inspired by Jungle Cruise, The Haunted Mansion, and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. Its design integrates family-friendly attractions like AquaMouse with adult-focused lounges, creating a balanced onboard environment for all ages. “Our ships have become brand ambassadors that bring our storytelling and immersive experiences to new audiences in new places,” says Bob Iger, CEO of The Walt Disney Company, emphasizing the ship’s role in extending Disney’s reach. Josh D’Amaro, chairman of Disney Experiences, noted, “We are more than doubling our fleet to 13 ships by 2031 so that we can bring Disney cruise vacations to even more families across the globe.” Disney Treasure began its inaugural voyage on December 21, 2024, sailing seven-night Caribbean itineraries from Port Canaveral, Florida.

disneycruise.disney.go.com/ships/destiny/

CINCINNATI ZOO



Elephant Trek

Cincinnati Zoo, Cincinnati

Schaefer, Satchell, COST of Wisconsin

The Cincinnati Zoo first became home to elephants more than 100 years ago, but Vice President of Facilities, Planning, and Sustainability Mark Fisher, says their “old habitat and barn were not up to our standards, and major renovations and expansions of space were not physically possible” due to the zoo’s small footprint.

The complex Elephant Trek II project relied on structural engineering by Schaefer, aquatic systems by Satchell, and theming and rockwork by COST of Wisconsin. COST preconstruction services expert John Harkinson recommends that other zoos prioritize “design build assistance early in their projects’ development,” noting that it “can provide advantages to the project schedule, guest experience, and animal welfare.”

Fisher’s biggest lesson for zoos and aquariums contemplating renovation and expansion is to “go big or go home, and don’t cut corners on capital investments,” because without “the highest of expectations, mediocrity is what you will ultimately get.”

cincinnati zoo.org/animals/habitats

LOST ISLAND



Fire Runner

Lost Island, Waterloo, Iowa

Rocky Mountain Construction (RMC)

As a newer theme park, Lost Island continues to grow. General Manager Eric Bertch says that as soon as “the park completed our first season [in 2022], we were already planning to add another coaster.” Working with Rocky Mountain Construction was an easy decision thanks to their Raptor model winning a fan survey, Bertch explained. “They are an American company without much of a presence in the Midwest,” and the Raptor presented an opportunity to offer “a unique addition” to Lost Island guests while helping RMC expand their footprint in another region of the country. Bertch’s advice to other park operators considering an addition like the Raptor is simple and direct: “Do it. Riders have a variety of different experiences depending on where they are seated.”

thelostisland.com/amusement-park/attractions/rollercoasters/fire-runner/

Expedition Odyssey

SeaWorld Orlando, Orlando

MACK Rides

Expedition Odyssey, an Arctic-themed flying theater that blends immersive technology with real-world animal encounters takes SeaWorld Orlando guests on a journey through frozen landscapes, encountering polar bears, orcas, and beluga whales in custom footage captured during Arctic expeditions. “We sent teams on several weeks-long expeditions ... to create this multi-dimensional experience,” says Conner Carr, SeaWorld’s corporate vice president of rides and engineering. The ride’s 39-inch height requirement makes it accessible to families, bridging thrill and education. After the ride, guests enter the habitats of Arctic animals like Uki, a rescued Pacific walrus calf now bonding with her surrogate mother, Kaboodle.

seaworld.com/orlando/rides/expedition-odyssey



SEAWORLD ORLANDO

Flash: Vertical Velocity

Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson Township, New Jersey

Vekoma

The Flash: Vertical Velocity by Vekoma, opened in March, expanding Six Flags Great Adventure’s portfolio of thrill rides. Ryan Eldredge, a Six Flags’ public relations manager says the new ride meets the guests’ desire for “a new, intense coaster experience” with “a fast, repeatable thrill they want to ride again and again.” The roller coaster’s compact footprint is unique to the park, and allows for high throughput and efficient land use, while its visual impact and dynamic motion make it a standout attraction within the park. Eldredge particularly appreciates that it delivers what guests want while offering surprises: “that’s how you spark real excitement.” This compact layout delivers forward and backward launches, a 172-foot vertical spike, Zero-G roll, and 180-degree twisted drop, and launches, while reaching speeds of up to 60 mph in both forward and reverse directions. Inspired by DC’s iconic speedster, the ride incorporates immersive onboard lighting and audio synced to the train’s motion, enhancing the superhero theme. With a minimum height requirement of just 48 inches, Vertical Velocity is designed to be accessible to a broad demographic, supporting Six Flags’ strategy to appeal to both families and thrill-seekers.

sixflags.com/greatadventure/attractions/the-flash-vertical-velocity



SIX FLAGS GREAT ADVENTURE

Georgia Gold Rusher

Six Flags Over Georgia, Atlanta

Intamin

Launched as part of a multiyear refresh of Six Flags Over Georgia’s historic Lickskillet area, Chris Foshee says Georgia Gold Rusher “surprises guests—it looks kind of quaint because it’s got a small footprint, but it really packs a punch.” Coordinator of Digital Content and Public Relations Jamie Sebastian concurs, describing the latest attraction as providing “unexpected bursts of airtime and moments of weightlessness.” The spin-incited gondola design by Intamin ensures that no two rides are ever exactly the same. Sebastian notes that Six Flags and Intamin’s earlier collaboration, the 2001-built free-fall tower ride Acrophobia, is still a hit with guests nearly a quarter century later. “Working together again just made good, crowd-pleasing sense,” Sebastian says.

sixflags.com/overgeorgia/attractions/georgia-gold-rusher



SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

BROOKFIELD ZOO CHICAGO



James & Elizabeth Bramsen Tropical Forests

Brookfield Zoo Chicago, Chicago

Stantec

The James & Elizabeth Bramsen Tropical Forests, a “modern care facility with enriching, expansive outdoor space, marks a major milestone in Brookfield Zoo Chicago’s history,” says Andrea Rodgers, senior vice president of guest experience and operations. The habitat, while immersing guests in the biodiversity of rainforest ecosystems, includes spaces for the zoo’s family troop of western lowland gorillas, their orangutans, and monkeys. It was designed to be immersive, “providing up-close, eye-to-eye encounters” to encourage the personal connections between animals and the zoo’s guests that “can lead to care and conservation.” The habitat also includes the Gorilla Conservation Center and King Conservation Leadership Academy, reinforcing Brookfield Zoo’s commitment to education and global wildlife protection. Opened in July, the exhibit features lush vegetation, elevated walkways, and climate-controlled environments that support primates, birds, and reptiles from Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. The space emphasizes conservation and education, with interactive displays and behind-the-scenes views of animal care.

brookfieldzoo.org/bramsentropicalforests

MERLIN



Lego Duplo Peppa Pig Playground

Legoland New York Resort, Goshen, New York

Merlin Entertainments

Legoland New York Resort debuted the Lego Duplo Peppa Pig Playground in April, marking a new collaboration among Merlin Entertainments, Hasbro, and Lego Duplo. The 13,000-square-foot space offers interactive play experiences inspired by the Peppa Pig universe. The initiative builds on Merlin’s ongoing partnership with Hasbro. “Merlin shares our vision of creating play spaces designed just for little ones,” added Matt Proulx, Hasbro’s SVP of global experiences, partnerships and music. The Playground features themed zones, including Peppa’s House, Grandpa Pig’s Boat, and Peppa & George’s Puppet Show, aligning with Legoland’s broader strategy to expand offerings for preschool-aged guests.

legoland.com/new-york/things-to-do/theme-park/rides-attractions/peppa-pig-playground

SAN ANTONIO ZOO



Naylor Savanna

San Antonio Zoo, San Antonio

Opened in October 2024, the Naylor Savanna at the San Antonio Zoo offers a sprawling, naturalistic habitat for giraffes, zebras, ostriches, sitatunga, and other African wildlife. Doubling the previous space, it features a state-of-the-art giraffe barn supporting the AZA’s Species Survival Plan. “We have all this beautiful limestone to create these habitats more naturally, like it is in the wild,” says Hope Roth, vice president of marketing. Guests can enjoy up-close encounters and even overnight stays at the Spekboom Lodge, a luxury suite overlooking the savanna. The lodge includes exclusive zoo access and supports giraffe conservation through donations to the Giraffe Conservation Foundation. With immersive experiences and a strong conservation mission, the Naylor Savanna exemplifies the zoo’s commitment to education, innovation, and wildlife protection.

sazoo.org

Niagara Takes Flight

Niagara Parks, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada

Brogent

Niagara Parks' new attraction, Niagara Takes Flight, is a flying theatre experience that immerses visitors in the beauty and history of the region. Located at Table Rock Centre beside Horseshoe Falls, the \$25 million attraction suspends guests in gondola-style seats, simulating flight with motion programming and sensory effects like wind, mist, and scent. Riders soar over 56 kilometers of Niagara Falls' iconic landscapes, captured through drone cinematography and displayed on a 17-meter-wide, 180-degree domed screen. "We are proud to be partnering with Brogent Technologies, the world leader in flying theatres, to deliver an exceptional new visitor experience to our flagship site Table Rock Centre, located at the brink of the iconic Horseshoe Falls," says David Adames, CEO of Niagara Parks. The experience begins with a pre-show narrated by filmmaker James Cameron, guiding guests through 13,000 years of Niagara Falls' history—from its glacial origins to its cultural significance today blending thrilling visuals with authentic storytelling.

niagaraparks.com/visit/attractions/niagaratakesflight



NIAGARA PARKS

Peppa Pig Theme Park Dallas-Fort Worth

North Richland Hills, Texas

Merlin Entertainments

Merlin Entertainments officially opened Peppa Pig Theme Park Dallas-Fort Worth in March. Representing an investment of over \$40 million, the standalone attraction builds on Merlin's collaboration with Hasbro and marks the brand's first U.S. site outside of a Legoland Resort. "This new destination reflects the strength of our partnership with Hasbro and our shared commitment to creating meaningful experiences for families," says Fiona Eastwood, CEO of Merlin Entertainments. "We're pleased to bring Peppa Pig to a broader audience through a dedicated location." The park features five rides and nine themed play areas based on familiar scenes from the Peppa Pig series. It is also recognized as a Certified Autism Center, offering inclusive amenities like sensory guides and accessible pathways. "Merlin Entertainments is dedicated to providing safe, inclusive and engaging experiences for all families," adds Jeremy Aguillen, general manager of the new park.

peppapigthemepark.com/dallas-ft-worth/



MERLIN

Rafter's Rage

Soaky Mountain Waterpark, Sevierville, Tennessee

WhiteWater

Soaky Mountain chose to build on the success of The Edge—winner of the 2023 IAAPA Brass Ring Award for Best New Product—by launching its sixth season with Rafter's Rage, a WhiteWater Wall Runner model. Master planner and theme park designer Frederic Pastuszak described how the six-person ride's four arcs produce lateral drifting by "using roller coaster engineering to create bespoke layouts that offer some roller coaster sensations" of climbing up as well as sliding down. The design ensures that riders can enjoy top speeds throughout their descent, adding an extra thrill.

soakymountainwaterpark.com/attractions/



SOAKY MOUNTAIN WATERPARK

KINGS DOMINION



Rapterra

Kings Dominion, Doswell, Virginia

Bolliger & Mabillard

When it was time to design and debut the new roller coaster that would become Rapterra, Kings Dominion returned to Swiss custom roller coaster design firm Bolliger & Mabillard. Public Relations Regional Manager Sydney Snow says the park chose to work with B&M again thanks to their “reputation of being reliable, efficient, and thrilling,” something Kings Dominion had experienced firsthand with the installation of their popular Dominator coaster. Rapterra, a winged coaster featuring a high-speed launch and dynamic maneuvers, is a centerpiece of the Jungle X-Pedition area of the park, which was renovated and re-themed in 2022. Bolliger & Mabillard’s design offers “amplified rotational motions and multiple possibilities of thrilling near-misses,” while spectators on the ground get an eyeful of Rapterra’s thrills thanks to its peak being located over the Jungle X-Pedition midway.

kingsdominion.com/rides-experiences/rapterra

KINGS ISLAND



RiverRacers, Splash River Junction

Soak City Water Park at Kings Island, Mason, Ohio

WhiteWater

This summer, Kings Island unveiled two attractions from WhiteWater as part of an ongoing strategic refresh focused on families and thrills. Nestled between existing attractions, the new RiverRacers is a dual racing water coaster (known in-house at WhiteWater as the Blaster Battle) that features 33-foot drops and speeds up to 30 miles per hour.

Splash River Junction replaces an aging splash zone with an up-to-date kids’ area. Here, the seven slides flow gently into a lagoon anchored by a nostalgically themed water tower, reflecting the region’s heritage. Children under 36 inches won’t be left out thanks to interactive splash stations throughout the area.

visitkingsisland.com/soak-city

MERLIN



Sea Life Florida Aquarium

Legoland Florida Resort, Winter Haven, Florida

Legoland Florida Resort, in an effort to expand marine education and family engagement, opened Sea Life Florida in May. The aquarium features 25 interactive exhibits, including a central display themed as a “Theme Park Under the Sea.” Claire McCool, Sea Life regional director, notes, “This location was developed to foster curiosity and support conservation through immersive design and educational programming. Our team worked closely with Merlin Magic Making to ensure the experience aligns with Sea Life’s global mission.” The attraction includes approximately 150,000 gallons of water and houses over 3,000 animals across 150 species. In partnership with Sea Life Trust, the resort has implemented recyclable bags across all affiliated parks to reduce single-use plastics. Merlin Entertainments CEO Fiona Eastwood adds, “Sea Life Florida reflects our broader strategy to deliver branded experiences that connect families with the natural world in meaningful ways.” The opening complements Legoland Florida’s existing offerings and reinforces Merlin’s commitment to accessible, family-focused attractions.

legoland.com/florida/things-to-do/sea-life-florida/

Siren's Curse

Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio

Vekoma



Cedar Point launched Siren's Curse, a tilt coaster, developed in partnership with Vekoma Rides. Opened in June, the attraction features a 160-foot vertical tilt mechanism that transitions riders from horizontal to vertical before a controlled drop, enhancing the coaster's thrill profile and engineering complexity. "This project took a lot of passion and effort," says Ricardo Tonding Etges, vice president of sales and marketing at Vekoma. "It's impressive what we accomplished in just nine months." Originally slated for another Six Flags property, the decision to relocate Siren's Curse to Cedar Point was driven by strategic placement along the park's midway, maximizing visibility and guest engagement—even for non-riders. The ride's location offers a visual impact while an immersive queue design, and synchronized audio-visual effects that align with the siren mythology theme enhance the experience. "We've been working on this product for six years," Etges adds. "We continue to innovate, create new concepts, and deliver memorable experiences."

cedarpoint.com/rides-experiences/sirens-curse



CEDAR POINT

Snoopy's Racing Railway

Carowinds, Charlotte, North Carolina

ART Engineering

Carowinds continues to invest in attractions for the youngest thrill seekers at Camp Snoopy, most recently with Snoopy's Racing Railway. The family launch coaster "is perfectly themed to match the area" and is "our second expansion of Camp Snoopy since 2018," says Chris Foshee, regional manager for public relations. It is designed for riders who clear just 36 inches in height and has a gentle maximum speed of 31 miles per hour. Park manager Brian Oerding set high expectations for the ART Engineering-designed coaster's potential to "provide fun-filled adventures for generations of park guests."

carowinds.com/rides-experiences/snoopys-racing-railway



CAROWINDS

Sol Club Lagoon Amenity Village at Sunterra

Crystal Lagoons, Katy TexasLand Tejas and Starwood Land

Sunterra's lagoon was "designed as an active centerpiece where residents can swim, paddle, or simply relax beachside, with a clubhouse at its center." All this "incorporated the developer's market research" pointing to strong resident preferences for "family-friendly recreation and social gathering spaces." To adapt the design to the development's terrain, Crystal Lagoons worked with developer Land Tejas and Starwood Land across a longer-term iterative design process.

Frischmann's best advice to developers and clients is "to define how they want the lagoon to function within their overall master plan, whether as a resident-only amenity, a mixed-use anchor, a hospitality attraction, or a Public Access Lagoons project with ticketed entry."

crystal-lagoons.com/proyectos/sunterra/



CRYSTAL LAGOONS

SPEEDZONE



Tennessee Twister, Blue Ridge Blitz, Dragon Tail Slick Track

SpeedZone Fun Park. Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

Five Star Parks & Attractions

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee's SpeedZone Fun Park is the third park owned and operated by Five Star Parks & Attractions in the region alone. "The exact timing [of the opening] wasn't strategic, but more of a desire to invest more into the area," says Five Star's Vice President of Entertainment Strategy and Tech Services Jeff Gebhart. Five Star also owns and operates Xtreme Racing Center of Pigeon Forge.

SpeedZone's two newly redesigned tracks are "elevated go kart tracks woven together," incorporating "downhill straights that give a rush, passing lanes that make for great competition racing, and turns that give the tracks character and that take skill to navigate." The park's location is special too, offering a feature that you just cannot recreate anywhere else: the Rocky Mountain view from the top of the track.

speedzonefunpark.com/

ROYAL CARIBBEAN



Star of the Seas

Royal Caribbean Port Canaveral, Florida

Royal Caribbean officially introduced Star of the Seas, its newest Icon Class ship, during a naming ceremony at Port Canaveral, Florida. "Star of the Seas represents the next bold step in our journey to reimagine vacations," says Jason Liberty, president and CEO of Royal Caribbean Group. "It brings together the best of our innovation, signature experiences, and the most sought-after destinations into one unforgettable vacation." The ship features eight distinct neighborhoods, including Surfside for young families, Category 6 waterpark, and Crown's Edge, a 154-foot-high experience above the ocean. Michael Bayley, president and CEO of Royal Caribbean International, notes, "Star of the Seas delivers everything families want in a vacation with more adventure and more ways to make unforgettable memories together." Star began seven-night Caribbean sailings in August from Port Canaveral.

royalcaribbean.com/cruise-ships/star-of-the-seas

FLORIDA AQUARIUM



The Tide Pool

The Florida Aquarium, Tampa, Florida

The Florida Aquarium's latest milestone in their multi-year, \$45 million expansion project—get ready for puffins, California sea lions, and African penguins in 2026 and 2027—is The Tide Pool, a large, new cool water touch habitat focused on the flora and fauna of Pacific Northwest coastal waters. For Roger Germann, president and CEO, the attraction offers "a rare opportunity to interact with" upwards of 200 invertebrate species, making it a "hands-on experience that ignites curiosity and can spark a lifelong commitment to conservation."

According to Senior Vice President of Engagement & Learning Debbi Stone, "touch habitats consistently rank among the highest-rated experiences at the Aquarium," and research has found that "tactile engagement leads to greater learning and retention."

To bring The Tide Pool to life for guests, The Aquarium worked with designers and fabricators that include Water Dog, Animal Exhibits, Aquatic Innovations, and Aquatic Design Group.

flaquarium.org/visit/habitats/the-tide-pool/

Top Thrill 2

Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio

Zamperla

Cedar Point opened Top Thrill 2 in 2025 with a new experience that incorporates the existing 420-foot tower experience of the original Top Thrill Dragster roller coaster. The ride experience now includes a new 420-foot vertical spike that riders experience after propelling forward enough of the main tower before a rollback and subsequent launch backwards and up the new spike before another 120 mph launch forward up and over the main tower and iconic top hat. “Because nothing was off the shelf, it needed to be completely engineered just for this project,” says Antonio Zamperla Jr., Zamperla CEO. Zamperla helped the park incorporate data from guest surveys to preserve their favorite aspects of the original coaster while guiding the Ohio park towards the future. “The project was really a huge partnership between Zamperla and Cedar Point but I think the pride is to the testament of our two teams working together to really integrate our new technology and make it work with the attraction,” says Sales and Marketing Director at Zamperla, Adam Sandy.

cedarpoint.com/rides-experiences/top-thrill-2



CEAR POINT



Universal Horror Unleashed

Area15, Las Vegas

Universal Destinations & Experiences officially opened Universal Horror Unleashed in Las Vegas, marking its entry into year-round horror entertainment. Located in the Area15 District, the venue features four haunted houses, themed zones, live performances, and curated food and beverage offerings.

“This marks an exciting step in our expansion into new markets as we officially welcome guests to Universal Horror Unleashed in Las Vegas,” says Page Thompson, president of new ventures for Universal Destinations & Experiences. “Horror Unleashed will provide unique character interactions that will thrill fans of both horror and immersive entertainment.” The experience also includes a VIP package, offering priority access and exclusive amenities. With this launch, Universal continues to diversify its entertainment platforms while deepening engagement with fans through interactive storytelling and themed environments tailored to horror enthusiasts.

universalhorrorunleashed.com/en/us



MICHAEL COSTELLO

Volcanic Wedgeee

Wet'n'Wild Hawaii, Kapolei, Hawaii

WhiteWater

Wet'n'Wild Hawaii shifted to 100% solar power and “partnered with Hawaii Energy to install 20 variable frequency drives (VFDs) on the motors powering its water attractions,” which are bold moves that have yielded approximately \$500,000 in annual savings, says General Manager Scott Loos. The park reinvested that money into the development and installation of their latest attraction, the Volcanic Wedgeee. As Loos succinctly put it, “harnessing the power of the sun pays off, and afforded us the ability” to reinvest in guest experience.

Volcanic Wedgeee's pair of High-Speed AquaTubes from WhiteWater, launches riders from 70 feet up into body slides featuring custom flashes of light and speeds of up to 30 miles per hour.

wetnwildhawaii.com



WHITEWATER



Sophie Brookover is a writer with bylines at Vulture, The Daily Beast, and Grammy.com. Thanks to her previous career in librarianship, she's curious about everything from costume design and decorative arts to logistics and amusement design. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).



PHOTOS: CHATTANOOGA ZOO



A snake rests on the arm of a man holding the Chattanooga Zoo's sloth-themed brew, Hang Two Mango IPA, developed in partnership with Oddstory Brewing Co.

Chattanooga Zoo Raises a Glass

How the zoo struck up a brewery partnership for a special celebration

by *Jim Futrell*

WHEN A TWO-TOED SLOTH NAMED BOYSENBERRY moved into the Chattanooga Zoo in the summer of 2025 for the first time in seven years, the zoo knew they had to celebrate the addition in a unique way. The result was Hang Two Mango IPA, a result of the zoo's growing collaboration with Oddstory Brewing Co.

Founded in 2016, Oddstory Brewing is one of Chattanooga, Tennessee's most popular local breweries. They operate two locations, including their main brewery and taproom, which features a sprawling, family-friendly 10,000-square-foot beer garden. The brewery places a high priority on supporting the community that elevates them.

Cheers to Developing Relationships

The partnership between Oddstory and the Chattanooga Zoo began in 2024, when Oddstory sponsored the zoo's annual Frights and Pints event, a 21+ beer festival. "It was the standard sponsorship deal," says Jake Cash, the zoo's director of marketing and communications, noting that Oddstory donated beer for the event. However, unlike some of the zoo's past brewery partnerships, both partners saw greater opportunity.

"Oddstory is very popular in the community with a wide age appeal," says Cash, citing the brewery's family-friendly atmosphere. The two parties then began looking for ways to deepen the partnership.

According to Aly Butler, Oddstory's creative director, this was the first time the brewery decided to take a partnership a step further and collaborate on a beer. "From our first meeting, it was clear we were onto something special. The conversation flowed as we brainstormed ideas and, before long, we landed on the perfect collaboration: brewing a beer together that features one of their newest additions, Boysenberry the sloth, right on the can."

While Oddstory brewed collaborative beers with a local soccer team and a two other nonprofits in the past, this is their first larger-scale partnership.

Butler says that to create a successful collaborative beer, the word "collaboration" is the most critical component. The two parties brainstormed together on details

like the season of release, the target audience, and styles that would appeal to a wide array of beer drinkers. In the case of the zoo, however, they even considered the characteristics of the sloth—such as its origin, diet, and habitat. "All of these factors help shape a beer that's not only approachable but also designed to make a meaningful community impact," says Butler. "A portion of every package sale is donated back to the zoo, so it was important that the product resonates with our community. From beer style to the can design, every step was intentionally crafted to ensure both quality and purpose."

Given the sloth's name, discussions immediately gravitated toward a boysenberry beer, but the brewery had doubts about the flavor and marketability. Instead, they moved on to a two-toed sloth's behavior—remembering that sloths are known to spend time in mango trees and eat the fruit. From there, the creation of Hang Two Mango IPA was natural. Described as a West Coast-style IPA, the beer was released



in June at the brewery's two taprooms and at the zoo. A portion of the proceeds go back to the facility.

Striking Balance Through Product Promotion

To promote the new beer, Oddstory designated the zoo their "Nonprofit of the Month" for June. A different community non-profit organization is selected each month, and customers can round up their purchases to support it.

According to Butler, supporting local nonprofits has been a core value since the brewery's opening. "We started our Nonprofit of the Month program about three years ago as a way to organize and ensure we are spreading the love across multiple organizations that all align with our company's values: connection, community, and nature."

Oddstory provides the selected non-profit the opportunity to do an activation at the brewery during the month, and on June 12, the Chattanooga Zoo hosted a

special Giveback Night event. Featuring zoo ambassadors—including a bearded dragon, turtle, and other animals, 10% of the evening's sales were donated to Chattanooga Zoo. Butler says their Giveback Nights and Round-Up Program raise an average of \$1,500 a month for each nonprofit.

Meanwhile, an article on the partnership was included in the zoo's member magazine while Oddstory was included in the zoo's social media promotions. Being able to tap into the zoo's social media platforms was one of the main benefits Cash cites for the brewery, as it is larger than the brewery's social media audience—but the two share a similar target demographic.

Cash calls their partnership with Oddstory the most comprehensive in recent years, and there are plans for it to continue. The first batch of Two Toes Mango IPA quickly sold out, and another batch hit the taprooms and the zoo in September. Oddstory will also be sponsoring the Frights and Pints event again in 2025.

Cash believes that zoos can make particularly effective promotional partners. "Zoos make ourselves attractive because of a rich amount of content," he says, citing their collection of animals. Oddstory did multiple photoshoots at the zoo that involved animals interacting with their beer cans—creating vivid and unique social media content.

When Oddstory looks for promotional partners, they've chosen to focus their efforts on those whose missions align most closely with their values. "By narrowing our scope, we're able to make a deeper impact alongside organizations that reflect what we care about most."

Cash agrees that the success of any promotional partnership depends on choosing your partner carefully. "Make sure your potential partner reaches the target audience you want to work with; look at how effective the partner already is in communicating its message, and make sure your values and mission align." 

chattzoo.org, oddstorybrewing.co



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DISNEY



Celebration Under the Stars

How Walt Disney World showers its cast with appreciation

By Scott Fais

LATE ONE AFTERNOON EACH JANUARY, Magic Kingdom Park at the Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, closes uncharacteristically early. As the sun sets in the west over the Seven Seas Lagoon, the red carpet begins to roll down Main Street U.S.A. Simultaneously, a culinary team rolls out specialty F&B carts along pathways in themed areas, like Frontierland. Meanwhile, technicians scurry to prepare an exclusive fireworks show, complete with projections that after dark will shine upon Cinderella Castle.

No tickets may be purchased for the celebration rooted in gratitude.

“The moment that you are welcomed to the event—walking the red carpet—makes you feel like a rock star, like a movie star,” says Felipe Mota, a 10-year cast member (the name Disney bestows upon its employees) working at Disney’s Riviera Resort.

Mota joined 6,500 other cast members who celebrated a milestone anniversary in 2025 at Magic Kingdom Park. The Service Celebration party, branded as “CelebrateYou!” (stylized as one word with an exclamation point), honors those from 10 years, all the way up to 50+ years of service at the theme park resort.

When Mota and others arrived, he and his wife walked the red carpet while Disney Experiences leaders applauded them.

“That energy is an important part of the party. It includes not only fellow cast members, but Disney executives,” explains Jackie Swisher, vice president of Disney’s Hollywood Studios theme park, who recently celebrated 20 years at Walt Disney

World and brought her mother to CelebrateYou!

“She’s a fan of mine and she’s a supporter, but I had never had the opportunity to take her to a company event where she had a chance to meet cast members of mine,” says Swisher, who began her career with the resort as a professional intern in the industrial engineering department. “So, my favorite Disney memory is absolutely [spending the evening] with my mom.”

Funworld was given the unprecedented opportunity to see the great length Walt Disney World goes to when showing appreciation to their cast on the special night.

An Attraction Within an Attraction

Disney’s time-honored tradition providing entertainment at the Service Celebration is legendary. After walking the red carpet, cast members and their guests are free to enjoy Magic Kingdom park all to themselves.

Around every corner, an exclusive menu awaits. In 2025, specialty F&B items included 5,500 lbs. of legendary shrimp (that holds a reputation for being the size of a fist), street corn, a special recipe macaroni and cheese, and cannoli carts serving dessert.

Just as plentiful, Disney character greetings with many featuring familiar faces from the past. The talented comedians from the former Comedy Warehouse at Pleasure Island came back together for several sets, much to the delight of older cast members who remember visiting the troupe during their younger years.

A DJ in Tomorrowland spins Disney tunes perfect for dancing.

And all enjoy low wait times on popular attractions that are operating.

At the end of the night, an extended fireworks spectacular—created just for the evening—lights up the night sky and features music from retired evening shows and parades at Epcot and Disney’s Hollywood Studios. Altogether, more than 150 experiences await cast members.

Another highlight is the opportunity to see colleagues from different segments

of the business. Throughout the night, Funworld heard squeals of joy when an attendee would recognize a face not seen in years.

“This is no ordinary employee party,” Swisher confirms with a smile. “It’s also a bit of a family reunion. You get to see people you haven’t seen in a while.”

A Beautiful Circle

Instilling a sense of value and appreciation is one of the characteristics of CelebrateYou! Swisher tells Funworld.

“We know—both through data as well as our own experience—that happy cast members do amazing work by creating happiness for our guests. So, when our cast members feel seen, and valued, and heard, they stay with us longer. They are more effective at the jobs they do and they create more magical memories for our guests,” Swisher says.

Retaining employees for more than 10 years is quite the feat. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports as of January 2024, the median number of years that a wage and salary worker stays with a current employer is only 3.9 years (that’s down from 4.1 years from 2022).

“For those cast members who are so excited to be here to celebrate, their energy translates back into the operation and allows us to create these amazing memories for our guests. So, it’s a beautiful circle.”

Mota agrees. “It gives you a feeling of being so proud to work for this company. They take the time, make the effort, and plan an event like this,” he says.

In all, Walt Disney World employs more than 80,000 cast members, earning the attraction the title of Central Florida’s largest employer.

Party Planning

Planning for CelebrateYou! takes place year-round. Walt Disney World has a dedicated team that plans and tailors every detail of the celebration. Yet, the Florida attraction is not alone: Disneyland also honors its cast with a Service Celebration gala in March. Across both coasts, the two resorts traditionally recognize nearly 9,000 cast members annually, equating to more



LEFT: Jackie Swisher and her mother.

BELOW LEFT: Felipe Mota on the red carpet.

BELOW RIGHT: A Disney cast member poses with Stitch, dressed in Elvis-themed clothing.



DISNEY

than 148,000 years of service at both the Florida property and California resort.

“The service award celebration is in some ways, the pinnacle and just a truly amazing way for us to be able to reinvest in our cast—and that’s such an inspiration,” Swisher says.

While the Service Celebration traditionally takes place on one night each winter, Walt Disney World cast members have access to additional resources year-round. Benefits include access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the on-site Partners Federal Credit Union, and life support through Care.com that connects workers to child and senior care, housekeeping services, pet care, and homework help among others. In addition, eligible cast members also receive support with childcare costs at two licensed childcare facilities right on Disney property.

Disney Aspire allows eligible full-time and part-time hourly employees a catalog of programs and degree options across various fields of study—from high school equivalent degrees to undergraduate diplomas.

And while CelebrateYou! is a memory that Mota will recall with excitement for the next five years until he reaches his 15-year milestone, he’ll live on the energy felt at January’s event.

“I was joking with my cast members during the day [before the party] and I said, ‘Tonight, don’t bother me. I booked the Magic Kingdom!’” Mota concludes with a laugh. 



Tips for Navigating Tariffs

How the attractions industry can address increasing costs and shrinking margins

by Dawn Allcot

JUST AS THE ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRY BEGAN TO RECOVER from the pandemic-related downturn and post-pandemic inflation, manufacturers, wholesalers, and operators are hit with another obstacle—tariffs.

“Tariffs affect everyone in America,” says Michael Nowak, CEO of family entertainment center wholesaler Redemption Plus. He’s already started to see the financial pinch, with prize merchandise from China facing tariffs of up to 50%.

Reduced Spending Meets Rising Prices

Rising prices on everything from prizes to the steel and aluminum needed to build or maintain rides reduces profit margins for entertainment centers, theme parks, and other attractions. Coupled with declines in consumer spending, tariffs could contribute to a rough ride for the industry over the next few seasons.

“Tariffs are driving a lot of changes in consumer behavior and driving a lot of inflation right now,” said Michael Snipes, associate professor of instruction, Economics at the University of South Florida. “We’re seeing the inflation rate for the United States starting to tick back up, and a big part of that is the tariffs.”

Rather than decreased demand ultimately reducing prices, which would typically happen in a free market, this is a different type of challenge. “It’s not like consumers lost interest and we can advertise more to get them back,” Snipes says. “Consumers and wholesalers are responding to a policy that is outside of the market.”

“Tariff-driven cost pressure is real,” agrees Amandine Servain, VP marketing at Wunderkind, a performance marketing platform. “Our tariffs report last month found 58% of U.S. consumers feel

either cautious, pessimistic or panicked about the economy.”

This may directly translate into consumers spending less on entertainment. “Non-necessities are going to be the first thing to get cut,” Snipes says.

However, the real pressure for attractions will come from diminished purchasing power. “Tariffs are increasing prices for wholesalers, and that’s going to feed down the food chain,” he says. “If most of your product is coming from overseas, your business is going to feel it acutely.”

Keeping tabs on ever-changing tariffs, managing cash flow and inventory, and focusing on delivering greater value can help combat these challenges.

Understanding Tariffs in the Attractions Industry

Food, merchandise, raw materials for repairs or new construction, along with the aforementioned prizes, often come from overseas and face tariffs. Sorting out tariff rates is a moving target, with no high score celebration at the end if you hit the mark with laser precision.

There’s also legislation in the works that would force the U.S. government to return tariff money to small businesses, whether or not the Supreme Court rules the tariffs as illegal.

Here are a few current figures to keep in mind that could drive buying decisions:

- Aluminum and steel tariffs on imports doubled to 50% this summer, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.
- Chinese goods, across the board, may face tariffs of up to 57%.
- Products from India could face 25% tariffs, according to a report from the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Going Hyper-Local

Sourcing from the United States, whenever possible, can help domestic operators control costs. For instance, regional parks may consider purchasing food and beverages hyper-locally, eliminating tariffs and reducing fuel costs.

IAAPA monitors critical tariff developments, advocates for fair trade policies, and provides insights to help facilities and suppliers stay competitive, compliant, and prepared in an increasingly complex global marketplace. Learn more at: IAAPA.org/tariffs

Inventory Management

Of course, certain items essential to theme park and family entertainment center operations can't be sourced locally. That's when operators must decide whether they want to increase prices, operate on slimmer margins, or deploy a combination of both solutions to control costs.

That's a dilemma Nowak, as a wholesaler, faced this year. Fortunately, his large warehouse allowed him to stockpile merchandise.

"We knew this was going to come," he says. "About a year ago, we started to buy heavy. But some of the people in this industry don't have the space to store merchandise."

Snipes acknowledges that many businesses have no choice but to raise prices.

"The only thing you can do is see how much you can kick the cost down to consumers in the form of higher prices," he says.

Leveraging Technology to Manage Your Supply Chain

Inventory management is a key to staying competitive. Implementing the right processes and apps can help.

"For entertainment operators, technology and third-party logistics can be real equalizers," says Ammar Moiz, CEO of Mayple Global, a logistics platform primarily for e-commerce companies. "Operators who consolidate inventory via cloud-based platforms can see what they have and where, in real time, to reduce over-ordering."

He noted that e-commerce brands have deployed these tactics with success. "It can work just as well for entertainment operators," he says.

Moiz adds that 3PLs spread shipping and warehousing costs over multiple partners to reduce per-unit costs.

"Being able to evolve from a reactive strategy to a proactive supply chain strategy can preempt disruptions, better manage tariffs, and convert logistics into a source of growth rather than a friction point," he says.

Changing Product Mix to Improve Margins

Nowak's warehouse space and strategic forethought helped him delay raising prices. As he re-stocks, tariffs on products coming in from China have caused him to re-think his product lines.

"I think this is a new normal," he says. "I think what people can do is consider if their product mix has to change. It's just [important] to get really intentional on what you're buying."

When deciding whether to raise prices, absorb the cost, or switch up product lines, Nowak recommends evaluating each expense in terms of its value.

He described the difference between what he views as "costly" vs. "expensive" products. "Costly is a high price, but good value, while expensive is a low value with a high cost," he says. "Has something that was previously a good value, even though it cost more, just become expensive, but no longer a good value?"

Appealing to Consumers in a Struggling Economy

Rising costs are just one part of the equation. Economic uncertainty adds to an operator's concerns moving into the holiday season and preparing for next year.

The IAAPA State of the Global Attractions Industry Q3 2025 report found that in North America, theme park operators pivoted with discounted pricing to attract visitors. However, once inside the gates, guests spent less, reducing incremental revenue for parks.

The U.S. Tariffs Consumer Impact survey from Wunderkind supported these findings on a larger scale; in general, more than one-third (38%) of consumers are cutting non-essentials.

However, Servain pointed out these numbers offer flexibility across demographics.

"Millennials and Gen Z are still deal-seeking and experimenting with new brands," she says. "That tells me demand won't evaporate completely; rather it will shift toward visible value and flexible offers."

She recommends "triggered messaging" and "personalized offers" to streamline the customer journey and shorten the conversion cycle.

This strategy proved effective for SeaWorld, which increased bookings five-fold and increased digital revenue by 2.4%, according to a Wunderkind case study.

"Lead with value framing, target discounts precisely, and let identity and behavior signals determine who needs an incentive and who does not," Servain says. "Resist the urge to train guests to wait for a sale."

Focus on the Guest Experience

Nowak emphasizes the importance of focusing on a company's core values. "Keep the main thing, the main thing," he suggests. "Of course you have to look at costs, but you can't do it at the detriment of the customer experience. Are you still delivering a high-quality product?" 



Dawn Allcot is a seasoned freelance writer with more than 20 years of experience specializing in personal finance, economics, technology and travel. Her work has been featured in outlets including GoBankingRates, TheStreet, CNET, MSN, and Nifty50Plus, where she delivers practical insights on saving, investing, and credit management. A theme park and roller coaster enthusiast, Dawn also shares her favorite travel tips at [GeekTravelGuide](#). Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).



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There are not many industries with a primary purpose to bring families together, create memories, and spread happiness. That acts not only as IAAPA's mission—but as a unifying force for what has become a global attractions industry family.

Since 1920, that family has come together to celebrate our industry at what is now named IAAPA Expo. In the first year of the convention, 40 people gathered at the Auditorium Hotel in Chicago to discuss the state of the industry and attend eight educational sessions—on topics including publicity, picnics, reducing liability insurance, and war taxes. A handful of manufacturers displayed their wares on three or four kitchen tables set up in a small room adjoining the meeting hall. By 1921, attendance increased to 150 attendees, 20 educational sessions were presented, and manufacturers were invited to display their latest inventions in a dedicated hall. From then on, the story of IAAPA Expo has been one of continuous growth. By 1976, IAAPA Expo moved into a convention center for the first time, where 7,100 people descended upon New Orleans and browsed 310 exhibitors occupying 62,300 square feet.

Now settled into its traditional home in Orlando, the scale of IAAPA Expo is staggering—bringing in more than 41,000 attendees from across the globe, more than 170 EDUSessions, and 1,100 exhibitors covering 550,000 square feet of show floor.



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One of the most profound comments I have heard about IAAPA Expo came from IAAPA Hall of Fame member and 2007 IAAPA Chair Mats Weidin in his IAAPA Oral History interview. "It's a universe that exists for a week and then it's gone. If you come here, if you come to the convention center, if you stay at the Peabody [now the Hyatt], you know almost everybody in the hotel. Come here a week later—you know nobody, and it's fantastic to have this universe sort of come together. Everybody's sucked into this; it's not a black hole, but we're sucked into this big magnet that IAAPA is."

I am thrilled to return again this year for my 27th IAAPA Expo and honored to be serving our industry as IAAPA's historian. Whether it's your first Expo or your 41st, I'd like to issue a welcome to our "universe that exists for a week." See you on the show floor! 



Jim Futrell has authored ten books on the amusement industry and dozens of articles for industry trade publications. He began overseeing IAAPA's Oral History Project in 2005 and currently serves as IAAPA's Historian in addition to being Historian for the National Amusement Park Historical Association (NAPHA). Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#):



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