IAAPA NEWS

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The Global Ambassador

Chris Perry's journey from bathhouse attendant to 2027 IAAPA Chairman

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2027 IAAPA Chairman Chris Perry shares a laugh with Jeroen Nijpels at IAAPA Expo Europe 2026 in London.

HELENA TRAVESSET

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The Global Ambassador

Chris Perry's journey from bathhouse attendant to 2027 IAAPA Chairman

COVER PHOTO: SCOTT FAIS



SKYLINE PARK

87 Hot in Atlanta

Sizzling strategies inside Atlanta's FECs & LBEs



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Rope Drop

Twist and Shout

The new Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift roller coaster at Universal Studios Hollywood packs a lot under the hood. Racing at 72 mph, the new coaster from Intamin features four launches, an inverted dive loop, twisted pretzel loop, and an inverted stall along 4,100 feet of track.

"The debut of this first-of-its-kind roller coaster is a literal game changer for Universal Studios Hollywood," says Scott Strobl, executive vice president and general manager of the park. The train is composed of four vehicles—modeled after a Dodge Charger, Mazda RX-7, Nissan Skyline GT-R, and a Toyota Supra—that "drift" (spin) 360-degrees.

See more 2026 innovations from across the globe with Funworld's annual What's New section found on page 103.



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

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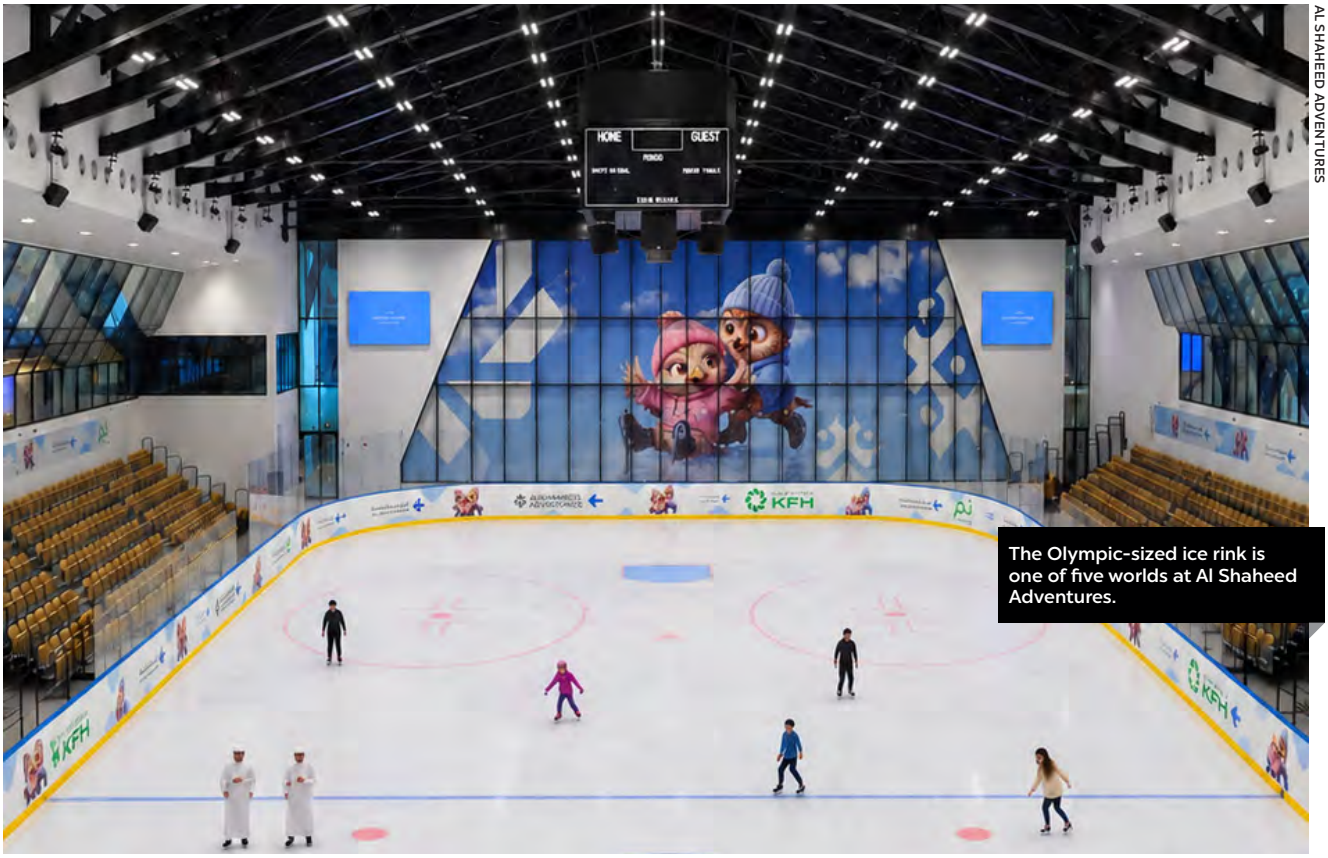
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AL SHAHEED ADVENTURES

The Olympic-sized ice rink is one of five worlds at Al Shaheed Adventures.

MULTI-GENERATIONAL DESIGN

Kuwait's Next Big Adventure

Al Shaheed Adventures highlights how the country embraces active experiences

by Juliana Gilling

ADVENTURE ARRIVED IN KUWAIT IN A BIG WAY on Oct. 1 when Al Shaheed Adventures—a new integrated adventure and entertainment destination—officially swung open its doors. With the debut comes a fresh wave of thrills to the third phase of Al Shaheed Park.

Operated by TAS Entertainment, the project combines indoor and outdoor experiences to create maximum fun in the heart of Kuwait City.

"We describe Al Shaheed Adventures as 'Five Worlds. Endless Adventures,'" says Fatima Alsaqabi, COO of TAS Entertainment. "We are very honored to be operating this important destination."

Al Shaheed Adventures centers around five headline experiences. Snow Fun invites guests to experience real winter conditions and snow-based activities in Kuwait. Ice Rink, an Olympic-size rink, welcomes recreational skaters and creates opportunities for ice sports, training, performances, and other events—complete with spectator seating. Guests soar like a bird in the Sky Tunnel, an indoor skydiving experience that is a first for Kuwait. Visitors also race around in Karting, a multi-level, indoor/outdoor karting attraction, offering different environments and temperature zones. The Outdoor Adventures area brings together physical and adventure-based activities, including BMX biking, parkour, and zip lines.

"What makes us most proud is not one attraction individually. It is seeing these very different experiences working together as one destination," Alsaqabi says. "Our vision is to create a destination where adventure, movement, and shared experiences bring people together."

Multi-Generational Design


AL SHAHEED ADVENTURES


AL SHAHEED ADVENTURES

ABOVE: The karting circuit at Al Shaheed Adventures combines air-conditioned indoor sections, outdoor racing, and a stretch above the ice rink.

RIGHT: The attraction promotes the availability of "real snow" year-round with areas to build snowmen, go snow tubing, ride zip lines, and climb an ice wall.

Designed for All

TAS Entertainment designed the attraction to have multi-generational appeal. Al Shaheed Adventures gives everyone—families, friends, teenagers, adults, schoolchildren, and corporate groups—reasons to participate rather than spectate.

"That diversity is important to our operating model. The destination should evolve with its audience rather than depend on a single demographic," Alsaqabi says. "Ultimately, our ambition is to create experiences in Kuwait that meet international standards while retaining a strong local identity."

Al Shaheed Adventures' setting within Al Shaheed Park is one of its key strengths. Backed by the Amiri Diwan of the State of Kuwait, this national park brings together landscaped areas, cultural facilities, entertainment, dining, public spaces, and parking, creating a broader destination ecosystem around the attraction.

"Now that Al Shaheed Adventures is open, the immediate goal is operational excellence, with safe operations, strong guest service, well-trained teams, and consistently high standards across every attraction," Alsaqabi affirms. "Beyond that, we want Al Shaheed Adventures to remain alive and evolving."

"The physical attractions are the foundation, but programming gives people reasons to return. We see opportunities for competitions, ice shows, sports programming, workshops, seasonal events, school programs, corporate experiences, and collaborations with local and international partners," Alsaqabi explains.

Growing Talent Within

The project will also help develop Kuwaiti talent within the attractions industry. "Building attractions is only one part of creating a sustainable entertainment sector; developing operators, supervisors, technicians, and future industry leaders is equally important," Alsaqabi explains. "Our ambition is for Al Shaheed Adventures to become a reference point for professionally operated entertainment in Kuwait and eventually contribute knowledge and experience to projects across the region."

She explains that the emergence of destinations like Al Shaheed Adventures shows that Kuwait's attractions industry is entering a new stage of maturity.

"The conversation is moving beyond simply importing an attraction or building a venue. There is increasing focus on operations, guest experience, safety, technology, programming, commercial sustainability, and creating destinations that remain relevant after opening day."

She adds that Al Shaheed Adventures also demonstrates what can happen when government vision, Kuwaiti private-sector expertise, and international attraction specialists work together. "For TAS, this is important. We want to demonstrate that Kuwaiti companies can not only invest in entertainment but can operate technically complex attractions, develop local talent, and build professional operating models capable of competing at an international level."

That ambition will flourish against a backdrop where Kuwaiti consumers expect more from their leisure offerings.

"Kuwait has a young, sophisticated audience that travels extensively and experiences some of the world's leading entertainment destinations. Their expectations are high. That challenges all of us in the industry to raise our standards," Alsaqabi says.

TAS Entertainment sees that as an opportunity. The group hopes that Al Shaheed Adventures is just the latest step in the continued development of Kuwait as an important contributor to the MENA region's rapidly evolving attractions and entertainment industry. FW

alshaheedadv.com



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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IAAPA EXPO

1 GUEST SERVICE
RULE **BREAKERS**

When is it okay to break the rules? At **FatCats Entertainment** in Arizona, the answer is: often. The chain of FECs recently introduced **Operating in the Gray**. The employee program encourages front-line staff to take initative for doing the right thing—even if that means bending SOP.

"We allow team members to 'break' a process if it's beneficial to the community, to the facility, and to the guest," confirms FatCat's Cory Hernandez. The initiative came about after a frontline employee made a snap decision that challenged the FEC's operating procedures, ultimately assisting a parent and their child with special needs.

FatCats' leadership team now uses Operating in the Gray to empower employees to do what's right—without the fear of retribution. Hernandez says going the extra mile for the team, or for the guest, ultimately is a win for the business.

2 RIBBON CUTTINGS

MEXICO **REFRESHED**

Jardín de los Espejos, a longtime family entertainment destination in Mexico City's Chapultepec Forest, recently introduced renovated spaces and new attractions. The new **Leyendas del Cosmos** virtual reality simulator joins **Portal Mictlán**, a vortex attraction inspired by Mexican culture. The fresh exhibits and reopening of favorites brings together generations of visitors through a mix of nostalgia, adventure, and innovation.



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PHILIPPINES **DISCOVERY**

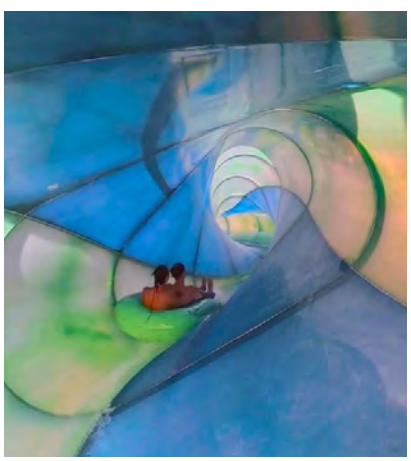
Anjo World Theme Park opened its new **Science Discovery Center**, expanding the attraction's offerings with new educational displays. Exhibits include natural hazards, where visitors learn more about cyclones, whirlpools, and earthquakes in a simulator that shakes. Interactive science displays—such as a Van de Graaff generator, Tesla coil, swinging pendulums, and even a tug-of-war game—explain the phenomenon behind the science.



ANJO WORLD

TÜRKIYE **TWIST**

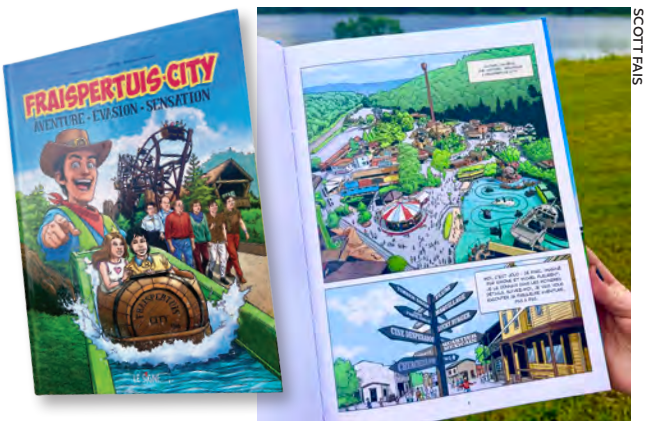
The Land of Legends in Antalya, Türkiye combined a water coaster and spiral drop to form an optical illusion. **Helix Twist** uses changing geometry to create the impression that the slide is rotating around the rider. "Helix Twist represents the kind of innovation that moves our industry forward by creating experiences guests have never encountered before," says Onno Meeter at **WhiteWater**.



WHITEWATER

3 BRANDING
CREATIVE **HISTORY**

France's **Fraispertuis-City** theme park marks its 60th anniversary in a unique way. The park created a hard-bound comic book connecting guests to the time when park founders, Simone and Michel Fleurent, first met. Their history—and the park's evolution—doesn't unfold chronologically. Rather, illustrations share a story of resilience, perspective, and love. The colorful 48-page keepsake retails for €19.90.



SCOTT FAIS

4 STAFFING
COMFORT **STATION**

When the Harrisburg International Airport in Pennsylvania recorded temperatures of 103°F in early July, **Hersheypark** ride operators were ready. The amusement park has proactively installed new rides with team comfort in mind. Several control booths are not only air conditioned, but feature a faucet where team members can refill their water bottles. "We work very hard with new ride installations to try and set these amenities for our team members," says Jeremy Underkoffler, managing director of attractions and guest experience at Hersheypark.



HERSHEYPARK

5 MERCHANDISE
SAFE AND **DRY**

By their nature, river rapids rides are designed to splash (er, soak) riders. Realizing some prefer to be mildly spritzed, **Ocean Park Hong Kong** allows guests to take matters into their own hands. **The Rapids** attraction presents riders with an option while navigating the queue: a vending machine offering ponchos … and moist towelettes. The park provides the service—one that requires no additional staffing—that also can generate additional revenue.



SCOTT FAIS

6 MARKETING
GENUINE **APPRECIATION**

Baynum Solutions continues to make a name for itself through thoughtful gift giving. "Our clients and team have come to expect something genuinely fun and memorable," says founder Chris Baynum. Enter the **Baynum-Opoly** board game. Traditional Monopoly locations are replaced with Baynum restorations, like roller coasters. Custom tokens include a Ferris wheel, high-reach manlift, and paintbrush. Clients and employees received the year-end appreciation gift in 2025. What's planned for 2026? A custom lunchbox.



BAYNUM SOLUTIONS

HAVE A DISPATCH FROM THE FIELD?

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

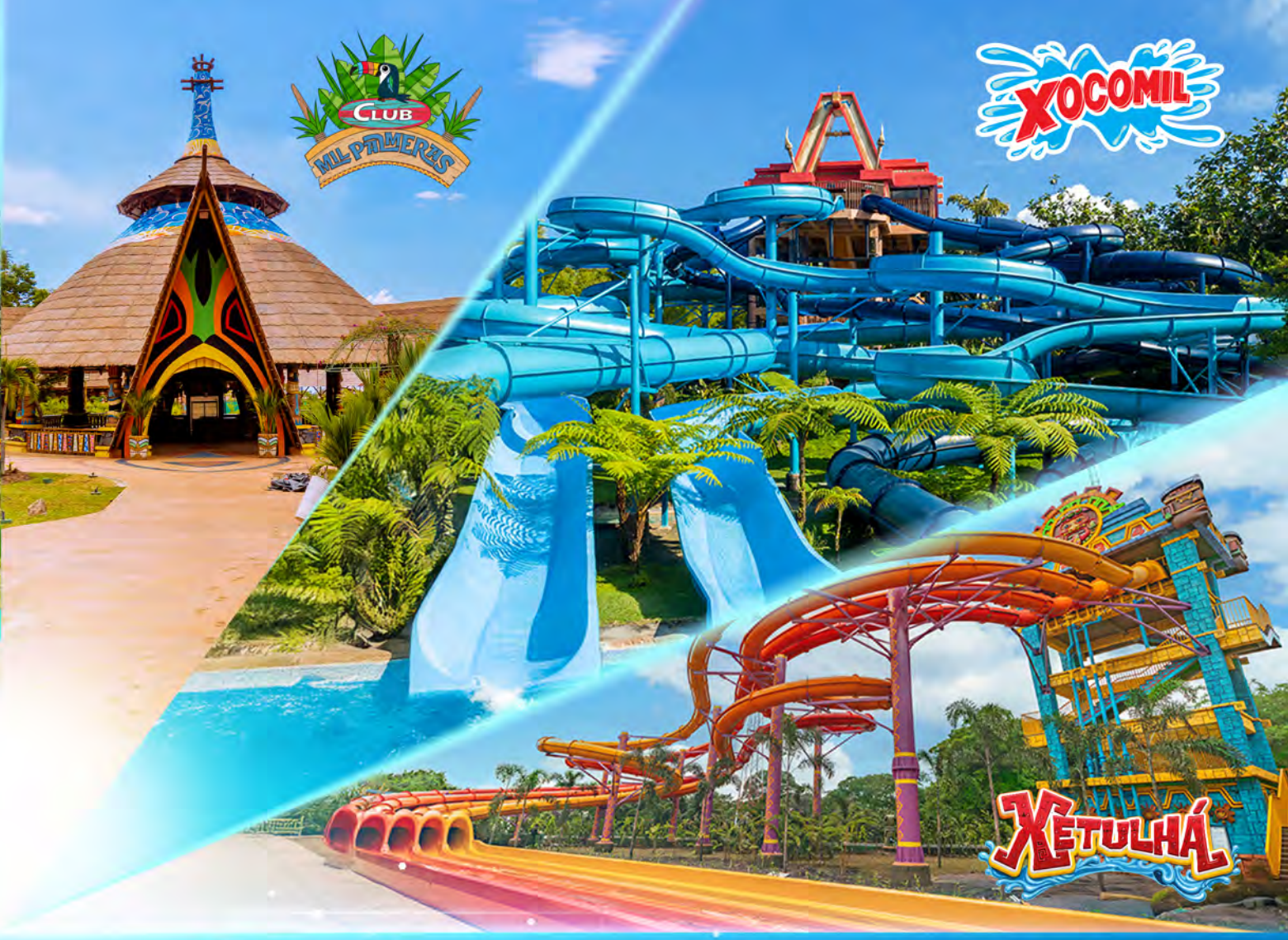


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CLUB MIL PALMERAS

Club Mil Palmeras is a tropical paradise offering a one-of-a-kind experience that blends sports, fun, and relaxation.

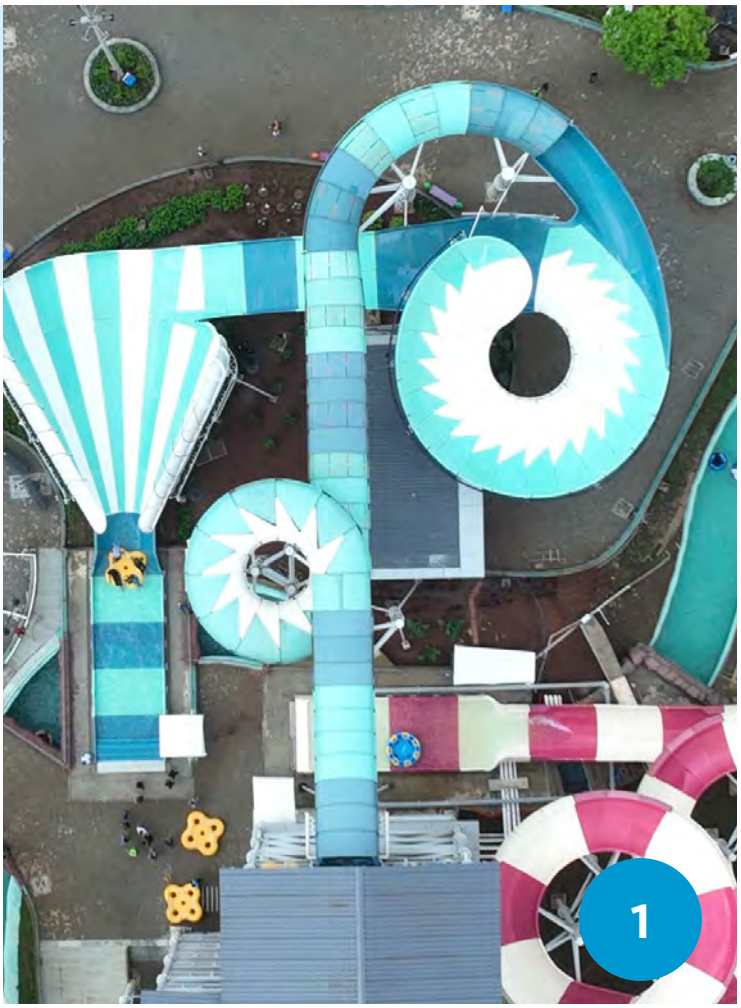
XOCOMIL

Xocomil Water Park is a paradise for a "Party in the water," where you can enjoy the most impressive water rides surrounded by lush vegetation.

XETULHÁ

Xetulhá, which means "beneath the water," is IRTRA's new water park. A nod to the Maya's deep connection with the natural world.

LIKE THE TURNSTILES SPINNING AT ATTRACTIONS around the globe, technology continues to evolve. Funworld's Tech Turnstile feature showcases the innovations, applied technology, and ingenuity found across the attractions landscape—and the manufacturers behind the breakthroughs, all of which were finalists in IAAPA's 2025 Brass Ring Awards.



ARIHANT

(1)

Sliding Into Innovation

WHO: Arihant Industrial Corporation

PRODUCT: Hydro Hurricane

HOW: Arihant touts how their Hydro Hurricane slide integrates six unique ride experiences into a single water attraction. The slide is engineered for high durability and low maintenance with UV-stabilized FRP construction, hot-dip galvanized steel supports, and precision-engineered joints ensure long service life and reduced downtime. Riders experience a combination of speed, banking turns, spirals, and sensory effects.

arihantwaterslides.com



RES RIDES

(2)

Dynamic Ride Sequencing

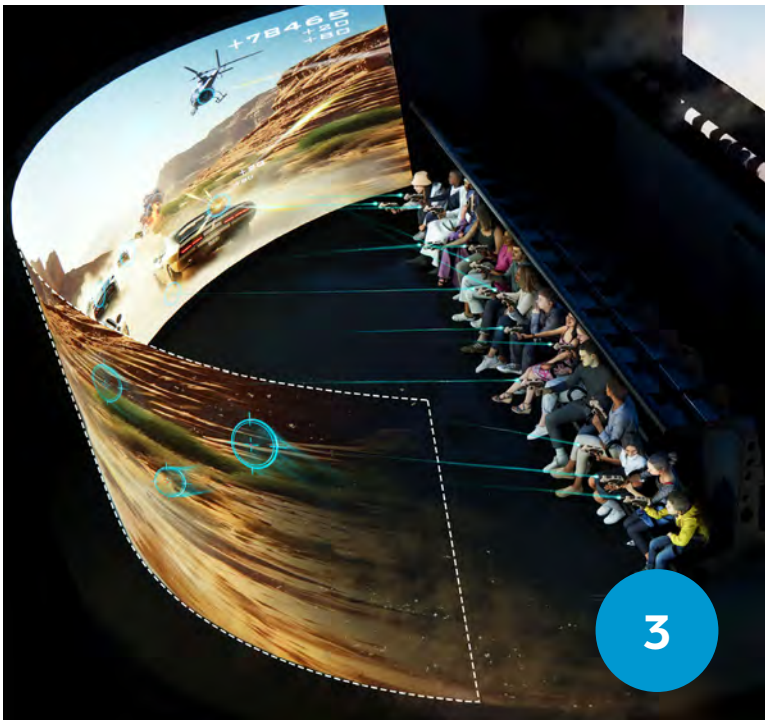
WHO: RES Rides

PRODUCT: Super Swing M20

HOW: RES Rides' Super Swing M20 blends thrilling motion for riders as small as 0.95 meters tall. Operators can control the ride experience: from gentle swings for families to high-octane thrills for adrenaline lovers. With the press of a button, operators can switch ride programs, adapting the experience to suit different audiences throughout the day.

resrides.com

BROGENT



(3)

Theater in the Round

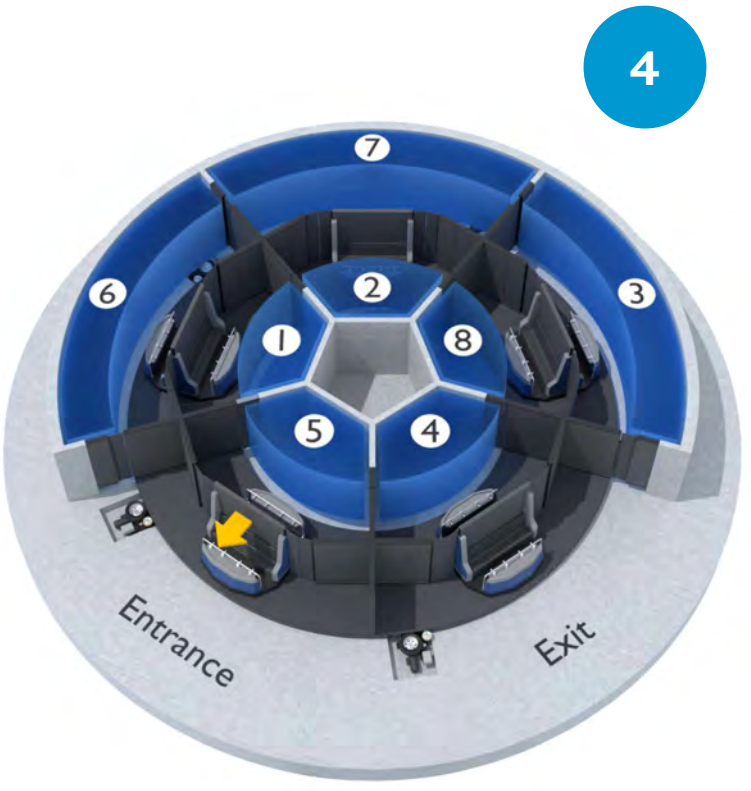
WHO: Brogent

PRODUCT: o-Ride X Flying Theater

HOW: Brogent's o-Ride X Flying Theater is engineered to seamlessly merge a motion theater and a flying theater into a single attraction. Brogent says by delivering two distinct experiences, operators can double their entertainment offering without the need to increase staff or their physical footprint. The blending of interactivity, narrative depth, and cinematics provides a smooth, uninterrupted transition between ride formats.

brogent.com

LAGOTRONICS



(4)

Rotating Dark Ride

WHO: Lagotronics Projects

PRODUCT: Ghostly Manor Gameplay Theater

HOW: The Gameplay Theater format developed by Mack Rides and Lagotronics Projects features rotating dark ride vehicles that continuously turn between a series of 180-degree scenes. With every rotation, a new chapter is revealed. By combining physical sets, large digital screens, and projection-mapped environments, Lagotronics can deliver a high-capacity experience in a preexisting structure without the need of a major expansion.

lagotronicsprojects.com

Discover more technologies and innovations online. See the winners and finalists of IAAPA Expo 2025's Best New Product Award by visiting **IAAPA.org/BestNew2025**

BRASS RING AWARD



LAI GAMES

LAI Games Begins North American Hyper Grid Rollout

In August, **LAI Games** announced the North American rollout of **Hyper Grid**, completing four installations across the United States and Canada within two weeks. The large-format active play attraction is now installed at Taroko Sports in San Antonio; Slick City in Geist, Indiana; Main Event in Woodbury, Minnesota; and Playdium in North York, Ontario.

Designed for up to six players, Hyper Grid combines an interactive LED floor, illuminated walls, and a large display with a library of competitive games. Its integrated Moments AI system automatically captures gameplay and uses AI to select highlights, creating shareable videos for guests.

laigames.com/games/hyper-grid



MACK-RIDES

Mack Rides to Deliver the Record-Breaking Bakunawa

Mack Rides has installed **Bakunawa**, a new spinning launch coaster set to open at **Six Flags Great Adventure** in 2027. Reaching 116 meters (382 feet) and speeds of up to 161 km/h (100 mph), the attraction at the Jackson Township, New Jersey, park will feature free-rotating floorless vehicles and three LSM launches. Inspired by the Bakunawa sea serpent from Philippine folklore, the coaster will also feature a stall inversion and immersive storytelling.

mack-rides.com



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HAPPITAT

Happitat Opens Experiential Destination in Thailand

CP Axtra opened Happitat, a new lifestyle and entertainment attraction in Bangkok, developed around a "World's First Happiness Destination" concept. Spanning more than 200,000 square meters, the indoor/outdoor Happitat comprises three main buildings: the premium lifestyle hub Bloominas, the family-focused Wonderwild, and the entertainment and celebration hub Festie Town.

Indoor, highlights include The Butterfly Trail, an interactive mixed-reality adventure adapted with native Thai butterfly species and created by U.K.-based Pixel Artworks, and Forest of Time, an immersive experience by Germany's BoraBora Studios where guests use their smartphones to collaborate when restoring a dormant ecosystem. Outside, The Forest is a lush plant area full of nature trails and waterfalls.

The grand opening culminated with The Sky Canvas of Happiness, combining music and performances with more than 2,200 drones in the sky above.

happitatthailand.com/en

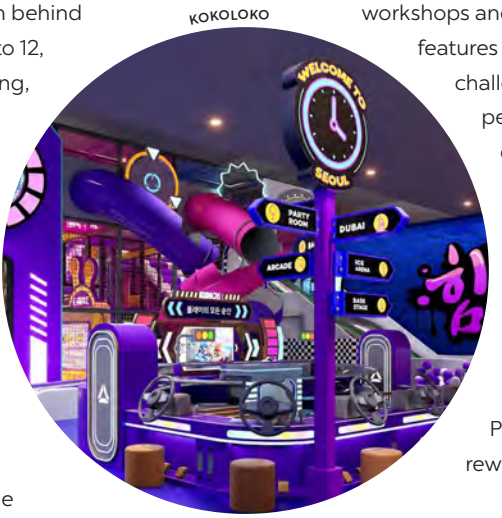
Kokoloko Opens New Indoor Adventure Concept in Bali

TEEG opened Kokoloko at Mal Bali Galeria, introducing a new playground concept created by the team behind Timezone. Designed for children ages 2 to 12, the venue combines immersive storytelling, role play, active attractions, and family dining, with more than 25 attractions across six city-themed zones.

"Rather than a traditional indoor playground, we've created an immersive world where children can explore different cultures, take on new challenges, and become part of an ongoing story," says Kokoloko COO Ashleigh Potts.

Children can race go-karts in Tokyo, explore role-play experiences that include a fire station and clinic in London, and take part in creative workshops and beach-inspired play in Bali. Perth features a giant treehouse, slides, and ninja challenges, while Seoul offers K-pop performances, arcade games, and dress-up experiences. Dubai completes the journey with trampolines and obstacle adventures.

KOKOLOKO



The concept follows an original story featuring Koko the Kangaroo, Pip the Possum, and Ozzy the Koala as they travel around the world. Future additions will include a Traveler's Passport with missions, stamps, and rewards to encourage repeat visits.

timezonegames.com/kokoloko/en-id/

TEXAS PETE

IT'S EASY AS RIP SQUEEZE SAUCE

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Europe & Sub-Saharan Africa

by Juliana Gilling



IAAPA NEWS

Dark Ride Restaurant to Satisfy in Germany

At IAAPA Expo Europe 2026, Mack Rides and Karls announced the world premiere of eatX. The dark ride dining attraction will open at Karls Erlebnis-Dorf park in Elstal, near Berlin, Germany in summer 2027. Mack's patented FlowDiner—a battery-powered floating table with benches—will take guests on the Strawberry Dining Journey, where they can enjoy a three-course meal while traveling through five themed worlds.

The ambition was never to create a restaurant with an experience attached, or an attraction with a meal attached. "We wanted to make both inseparable. For that hour, the outside world should disappear," Robert Dahl, managing director of Karls, explains. "What excites us isn't just the technology, but what it enables us to do: four people can travel through a story together, gathered around a single table."

The attraction's story is rooted in the strawberry's history, reflecting Karls' heritage. Guests will learn how an 18th-century French soldier first gathered the wild fruits that were the ancestors of modern strawberries. eatX blends storytelling, ride technology, dining, multimedia, and themed settings to create an immersive experience.

For Thomas Mack, managing partner of Europa-Park and founder and CEO of Eatrenalin, the installation represents the fruition of a dream he first shared at IAAPA Honors 2025. "Together, we're creating an experience unlike anything that exists today," he says.

karls.de | mack.group/en/

United Kingdom Lights the Way in Windsor

LCI Productions has secured a new five-year contract to continue designing and delivering the popular Windsor Great Park Illuminated—a seasonal lighted trail experience in the historic Windsor Great Park—part of the royal estate south of Windsor in England. The next festive spectacular runs from Nov. 13, 2026 through Jan. 3, 2027.

This year, LCI Productions promises the largest-ever collection of new installations and interactive experiences, introducing fresh characters, stories, and multisensory environments.

LCI's team will combine technologies including holofans, lasers, dynamic LED environments, haze-based holograms, and water projections with large-scale scenic builds to create the nighttime trail.

Rob Paul, design director at LCI Productions says the company aims "to evolve the experience and give returning visitors something new to discover."

windsorilluminated.com | lciproductions.com



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IAAPA 2026



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Miral Announces Major Investment for Abu Dhabi

Miral, Abu Dhabi's immersive destinations and experiences creator, will invest more than AED12 billion across Yas Island over the next five years.

Miral pledges a pipeline of fresh developments, alongside expansions such as the three Harry Potter-themed lands—Diagon Alley, Hogwarts, and Forbidden Forest—coming to Warner Bros. World, Yas Island, Abu Dhabi. The funding will support enhancements to existing attractions, new rides and entertainment offerings, and additional accommodations.

Miral's new AED12 billion investment is separate from the previously announced new Disney theme park in the region, with both supporting Abu Dhabi's Tourism Strategy 2030. "This investment reflects our commitment to Abu Dhabi's long-term vision and our ambition to continue shaping one of the world's most dynamic tourism destinations," says H.E. Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman of Miral.

miral.ae

Orange Wheels Debuts Newest Play Center in Dubai

Orange Wheels' 13th location across the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has opened at Jumeirah Beach Residences (JBR) in Dubai. "JBR felt like a natural next step. It is one of Dubai's most vibrant family and residential communities, surrounded by retail, hospitality, and some of the city's most recognizable attractions," says Shifa Yusuffali, founder and CEO of IdeaCrate, the multi-brand edutainment group behind Orange Wheels. The attraction is designed for young children, with activities and attractions geared towards ages 8 and under.

IdeaCrate is home to three brands—Orange Wheels, Orange Hub, and Orange Seeds Nursery. Yusuffali's goal is to create better experiences for families at different stages of their lives.

IdeaCrate is also exploring expansion opportunities overseas. "The UAE has been our home and our proving ground, but we see significant opportunities to take what we have built into international markets, including India and eventually other markets," Yusuffali says.

ideacrate.net



ORANGE WHEELS IDEACRATE

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Engineered by **Bolliger & Mabillard**, Tormenta Rampaging Run is now in operation at Six Flags Over Texas.

BOLLIGER & MABILLARD



RUM LEGACY MUSEUM

Rum-Themed Experience Opens in the Dominican Republic

Inaugurated in February, the Rum Legacy Museum & Shop opened in the historic downtown of Puerto Plata. The venue highlights the rich history, production process, and enduring heritage of Dominican rum. Spearheaded by Simón Fernández Brugal, a direct descendant of founder Ron Brugal, the facility aims to strengthen Puerto Plata's position as a premier cultural tourism destination in the Caribbean.

The attraction offers an immersive, audio-guided tour available in English and Spanish. Visitors explore the evolution of rum production and learn about fermentation, distillation, and the raw materials used in the product. The exhibit showcases authentic manufacturing elements—including real sugar cane and an original sugar mill. The experience concludes with a guided tasting of regional rums and access to a specialized retail shop.

Open daily, the museum is positioned as a strategic stop for cruise ship passengers arriving in Puerto Plata. The Rum Legacy Museum & Shop collaborates directly with tour operators in the northern region. By providing an interactive educational journey, the museum aims to share Dominican culture, identity, and traditions with global visitors.

instagram.com/rumlegacypop

IRTRA Inaugurates Xetulhá Water Park in Guatemala

The Institute for the Recreation of Private Enterprise Workers of Guatemala (IRTRA) inaugurated its new water park. Located at its Retalhuleu complex, Xetulhá expands Guatemala's recreational offerings.

Spanning more than 76,000 square meters, the park features state-of-the-art infrastructure, themed architecture, and 13 major water attractions. Canadian manufacturers WhiteWater and ProSlide supplied 40 new slides. Key features include the 464-meter Balam Wave river and Sparkling World, a nearly 5,000-square-meter children's play area. The facility offers family cabins, themed restaurants, spa services, and event venues.



The opening generated 500 jobs, strengthening Retalhuleu's local economy and tourism value chain. Founded in 1962, IRTRA operates seven parks and Guatemala's largest hotel complex. IRTRA Chairman and IAAPA Hall of Fame inductee Ricardo Castillo Sinibaldi notes the project reflects the private sector's commitment to delivering world-class facilities for workers and their families.

irtra.org.gt



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EUGENE HYLAND

Funlab Debuts '90s-Inspired Immersive Concept in Australia

Funlab opened Playback96, a new 1990s-inspired social gaming concept at Chadstone's Social Quarter in Melbourne in August. The venue combines physical gameplay, competition, and pop-culture nostalgia within an immersive environment inspired by a retro video rental store.

Guests collect a game card at the Walkman Radio Wall before enjoying an hour of unlimited play across challenges including Total Recall, Stop Hammer Time, Pong Time, Line Master, and Ready Player Run. Nostalgic easter eggs and interactive surprises are scattered throughout the venue, alongside a curated '90s soundtrack and themed food and beverage offering.

"It's exactly the kind of night out Melbourne's been missing—somewhere that puts phones down and gets people playing, competing, and actually talking to each other again," says Funlab CEO Blaise Witnish.

Playback96 accommodates up to 48 people on the game floor each hour and offers combined entertainment options with neighboring Funlab venues Holey Moley, Hijinx Hotel, and Archie Brothers.

playback96.com.au

Hoopla Opens FEC in Melbourne

Hoopla opened a new $15 million family entertainment center in Pakenham on Aug. 3. The purpose-built, 6,000-square-meter venue combines dining, bowling, arcade gaming, and active play, with a concept designed to move beyond the traditional indoor play center.

"We didn't build Hoopla just for kids; we built it for families," says Wayne Gardiner, operations manager at Hoopla. "We wanted to create somewhere the whole family looks forward to visiting together."

At its heart is one of Australia's largest interactive soft playgrounds,



HOOPLA

complete with a fully enclosed toddler arena, alongside a dedicated track for electric ride-on cars. An expansive arcade combines nostalgic titles with contemporary interactive games, while 10 bowling lanes comprise eight mini Blitz lanes and two classic lanes.

Hoopla also offers café-style breakfasts, pub classics, barista-made coffee, and a fully licensed bar. Dedicated social spaces also feature billiards and sports screens, allowing adults to remain close to the family activities.

visithoopla.com.au

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Dollywood Debuts NightFlight Expedition

Dollywood opened NightFlight Expedition to the public in August. Costing more than $60 million, the indoor adventure coaster and water ride from Mack Rides is the largest attraction investment in the Tennessee park's history. The experience runs more than five minutes and combines four distinct ride experiences, immersive storytelling, and groundbreaking technology.

Guests embark on a nighttime journey through the Great Smoky Mountains in search of Secret Lake, navigating coaster and whitewater sequences through more than 500,000 gallons of water. The attraction is housed inside a 44,000-square-foot building, allowing year-round operation independent of the weather.

"NightFlight Expedition represents a defining moment not only for Dollywood but for the theme park industry as a whole," says Eugene Naughton, Dollywood Parks & Resorts president. He believes the attraction demonstrates how a family ride can tell an authentic story connected to the park and its Smoky Mountain surroundings.

dollywood.com

Calgary Zoo Opens Asian Highlands

The Wilder Institute's Calgary Zoo opened its Asian Highlands exhibit, marking the first phase of its broader Imagine Asia transformation. Inspired by the Eastern Himalayas, the new area features three newly created habitats for snow leopards, red pandas, and Sichuan takin, a species making its debut at the facility.

"As the first phase of a broader journey to reimagine our connection to Asia's wildlife and landscapes, Asian Highlands brings together exceptional animal care, conservation storytelling, and meaningful opportunities for guests to learn and engage," says Calgary Zoo President and CEO Dr. Kyle Burks.



CALGARY ZOO

Designed to represent different elevations of the Himalayan ecosystem, the habitats provide larger, more complex environments supporting animal choice and natural behaviors, while immersive elements, interactive discovery, and conservation storytelling connect guests with the region's wildlife. Snow leopards occupy two interconnected habitats at Kingdon Snow Leopard Ridge, while red pandas explore expanded climbing spaces and overhead logs. Finally, Sichuan takins inhabit the Nicholls Family Himalayan Slopes.

calgaryzoo.com/plan-your-visit/animal-zones/imagine-asia



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Huitt-Zollars Appoints Director


HUITT-ZOLLARS
Jenkins

There is a new design director at **Huitt-Zollars**. The company named **Dan Jenkins** as director of design for its creative development team. Jenkins brings more than 30 years of experience in themed entertainment, having led the design and development of attractions, immersive environments, and destination projects for clients around the world. In his new role, Jenkins will help expand the firm's creative design capabilities and support the delivery of experiential projects.

Merlin Selects New Global Corporate Affairs Leader


PRWEEK
Pickett

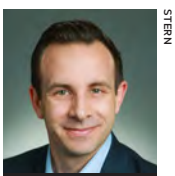
Tamara Pickett is **Merlin Entertainments** new senior vice president, global corporate affairs. Bringing more than 20 years of experience, Pickett joins from Virgin Group, where she served as group communications and external relations director. In her new role, she will oversee corporate communications, public affairs, employee communications, reputation management, and stakeholder engagement globally, reporting directly to CEO Fiona Eastwood. The newly created role reflects Merlin's growing emphasis on suppoting growth ambitions, strengthening its reputation, and building stakeholder trust.

Enchanted Parks Welcomes New CMO


UNA DEBOER.
de Boer

Industry veteran **Una de Boer** is the new chief marketing officer at **Enchanted Parks**, joining its executive team. De Boer joins from WhiteWater, where she served as chief marketing officer for a decade with the water slide manufacturer. At Enchanted Parks, she will lead brand and marketing strategy, build brand awareness, strengthen local park marketing, and deepen connections between the company's parks and their communities.

Stern Pinball Promotes New Chief Financial Officer


STERN
Whitfield

Stern Pinball has elevated **Brian Whitfield** to executive vice president and chief financial officer. Whitfield has served as the company's Controller since February 2023. Prior to joining Stern, Whitfield was an audit partner with RSM US in Los Angeles, where he spent 14 years in roles of increasing responsibility. His tenure also included a three-year post in Hong Kong.

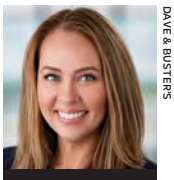
Disneyland Paris Taps New Operations Leader


VALIQUETTE
Valiquette

Melissa Valiquette is the new senior vice president, operations at **Disneyland Paris.** Valiquette moves to Paris following a 31-year career at Walt Disney World, where she held senior leadership roles across park operations, including leading Epcot and Magic Kingdom Park. She also supported the opening of Hong Kong Disneyland in 2005. Valiquette joins Disneyland Paris during a period of transformation as a slate of enhancements open at the rebranded Disney Adventure World park.

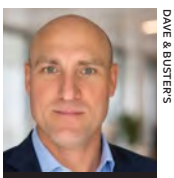
Dave & Buster's Strengthens Executive Leadership Team

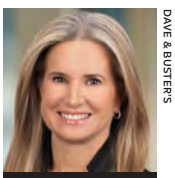

DAVE & BUSTER'S
Harper


DAVE & BUSTER'S
Busby

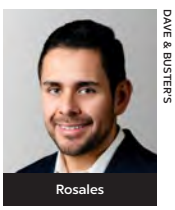

DAVE & BUSTER'S
Tucker


DAVE & BUSTER'S
Fish


DAVE & BUSTER'S
Sample


DAVE & BUSTER'S
Morgan

FEC operator **Dave & Buster's** has updated its executive leadership team, appointing former CFO **Darin Harper** as CEO. **Amanda Busby** joins as chief operations officer, **Jeremy Tucker** as chief marketing officer, **Kevin Fish** as chief technology & digital officer, and **Derek Sample** as chief accounting officer. **Rachel Morgan** was promoted to chief legal & administrative officer & corporate secretary, while **Aldo Rosales** becomes chief strategy & revenue management officer. The appointments support the company's growth, operational, digital, and revenue priorities.


DAVE & BUSTER'S
Rosales

CEC Entertainment Promotes Longtime Leader


CEC
Forsythe

The corporate parent of **Chuck E. Cheese** has promoted **Randy Forsythe** to president and chief operating officer. Forsythe joined ShowBiz Pizza in 1982 and has held leadership roles across the business for more than four decades. He has helped expand operations to more than 500 locations worldwide. In his expanded role, Forsythe will oversee operations spanning Chuck E. Cheese and Peter Piper Pizza, including marketing, games, technology, construction, international franchising, sourcing, and purchasing.

SeaWorld Orlando Appoints New Park President


SEAWORLD
Gilmour

United Parks has named **Brad Gilmour** park president of SeaWorld Orlando, Aquatica Orlando, and Discovery Cove. A 23-year company veteran, Gilmour began his career at Discovery Cove in 2003 and has since held multiple leadership roles across the three Orlando parks. He has served as park president of Discovery Cove and Aquatica Orlando



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since 2023 and now expands his responsibilities to include SeaWorld Orlando. Gilmour succeeds Jon "JP" Peterson, who recently retired from the lead role at SeaWorld Orlando.

Pacific Park Appoints New Sales and Marketing Director


PACIFIC PARK
Garcia

Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier named **Steve Garcia** as director of sales and marketing. Garcia will lead revenue-generating initiatives including group sales, sponsorships, partnerships, events, and ticketing programs, while overseeing strategies to strengthen awareness and visitation. He most recently served as director of sales and special events at Live Nation and previously held leadership roles at SeaWorld San Diego and Sesame Place, where he focused on business development, special events, group sales, and partnerships.

Lake Compounce Welcomes New General Manager


LAKE COMPOUNCE
Llanas

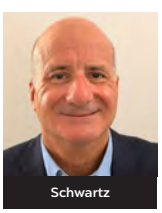
Daniel Llanas is the new general manager of **Lake Compounce**, bringing more than 25 years of leadership experience across theme parks, water parks, and destination attractions. Most recently, Llanas served as director of admissions for Aquaventure World at Atlantis, The Palm in Dubai and previously spent over a decade in leadership roles with SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment. At Lake Compounce, he will oversee overall operations, guest experience, financial performance, team development, and continued growth.

Flyover Elevates Founding Team Member


FLYOVER
Adams

Flyover has appointed **Lisa Adams** as chief executive officer following the company's acquisition by Brogent Technologies. Adams joined Flyover in 2013 as its first employee and has helped grow the business from a single Vancouver attraction into a global brand spanning four markets, welcoming more than 11 million guests. Previously chief operating officer and executive producer, Adams will lead Flyover as it enters a new phase focused on global expansion, immersive storytelling, and continued innovation.

Pixel Plush Names New Director of Sales


DAVE SCHWARTZ
Schwartz

Dave Schwartz will take a leadership role with **Pixel Plush** as director of sales at the company. Schwartz brings decades of experience across the amusement, redemption, plush, and toy industries, with previous leadership roles at Good Stuff, BMI Merchandise, National Entertainment Network, and Hasbro. His appointment supports Pixel Plush's continued growth and focus on customer partnerships, including innovative merchandise programs, reliable inventory, service, and customized solutions designed to help operators drive results.

TESSERE Expands Zoo & Aquarium Leadership


TESSERE
Ludlum

Stacey Ludlum will serve **TESSERE** as director of design & planning within its growing zoo and aquarium division. Ludlum brings more than 20 years of experience in zoo and aquarium planning and design, with expertise spanning master planning, concept design, business planning, and strategic visioning. Her appointment strengthens TESSERE's ability to help clients align mission, conservation impact, guest experience, operations, and long-term vision.

Solid Light Grows Executive Leadership Team


SOLID LIGHT
Marnell


SOLID LIGHT
Jett

Experience creator **Solid Light** recently announced two appointments. **Mike Marnell** is the new chief operating officer and **Ben Jett** will serve as chief creative officer. Following his leadership of the fabrication department, Marnell will oversee company-wide operations, focusing on project delivery, internal workflows, and execution. Jett will continue to lead the creative department focusing on creative strategy. The internal promotions reflect the company's focus on developing existing talent while strengthening the client experience.

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Names Director

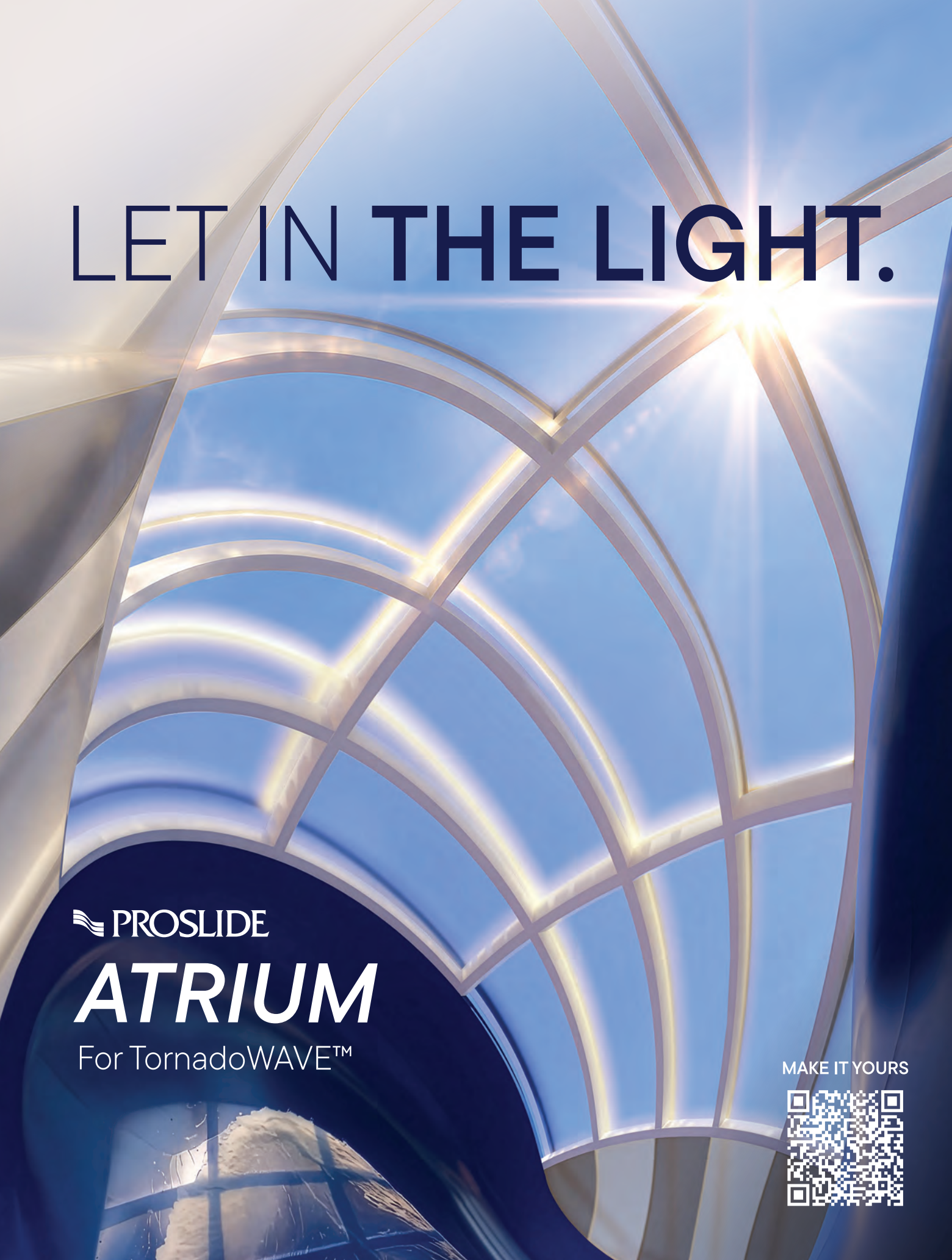

JUSTIN KASE CONDER
Hillings

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi has appointed **Dr. Valerie Hillings** as its inaugural director ahead of the museum's December opening. Hillings previously worked on the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi project from 2009 to 2018, contributing to collection development, acquisitions, and pre-opening programming. She returns after serving as director and CEO of the North Carolina Museum of Art. In her new role, Hillings will lead the museum's strategic direction and oversee its inaugural exhibitions and programs.

RWS Global Appoints Veteran


RWS
Conovers

Matt Conovers will take a leading role at **RWS** as divisional president, global production—a newly created role overseeing production strategy, planning, and execution. Conover joins after 37 years with The Walt Disney Company, most recently as vice president of Disney Live Entertainment at Disneyland Resort, leading more than 400 creative and technical professionals. His production experience extends beyond attractions to two Super Bowl halftime shows, NBA All-Star Games, and live activations with the Savannah Bananas.


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Tate Names New Director


GABRIELA HERMAN
Morgan

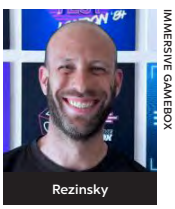
Effective Jan. 2027, **Jessica Morgan** will join **Tate,** the British museum operator, as a director, a homecoming of sorts. Morgan returns to Tate after previously serving in curatorial roles at Tate Modern from 2002 to 2014. Since 2015, she has led Dia Art Foundation, overseeing major capital projects, expanding its collection and programming, and introducing free admission. Morgan will lead Tate as the institution advances its future strategy, including the transformation and reopening of Tate Liverpool in 2027.

Kool Replay Eyes Global Growth


KOOLREPLAY
Gemme

Industry veteran **Yannick Gemme** is **Kool Replay's** new vice president of sales. He will lead the international expansion of the company's automated photo and video solutions for attractions and entertainment venues, building on an installed base spanning more than 12 countries. His mandate is to drive the commercial strategy and the growth of Kool Replay worldwide. Gemme brings more than 20 years of industry experience, including four years at Triotech and sixteen years at D-BOX Technologies.

Immersive Gamebox Names COO Amid Expansion


IMMERSIVE GAMEBOX
Rezinsky

Eli Rezinsky is the new chief operating officer as **Immersive Gamebox** enters a new phase of growth. Rezinsky brings extensive leadership experience across the entertainment and software industries and joins the executive team as Immersive Gamebox strengthens its operational capabilities. His appointment comes as the company rolls out new franchise partnerships in Seattle and the U.K. while rapidly expanding its plug-and-play concession model, designed to extend the immersive gaming concept into existing leisure venues.

Setting the Stage for Summit Paris


SUMMIT PARIS
Tareau

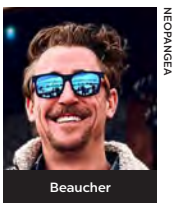
There's a new general manager of **Summit Paris**, the upcoming Paris location of the Summit One Vanderbilt concept, scheduled to open in late 2026. **Laurent Tareau** brings extensive leadership experience across tourism, leisure, and hospitality to the role following positions with Disney, Accor, and Merlin Entertainments. Tareau will oversee the development of the new destination ahead of its opening. His priorities include building the team, structuring the organization, and ensuring operational excellence as the project moves toward launch.

Hadrena Appoints New Chief Executive Officer


NICKO GUIHAL
Dupeux

Hadrena has appointed **Nicolas Dupeux** as chief executive officer to lead the indoor leisure group's next phase of growth and expansion. Dupeux brings more than 20 years of experience across entertainment, sports, events, and leisure, including senior roles at Disneyland Paris. He later served as CEO of Accor Arena before founding Paris Entertainment Company, bringing together Accor Arena, adidas arena, and Bataclan. At Hadrena, he will support international expansion and further develop its portfolio of immersive experiences.

Passing the Torch at NeoPangea


NEOPANGEA
Beaucher

Aaron Beaucher will continue to serve **NeoPangea** as division president and chief creative officer, succeeding founder Brett Bagenstose as he steps away after 21 years at the experiential media studio. Beaucher has spent more than 18 years with NeoPangea, contributing to projects for clients including National Geographic, Disney, and Paramount+. In his new role, he will lead the studio into its next chapter following its acquisition by Exploring Inc. earlier this year.

A New Creative Chapter at Liseberg


LISEBERG
Rydenstam

Liseberg has appointed **Amanda Rydenstam** as creative director, marking a generational transition in the destination's creative leadership. She succeeds David Schofield, who held the role for more than 30 years and will remain as senior advisor during a transition period. Joining from Okidoki Architects, Rydenstam brings experience in creative leadership, concept development, and experience design. She will oversee Liseberg's creative direction across the entire destination and help shape future guest experiences.

Reaching New Heights at Table Mountain


TMACC
Mkhize

Tracy Mkhize is the new managing director of **Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC).** Mkhize joins from the Cape Town International Convention Centre, where she served as chief operating officer since 2023. She brings extensive experience across operations, hospitality, business events, governance, risk management, and sustainability, and currently chairs the Cape Town Tourism Board.

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Charlyn (Tootsie) Harless


DIGNITY MEMORIAL

Harless

Charlyn Tootsie Harless passed away on May 9 at the age of 85. Harless was a third-generation owner of Lake Winnepesaukah in Rossville, Georgia, where she worked alongside the family as a locker girl, gift shop manager, and gardener. Harless is survived by her sister Adrienne, four children and numerous grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

James Keister


PETERSON AND PATCH FUNERAL HOME

Keister

Longtime attractions marketing professional **James Keister** passed away on August 14 in Illinois at the age of 59. A native of Pennsylvania, Keister served as the advertising and promotions manager at Six Flags Great America in Illinois from 1994 to 2008 before moving to similar roles at Six Flags Marine World, Six Flags' headquarters, and the Seattle Space Needle. He is remembered fondly by his friends in the industry for his intellect and wit.

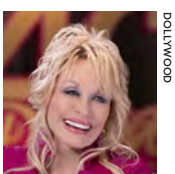
Frank Jack Mahany


STORY LAND

Mahany

Jack Mahany passed away on July 14 at the age of 76. Mahany's career began in 1967 when he was hired as a seasonal employee at Storyland, Glen, New Hampshire, before becoming a full-time employee three years later. After working in other jobs, he returned to the park in 1995, retiring as assistant general manager in 2018, but remaining as a part-time train operator until 2024. Jack also served on the board of directors of the White Mountains Attractions Association. He is survived by his wife Mary, two children, and five grandchildren.

Dolly Parton


DOLLYWOOD

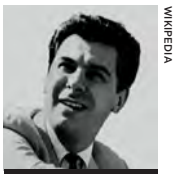
Parton

Country music legend, philanthropist, and Dreamer-In-Chief of Dollywood, **Dolly Parton**, passed away on August 25 at the age of 80. Rising from poverty in Locust Ridge, Tennessee, Parton became a successful singer and songwriter with 25 No. 1 hits. By the 1980s, Parton sought to give back to community and in 1986 partnered with Herschend Family Entertainment to redevelop Herschend's Smoky Mountains theme park into Dollywood. In recognition of her remarkable contributions and lasting influence on the global attractions industry, Parton was inducted into the IAAPA Hall of Fame in 2025.



Dolly in Her Own Words
In her exclusive Funworld interview, Dolly shares how she influenced Dollywood's growth, provides a peek at how new rides came together (with help from the creative minds at Herschend), and why roller coasters could have flipped her wig!

Frederick Anthony Picariello Jr. (aka Freddy Boom Boom Cannon)


WIKIPEDIA

Cannon

Freddy Boom Boom Cannon, a successful pop-music musician and singer, passed away on July 17 at the age of 89. Considered a pioneer of rock and roll, he had several hits in the 1950s and 1960s including 1962's, Palisades Park, reflecting on a visit to the legendary New Jersey amusement park. In 1988, he performed an updated version of the song for a commercial for Pennsylvania's Kennywood Park.

Pirola Ávila


LINKEDIN

Ávila

Clever Pirola Ávila passed away in July 2026 after a distinguished career in Brazil's attractions industry. Since 2014, he served as director of Beto Carrero World, helping lead one of Latin America's premier theme parks through a period of operational growth and continued development. Prior to joining the attractions industry, Pirola held leadership positions in Brazil's agribusiness sector, bringing extensive management experience to the park. He will be remembered for his dedication, steady leadership, and lasting contributions to the attractions industry in Brazil and throughout the region.

Paul Snyder


AMIGONE FUNERAL HOME

Snyder

Buffalo, New York businessman **Paul L. Snyder** passed away on August 10 at the age of 94. Founder of Freezer Queen Foods, he later went on to found the Buffalo Braves NBA team. In the 1960s, Snyder acquired nearly 1,000 acres in Western New York to develop Darien Lake. Initially developing a major camping resort, by the early 1980s, Darien Lake had grown into the largest theme park in upstate New York. Snyder is survived by his wife of 66 years, Marie, and five children.

Robin Innes


JIM FUTRELL

Innes

Longtime Cedar Point public relations director and spokesman **Robin Innes** passed away unexpectedly in Oct. Innes worked at the Ohio amusement park for 37 years, selling the press on the wonders of world-renowned rides such as Magnum XL-200, Millennium Force, Top Thrill Dragster, and opening the Soak City water park in 1988. Five years prior, Innis met his wife Katie at the park. They went on to begin a family when the couple adopted their daughter, Cassidy. Following his departure, he returned to the park seasonally as a security officer. Innis believed his "best gig" was serving as grandfather to his five grandchildren.

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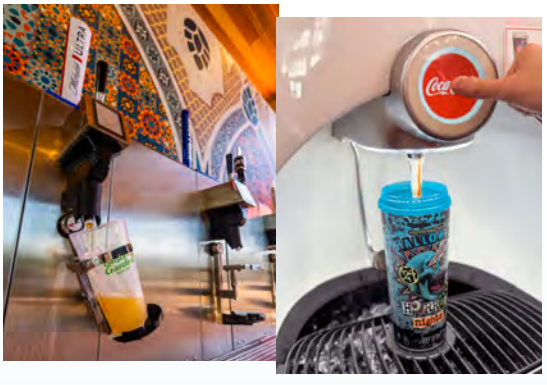
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Industry Insights



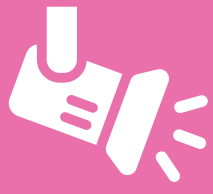
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by Zachary Laks

Chuck E. Cheese Comeback

CEO Scott Drake Reflects on the FEC's Reinvention

FOR NEARLY 50 YEARS, CHUCK E. CHEESE has ruled the birthday-party circuit. With a 2020 bankruptcy in the rearview mirror and a new vision for expansion beyond arcade games, CEO Scott Drake is ready to level up.

His playbook: immersive entertainment, friction-free family fun, and ambitious new concepts with global potential. Drake shares with Funworld where Chuck E. Cheese (CEC) is headed and what every attraction operator can learn from its comeback.

How do you ensure a nearly 50-year-old brand remains relevant?

We have to be relevant to today's kids, which means always evolving, always changing. Chuck E. Cheese has replaced most animatronics with video walls and interactive dance floors, digitized tokens and tickets, and introduced bounce zones and obstacle-course-style playgrounds. Active play now accounts for about 10% of store sales, and CEC is building on that demand with an accelerated U.S. rollout of Chuck E. Cheese Adventure World, our new indoor-playground concept.

How has Chuck E. Cheese modernized the experience for children and parents?

We removed a ton of friction for parents. They used to have to haul around tickets, weigh them, put them in the ticket muncher, and keep track of tokens. We digitized all of that. Kids just tap a card. It's easier for them and less friction for the parents.

As economic uncertainty faces consumers, how does the company adjust and focus on affordability?

We knew affordability was the hurdle because birthday parties are the on ramp to the Chuck E. Cheese experience. People book the $99.99 birthday party (for a party of six children), but on average, they have about eight kids, and the full ticket is typically a little over $200. It isn't a trade-down from $300 or $350 to $99. Birthday bookings have increased 40% over the past two years, while total revenue grew 15% from 2024 to 2025. It was a massive win-win.



CEC ENTERTAINMENT

Chuck E. Cheese. Adventure World's is the operator's new concept in entertainment that evolves the brand experience.

What have you found the industry gets wrong about value?

When families go out, one of the primary things they want to know is: 'How much are we going to spend?' They want expense certainty when they walk in the door. If they planned to spend $80—but spend $120—that's great for you that day, but they also file it away and say, 'I'm not going back.' That certainty of spend, knowing what they're going to get and what it will cost, is vital.

How are you incorporating AI into a kid-focused business?

We're not introducing AI face-to-face with kids. We don't feel there are sufficient safety guardrails around that. Kids need fun. They need games. They need Chuck E. We'll use AI to make parents' lives easier, improve operations, and support back-end analytics, but it won't be face-to-face with kids. Maybe someday, but not today, and not soon.

What do you think is the opportunity ahead?

We're really an industry of one: a mini amusement park in a box. Adventure World is the future of Chuck E. Cheese. Once we have about a dozen open and some experience, we'll know whether this can become 300 stores, 700 stores, or 900 stores in the U.S. [or] globally, it could be thousands.

Away from strategy, Drake is an enthusiastic champion of the company's food, praising the stores' fresh-made dough and proprietary sauce. His order: It's always a sausage pepper or sausage jalapeño. His go-to game? Rollerball, Chuck E. Cheese's version of Skee-Ball, although he's still working out what's best: straight up or bouncing it off the side.



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:

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by Mike Denninger, North America Regional Advisory Board Chair Director, 2027-2029

Safely Speaking at IAAPA Expo

Including safety in negotiations at IAAPA Expo 2026

THE IAAPA EXPO TRADE SHOW FLOOR is full of energy and possibilities. Having suppliers, service providers, and project participants in one location makes IAAPA Expo an efficient place to work through questions and safety protocols.

Before stepping foot in the South Building or West Building at the Orange County Convention Center, Funworld asked experienced ride developer Mike Denninger for his top 5 suggestions on how to get the most from conversations with exhibitors.



IAAPA NEWS

1 Have a Plan

Where practical, align your project activities and decisions with the opportunity to meet at Expo. Know what you want to accomplish, and which discussions are most important. Do that by scheduling each day ahead of time. Arrange key meetings in advance, and make time for education sessions, facility tours, and conversations with industry colleagues.

Use the IAAPA Connect+ app to help plan your time and locate exhibitors. One scheduling tip: Thursday and Friday can offer opportunities for additional, unplanned conversations, although it is always best to confirm availability with each exhibitor.

2 Plan for the Longterm Investment

In addition to the initial purchase price and guest experience, understand staffing, maintenance, inspection, training, and long-term support requirements. Involving operations, maintenance, and safety teams early helps operators ask better questions and make more informed decisions.

3 Include Standards and Compliance in the Conversations

Identify the specific standards and/or codes that will apply to new equipment purchases, such as relevant ASTM or EN standards, along with requirements of the jurisdiction where the new ride will be installed. Agree on the documentation, testing, and verification that will demonstrate the equipment meets those requirements.

4 Discuss Responsibilities

Develop a responsibility matrix that identifies major ownership items from design through opening. Operators should document what the supplier, owner, and other project participants will provide. This should cover design, site interfaces, installation, inspections, testing, commissioning, training, and preparation for opening. Safety and security provisions—such as restricted access, fencing, and emergency access—should have clearly assigned responsibilities. Define operational and acceptance criteria and the information needed before the equipment is placed into service. A formal risk assessment—developed with input from the appropriate parties and reviewed as the project evolves—can help identify these needs and clarify how they will be addressed.

5 Establish Expectations

Before a new ride opens, establish operating and maintenance documentation, training, technical support, replacement parts, and communication of safety bulletins or required updates. Operators need to discuss foreseeable emergency conditions, evacuation needs, and any specialized equipment or training that will be required. For equipment connected via Wi-Fi or a dedicated data line, address how remote access will be authorized and controlled, along with who is responsible for software updates.

Finally, leave time to discover something fresh. A new product, a different approach, or an unexpected conversation can lead to an idea that benefits an operator's business.

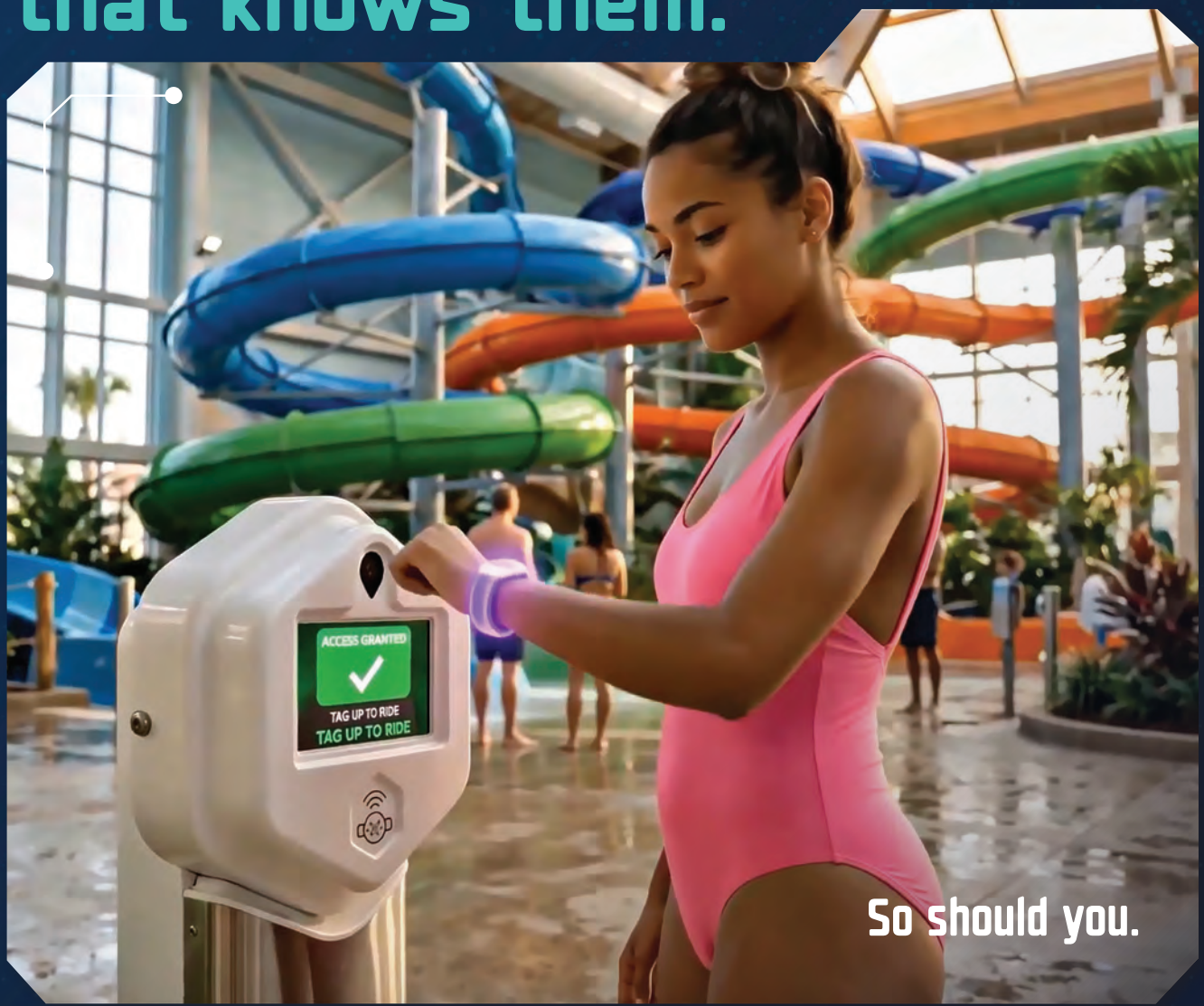


Mike Denninger, P.E., is the founder of Denninger Development LLC, an attractions consultancy, and a veteran attractions executive with more than 36 years of experience in ride engineering, capital development, and operational safety. Mike currently serves as chair of IAAPA's North American Safety & Security Committee and is a member of IAAPA's Global Safety & Security Committee and North American Regional Advisory Board. Connect with him on LinkedIn:

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VANTAGE

by Ylva Linder, global sustainability director, IAAPA

Sustainability in Action

IAAPA SUSTAINABILITY

Key insights from the IAAPA Sustainability Survey Results 2026

Explore the baseline view of how attractions industry professionals are approaching environmental and social responsibility today, including current priorities, commitments, achievements, and challenges.

KEY INDUSTRY FINDINGS

81% consider having their own sustainability programs and initiatives very or extremely important.

74% are currently implementing sustainability initiatives.

Organizations are prioritizing **operational efficiency initiatives** before broader climate strategies.

TOP AREAS OF FOCUS

- Waste Management — **52%**
- Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy — **49%**
- Water Conservation & Management — **38%**
- Climate Action — **36%**

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Latin America, Caribbean:
Highest emphasis on social impact and community engagement
50%

Europe, Middle East, and Africa
Strongest focus on governance and reporting
53%

CERTIFICATION STATUS

29% Certified

Less than a third (29%) of participants are currently certified according to a sustainability management standard.

MOST COMMON CERTIFICATION
ISO 14001
(18 organizations)

DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY IMPLEMENTATION

- Internal Values & Mission Alignment (it is part of our DNA) — **72%**
- Reputation — **58%**
- Customer Expectations — **55%**
- Regulation — **46%**

Sustainability is not only reactive, but **identity-driven.**

IAAPA'S ROLE IN ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY

76% of respondents rate IAAPA sustainability resources as very or extremely valuable.

TOP RESOURCES VALUED BY MEMBERS

- Best practices & case studies
- Webinars & live discussions
- EDUSessions at IAAPA events

Members expect IAAPA to provide practical sustainability guidance, foster collaboration, and lead by example.

TOP SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES



1. Carbon Emission (CO_2) Mitigation
2. Biodiversity Protection
3. Accessibility
4. Climate Adaptation
5. Risk Mitigation

EVOLVING EXPECTATIONS FOR MANUFACTURERS & SUPPLIERS

61%
Rides with lower energy consumption is seen as the most pressing sustainability need.

49%
Rides adapted for guests with physical disabilities where 50% of organizations have a time frame for implementation within the next 1–2 year

48%
Rides with more sustainable materials is also in demand

*Online survey fielded February 18 to March 17, 2026, resulting in 203 responses, across all regions and all industry business types.

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AXESS

by by Dawn Allcot

Adventureland Pursues New Programming to Attract All Ages

Park manager Jeanine Gentile shares insights in park entertainment



TJ ALLCOT

THIS YEAR MARKS A MAJOR MILESTONE as Adventureland, Long Island's iconic regional amusement park, celebrates 65 years of family memories. Even as a staple for family entertainment, the Farmingdale, New York park faces increasing competition from FECs and other attractions. Park manager Jeanine Gentile shares how new performances help deliver more value for all ages.

Please describe some of Adventureland's shows.

On Thursdays throughout the summer, we had events with princesses and superheroes; they held sing-alongs and story time; and they roamed the park to greet guests and take pictures.

We hosted the Team Fun Circus on Friday nights. They always drew a big crowd. On Saturdays, we had a DJ for our Party on the Midway. Then, on Sunday afternoons, we hosted The Amazing Louie, who did a different magic show each week.

Why do you feel it's important for regional parks to offer attractions beyond rides?

Being able to provide entertainment experiences in addition to the rides and everything else the park has to offer increases the value of the admission ticket. People may not even realize they want more until they experience it. The shows offer an opportunity to decompress. Mom and dad can sit back and relax a little bit while the kids are enjoying the show.

How do you source new entertainment?

Social media is a huge source of ideas. Something will catch my eye when I'm scrolling. Sometimes, a company will reach out to us, and we'll explore the opportunity. I'd say eight times out of 10, it usually works out. We've had great partnerships over the years.

What do you look for in new shows?

Energy. Having a good, energetic cast is so important. Obviously, they must be family-friendly and able to entertain all ages. And flexibility is important. With weather being a huge factor, all the entertainment companies we work with are willing to reschedule in case of rain.

You introduced a drone show last season. How was the new technology received?

We were looking to do something different that you don't see everywhere. The feedback we got was great. It was a way to bring the community together. We were very happy with the turnout and the execution of it. We worked with Sky Elements to launch the drones. We collaborated with them as far as graphics. Then we picked accompanying songs. They sent us over a show proof before going live in the sky, so there weren't any surprises. We knew exactly what to expect.

What advice would you have for regional parks who want to expand their entertainment offerings?

Be open with the process. Let the performers pitch their ideas to you and have them share graphics or videos so you can get a better idea of what they can offer. Don't be afraid to explore new ideas. FW



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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by Brian Collins

So, You Want to Be a Theme Park Designer?

Creative mind Brian Collins offers advice for aspiring themed entertainment careers

WHENEVER I TALK TO KIDS, STUDENTS, AND YOUNG ADULTS about my time at Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI)— and my career since then—one of the most common questions I hear is, "How can I become an Imagineer?" To their surprise, I usually reply with, "Forget about being an Imagineer—tell me what you're passionate about."

To any of you reading this who aspire to design world-class theme parks and attractions, let's talk about that—and about passion too.

As a former theme park professor, one thing I always tried to convey to my students was that the skills they gain and develop to create theme park experiences are transferable to so many different areas. "You may think you're going to work for one of the big parks," I would tell them, The truth is, immersive environments have become incredibly mainstream, and there are so many cool opportunities now.

Just check out the July/August 2026 issue of Funworld, which showcases this trend. Restaurants, education, eldercare, architecture, and many industries continue to borrow more from the themed entertainment world to capture the imagination of their target audiences, which brings me back to passion.

Many of the students I speak to are very intent on entering our industry—yet they have no idea what types of roles are available to them.

Themed entertainment is amazing: it takes so many different types of skill sets to bring an experience to life. (Truth be told, I had no clue that I can break in as a writer!) That's why the best advice I give to students is to follow their hearts and become as good as they can in whatever field they want to pursue. It might be something in STEM or perhaps the arts, but whatever they do, focus on that and be very good at it. Then, find a way to make it their own. Bring your own voice to your work and make it different than anyone else's.



BRIAN COLLINS

> You may think you're going to work for one of the big parks. But the truth is, immersive environments are becoming incredibly mainstream, and there are so many cool opportunities now.

I really believe that if students or young professionals follow that path and take time to learn about the industry and the manufacturers that work within it, they will have opportunities that they never dreamed of.

Ask yourself how many themed entertainment companies now diversify beyond theme parks? Or take on new and unique projects that never existed a few years ago?

Our industry is one of the most rewarding and fun to work in. We are literally creating smiles for the world's population. As themed entertainment evolves, it spills over into incredible new venues and applications, and those—in my opinion—are some of the most interesting, satisfying, and in some cases, important projects that exist.

I'm certain that while IAAPA continues to attract new members from these growing industries, the attractions industry will continue to serve and influence them. FW



Brian Collins is a former Walt Disney Imagineer who now works as an innovation consultant specializing in immersive environments and creative direction. He's a Fulbright Specialist, recognized for his expertise in adapting new and emerging technologies to the guest experience. He is the author of Creative Cross-Pollination: A Former Imagineer's Take on the Innovation Process. Connect with him on LinkedIn:

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by Kelly Repass and Elaine Mathis

2026 IAAPA Europe Economic Impact Report

This 2026 study showcases **2025 year-end data** for:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Denmark
- Croatia
- Czech Republic
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

Total Attraction Facilities: 55,640

- Amusement/Theme Parks: **295**
- Water Parks: **735**
- Entertainment Centers: **12,528**
- Zoos/Aquariums: **1,691**
- Museums/Science Centers: **26,619**
- Historical/Cultural Attractions: **6,863**
- Natural/Adventure/Eco/ Scenic Attractions: **6,909**

Total Attendance:	**2.06 billion**
Total Revenue Impact	**€156.8 billion**
Total Employment (Jobs):	**1,033,000**
Total Labor Income:	**€43.3 billion**
Total Taxes Paid:	**€24.4 billion**

IAAPA Economic Impact studies are biannual reports analyzing the attractions industry's contribution on a regional level. They provide data-driven insights on revenue, jobs, taxes, attendance, and overall performance, making them an essential resource for policymakers, investors, developers, and industry leaders.

FULL REPORTS AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS AT: HTTPS://IAAPA.ORG/IMPACT-EUROPE2026



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:



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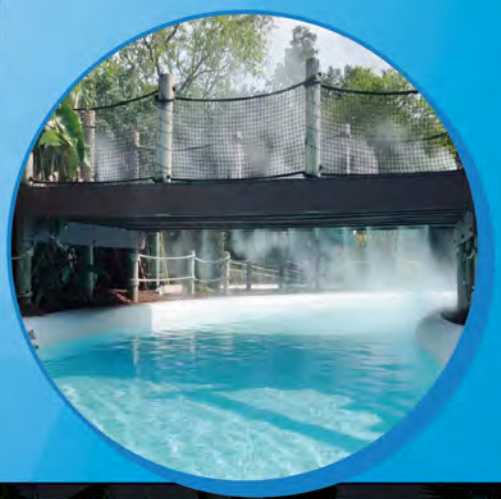
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Greetings from IAAPA Expo Europe in London from the Berliner Team!

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Play equipment for life

Association News & Benefits

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IAAPA Expo Europe 2026 opens with a bang in London. Read the highlights on *p. 56*

IAAPA Expo Europe 2026 Experiences Record-Breaking Return to London

IAAPA EXPO EUROPE 2026 HAD A HISTORIC RETURN TO LONDON, breaking multiple records as the event hosted the largest trade show floor in the expo's history. Returning to the U.K. for the first time since 2022, IAAPA Expo Europe featured a massive 22,868-square-meter exhibit floor that welcomed 16,530 verified attendees (18,719 registered participants) representing 118 countries, including 11,710 buyers from 8,956 purchasing companies.

The expo also delivered an extensive educational program, once again reaffirming its status as Europe's premier event for the attractions industry.

Education Abounds

More than 70 EDUSessions featuring 192 speakers alongside EDUTours to Legoland Windsor, Chessington World of Adventures, and Thorpe Park allowed attendees to gain best practices in the field. Among them was the debut of the inaugural IAAPA Legends: Europe, adapting the Orlando Expo legends format to Europe and curated by industry icon Bob Rogers. The panel featured former JRA CEO Keith James and former IAAPA chair Chip Cleary who discussed iconic European attractions such as Europa-Park and how the next generation can create visitor experiences that stand the test of time. Leadership Breakfast Insights included Robert Dahl, managing director of Karls and cover subject of the Sept./Oct. issue of Funworld, delivering the address on "Growing Without Losing Your Soul."

"I think the human being is a social person, and nothing can replace being together," says Jakob Wahl, president and CEO, IAAPA. "At our Safety Corner, we had the leading safety experts speaking, exchanging, and inspiring each other. That is something which you can only do face-to-face because we are social beings—especially in our industry, which is full of wonderful people."

For more news, innovation, and insights from IAAPA Expo Europe, visit the IAAPA News page.

IAAPA EXPO EUROPE 2025 BY THE NUMBERS

22,868 Square-feet of Exhibition Space

16,530 Verified Attendees

11,710 Qualified Buyers

8,956 Buying Companies

874 Exhibiting Companies

192 Speakers

118 Countries Represented

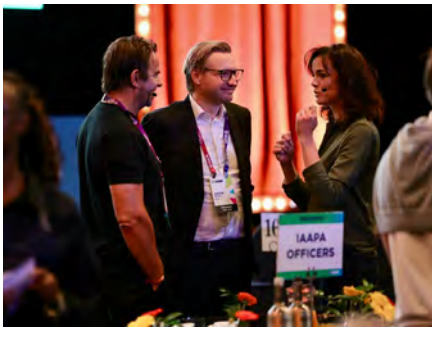
70 Learning Opportunities

8 Networking Events

IAAPA NEWS









Trade Floor Show Milestone

Featuring the latest technology, the London trade show floor became the largest in IAAPA Expo Europe history with 874 exhibitors, representing a 50% growth since the event was held in the U.K. four years ago. "The growth we've seen since we were last in London four years ago speaks volumes about the strength of the attractions industry," says Peter van der Schans, executive director and vice president of IAAPA ESA. "You could feel the momentum across the show floor all week long. From collaborative innovations being unveiled to new information being



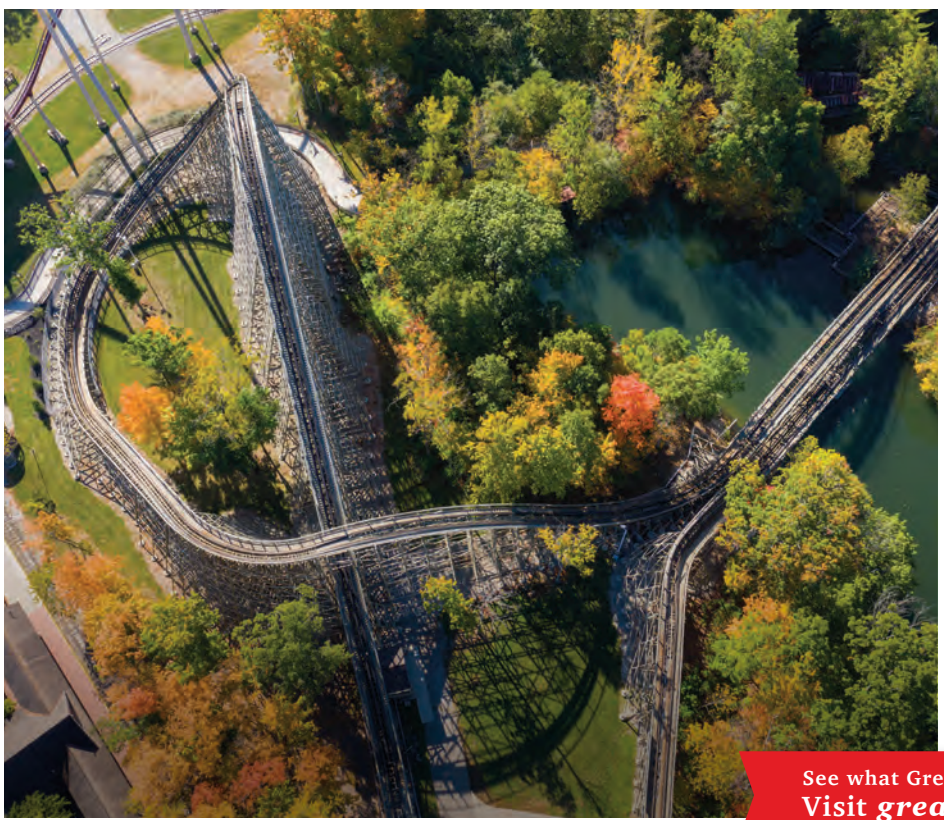
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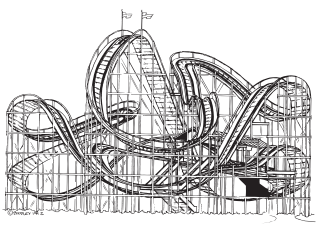
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Mark your calendar to attend IAAPA Expo Europe in 2027, taking place in Vienna, Austria Sept. 20–24. Learn more at **IAAPA.org/Expos**

See Technology at Play. The Funworld Team is your guide to the latest technology found on the IAAPA Expo Europe trade show floor. Watch a collection of From the Floor videos on YouTube:

shared, Expo Europe is ultimately about bringing our industry together, and London gave us an incredible stage to do just that, while also looking ahead to what's next."

Certified Sustainability

Ahead of the London opening, IAAPA Expo Europe 2026 achieved official Certified Sustainable Event status from Greentime, an independent third-party assessor. The event received a score of 76%, with criteria covering environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors. IAAPA promoted lower-emission travel options, optimized resource use on the trade show floor, enhanced venue accessibility measures, and expanded programs for students and young professionals to attend and network at the Expo.

In anticipation of the event, IAAPA invited exhibitors to voluntarily commit to at least seven sustainable booth operating practices, rewarding the participating exhibitors with special digital badges and in-booth recognition. Some sustainable operations and practices included reducing energy use and transport emissions, minimizing emissions, and packaging from logistics, and offering sustainable and low-waste food and beverages, among others.

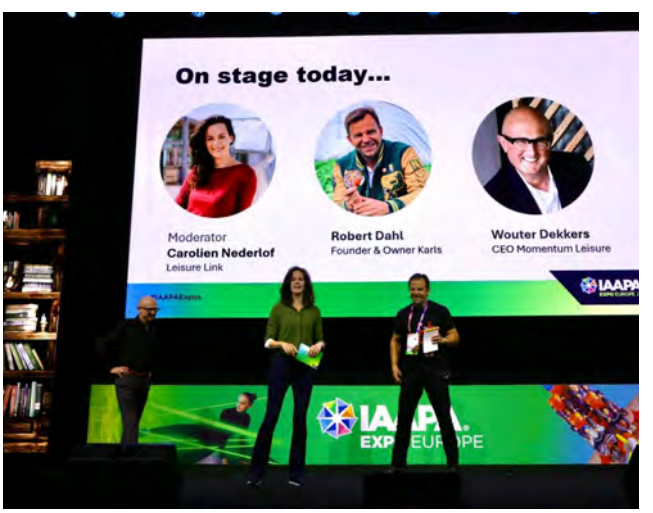
During the expo, IAAPA offered Sustainability Day, a full-day, separately ticketed program including keynote presentations, workshops and networking receptions as well as an EDUTour of Legoland Windsor Resort. Participants explored topics such as water management and carbon emissions—learning from leading organizations such as Vekoma and Looping Group—how to apply better practices within their organizations.

"We had such a great week here in London with so many exhibitors showing their innovations, their products. We have more press conferences than ever before. So many new announcements in our industry … Happy exhibitors, happy guests," concludes van der Schans.









PHOTOS: IAAPA NEWS

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First-Time Exhibitors

COMPANY NAME	BOOTH NUMBER
5 Wits	W1469
Agri-Games	W1582
Airstar America	W1572
American Lighting	W1684
Apex Aerial Works powered by Go Ape!	W1586
App My Community	W2184
Arti Grafiche Julia S.p.A.	W2083
Avaden LLC	W2486
Beacon	W2278
Betop Group	W1879
Bigbelly | All Together Better	W1686
Bomanite LLC	W1773
CandyMachines	W1578
Collins Creative	W1784
Commercial Collection Corp. of NY	W2389
Crunch Tech LLC	W1589
DEEPTECH	W1779
DreamPark	W1884
DucOmni LLC	W1487
DucOmni LLC	W1489
Edge Coat Lining	W2183
EJH Distribution	W1568
elektraLite	W1584
Elevate Surf	W2369
emuamericas, llc | Stop Spot LLC	W1979
Endless Fun	W1988
Eyecandy Robotics	W1989
Fantasy Funwheel	W2178
fd innovative art inc	W1885
FEC Playbook	W2182
Firefly Drone Shows	W2169
Flash Sales Inc	W2084
FuzionGamz & Attractions	W1768
Gig Game	W2286
GLP German Light Products	W1479
Goolfy	W1769
GotSafety, LLC	W1473
Healthy Touch LLC	W1985
HowlTicket	W1583
HYTORC	W2087
Imagination Playground	W1678
Inlight Festivals By ZLG	W2172
Inner Circle Distribution, Inc.	W1685
Intuit Mailchimp	W1871
Jenka Lab LLC	W1573
Joco Innovations LLC	W2185
Kalan	W1682
Kano Laboratories	W2085
Knight Lighting Solutions	W1587
Kunming Mailu Trading Co., Ltd.	W2288
Levita-magic	W2173
Lilliputt Mini Golf	W2269
Longfish Leisure US Inc	W2186
Magic Playground	W2478
Marsh McLennan Agency	W1483
Merchant Cost Consulting	W2383
MIA Dynamics USA	W2089
Monstrum	W2079
NAF Aquatics Enterprises, LLC	W1785
NeatoFX	W1485
Noble Built Adventure	W2189
NOW CFO	W2387
PartyPing	W2482
PJ Logistics Agency/ Logistic Dynamics Inc	W1585
Process Curiosity	W2179
Radio One Inc.	W2187
RYDZ	W2272
SeeDevil Lighting & Power	W2069
Show Your Logo, Inc.	W2088
SimVenture GmbH	W1673
Teddy Mountain LLC	W2073
The Baldwin Group	W1888
The Bear Factory	W1569
The Original Lemon Chill Company LLC	W1689
The PISTIL Consortia LLC	W2188
The Simons Law Firm, PLLC	W2385
The X-Tower - Boaz-Us INC	W1973
Theme Park Innovations	W1788
Tianyu Arts & Culture Inc	W1679
Tiki Farm, Inc	W1984
TravelTV	W1889
Trivedi Advanced Technologies LLC	W2282
USA Byte LLC	W1579
USA Lightning LLC	W1669
WeRiseUp	W2284
Wigglitz by ZB Designs	W1789
Windish Entertainment	W1969
Windows To Infinity	W2379
Wondery Outdoors	W2484
Xperiamus	W1672

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IAAPA EXPO 2026

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501 FUN	W1000
abc rides switzerland	S3727
accesso	W1042
ACE Amusement	S929
Aerophile S.A.S	W2121
Aier Inflatable Group Co. Ltd	S5405
Alterface	S646
Ankam Water Park Equipments	S846
Arihant Water Park Equipment	S1834
Avius	S1200
Axess	W649
Beijing YIDELI Amusement Equipment Co.,ltd	W1728
Bertazzon	S3428
Nets Tribe	S2081
Bolliger & Mabillard Inc.	S4817
Guangzhou Wahlap Technology Corporation Limited.	S407
Brogent Technologies, Inc.	S4891
Brunswick Bowling Products	S3473
BUZZPARK	S5196
Cheer Amusement (Nanjing) Co.Ltd	S5673
Cimolai Technology	S154
Concept 1900	S2931
Crenexus Culture & Tech (Shenzhen) Co., Ltd.	W2846
Delta Strike International Ltd	S4278,S4281
InstaVR Arena	W2161
DOF Robotics	S1464,W2569
Dongguan Unistar Industrial Limited	S6077
Dotto Trains	S3234
Dreamland Playground Co.Ltd	S2896
Elephant Sculpture Art Company Ltd.	W1433
Empex Watertoys	S2007
ETF Ride Systems	S4026
Fabbri Group	S4821
Fever	W1655
WhiteWater Surf	S2234
Gengu Dinosaurs Technology Co.,Ltd.	7060,W2910
Gooest Media Technologydaqing Co.,Ltd	S3291
Gosetto	S4032
Great Coasters International, Inc.	S2277
Domerry Amusement Equipment Co., Ltd	S3796
Dream Catch	S2177
Guangdong H-FUN Water Recreational Articles Co. Ltd.	S2167
Jinma Rides	S626
Guangdong Zhengrong Amusement Equipment Co., Ltd.	S5446
Guangzhou DESIGN Decoration Engineering Co., Ltd.	W1711
Guangzhou EPARK Electronic Technology Co., Ltd.	S528
Guangzhou Ifun Park Technology Co., Ltd.	S5577
Guangzhou Infinity Technology Co., ltd.	S1368,S346
Jiuyou Animation	S244
LTG Carnival	W2125
Guangzhou Luckyplay Amusement Equipment Co., Ltd.	W2228
Guangzhou Movie Power Technology Co.Ltd.	S1022,S415
Guangzhou Sea Animation Technology Co., Ltd.	S456
Sunflower Amusement	W2901
Guangzhou Yinghua Technology Co., Ltd	S1319,S352
HAFEMA Water Rides GmbH	S4234
China Hogwood Amusement Equipment Co., Ltd	W1643
Hangzhou Trains Equipment Co. Ltd.	S4648
Haystack Dryers Limited	S3077
HB Leisure Ltd.	S2847
Haiber Play Equipment Co. Ltd	W2635
Embed	S3759
Henan Dinis Entertainment Technology Co., Ltd	W1929,W2624
Hualong Dino Works	S6069
Huaxia Amusement Co. Ltd	S5481
Hunan Zhongyi Amusement Equipment Co., Ltd.	S657
Huss Park Attractions	S4426
HY Technology Ltd.	W1343
I.E. Park S.r.l./Amusement Rides & SOLI Bumper Cars	S4073
Industrial Frigo Ice	W2405
Intelligent Entertainment	S2079
Intercard, Inc.	S2407
InterPark Magazine	S4353
iPlayCO	S2069
JB-Tag Solutions	S5434
Ellis & Associates	S2654
X-Kart	W2543
KristallTurm GmbH & Co.KG	S3767
LaserBlast	S4867
Leisure Activities	7440,S5641
Liben Group Wenzhou Toy Co., Ltd.	S4479
LightUpToys.com	S2839
MACK Rides	S2273

COMPANY NAME	BOOTH NUMBER
Mich Playground Co., Ltd.	S2685
Moser's Rides	S4844
MURPHYS WAVES LTD	S1626
Nanjing Fagao Electronic Technology Co., Ltd	W1243
Neofuns Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.	S612
Neveplast	S3276
Ningbo Sinoknit Co., Ltd.	S4193
Oasys Su Parki Sistemleri Sanayi Ve Ticaret Limited Sirketi	W2905
Polgun Waterparks & Attractions	W1525
Premier Rides	S2203
Preston & Barbieri	S1426
ProSlide Technology, Inc.	S2165,S2266
QubicaAMF Bowling Products	S4757,S4855
RCI Adventure Products	S3491
Redbone Products Inc.	S3004
Reverchon / SAMC	S4632
Rides and Fun	S4746
RMC	S4200
ARROWY RACING	W2609
S&S Worldwide	S2226
Sally Dark Rides	S2250
SARTORI	S4626
SBF - Visa	S4434
SACOA Cashless System	S4416
Semnox Solutions LLC	S3783
Severn Lamb Trams International	S3726,S3832
Shanghai JEGOPLAY Facilities Group Co., Ltd.	W2124
Purr Play	W2043
Jargee.Foto	W1749
Simtec Systems	S1254
Sindrax Technology Co.,Ltd.	S4094
Sub Sea Systems, Inc.	S1439
Sunkid GmbH	S2064
Synergy Waterpark Rides Pvt. Ltd.	S1629
Taki Playground CO. LTD	W1808
Technical Park	S2832
Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)	S1050,S850
Themics Philippines Inc.	S2041
Tianjin Brother Tourist Train Co., Ltd.	W1646
Funlandia Play Systems Inc.	S4884
Triotech	S2662,S2862
TÜV NORD	S1416
Twelve Design (Guangzhou) Co., Ltd	W1629
Unis Technology (H.K) Limited	S1007,S907
Uremet Corporation	S1615
Vekoma Rides	S3773
VENU+	W2243
Viewpoint Videos	W1515
VIVATICKET	S4800
Walltopia	S5669
Aquakita	S926
Water Technology, Inc.	S1420
Pokiddo Active Entertainment	S5879
Whirley-DrinkWorks!	W725
WhiteWater	S2237
Wibit Sports	S426
Wiegand Josef GMBH & Co. KG	W2235
Wiegand.Waterrides GmbH	W2436
World Waterpark Association	S2660
Xiaofeixia Amusement Equipment Group Co,Ltd	S4496
Yuehua Industry Co. Ltd.	S1212
Yuto Games	S107
Zamperla	S2221
Zhengzhou Huajin Amusement Equipment Co.,ltd	W1451
Zhengzhou Tonle Inflatables Co.,Ltd.	S5607
Zhengzhou Wolong Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.	S5109
Zhongshan Luck & Jinying Amusement Machine Co. Ltd	S2836
Manmiao Textile Co., Ltd	S5576
Zhuoyuan Co., Ltd	S262
ZIERER	S4621
Zigong Chuangying Intelligent Technology Co., Ltd	W2604
Zigong City Ocean Art Co., Ltd	W2224
Zigong Haitian Culture Co. Ltd	W2927
Zone Laser Tag, Inc.	S4069
Intamin	S3728
Laserforce	S2881
YPFuns Global	W2227
Pixel Games	S2879,S3079,S3081
Guangzhou Flamestone Technology Co. Ltd	W2906
Martin & Vleminckx Ltd	S2248,S5175
Zhengzhou Wanle Amusement Equipment Co. Ltd.	W2512

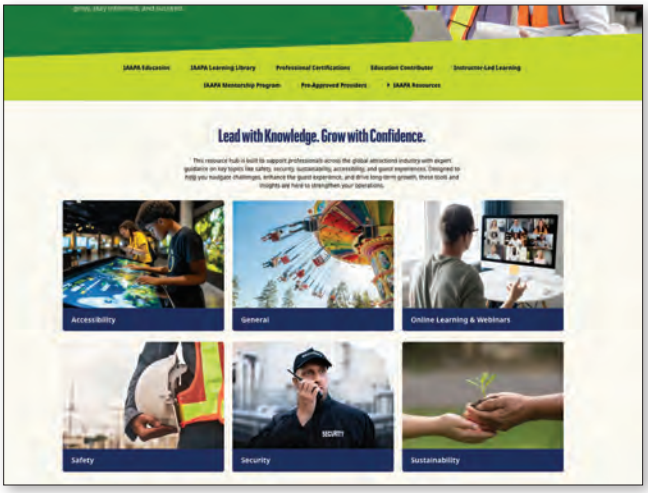
As of October 2026

The Value of IAAPA Resources

From insight to impact: utilizing knowledge from industry experts

TODAY, ATTRACTIONS PROFESSIONALS—both established and emerging—have access to more information than ever before. However, having data is one thing; understanding and applying it is another.

Learning from industry experts with years of experience, applying their knowledge, and creating a safer operation is the purpose of IAAPA resources. IAAPA white papers, guides, and toolkits provide deep context with actionable information and are included in an IAAPA membership at no additional cost.



Visit **IAAPA.org/education/resources** to access the IAAPA library of white papers, guides, toolkits and online learning. Additional IAAPA Safety and Security articles can be found at **IAAPA.org/safety-security/news-articles**

The Information Advantage



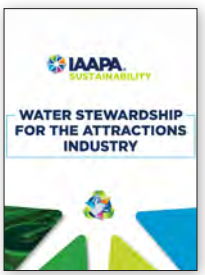
IAAPA Resources provide readers with detailed information compiled from industry subject matter experts. Operators can read the *Guidelines for Successful Ride Evacuation* and map their evacuation processes to the flow chart in the resource and compare their facility's evacuation process to best



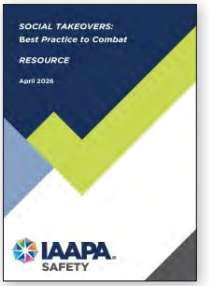
practices from industry experts. The checklists in the appendix can be utilized to review established processes.



Another recommended read, *Change Management: Modifications of Amusement Rides and Devices*, published in September 2025, is focused on the steps of the attraction safety lifecycle and what maintenance tasks might classify as a modification. This publication assists attraction owners and operators to understand what is considered a modification to an attraction and the requirements from industry standards when modifying amusement rides or devices.



The various resources include many safety topics and security best practices.



There are a growing number of operators who are concerned about the recent increase in social takeovers. IAAPA member facilities who experienced takeovers came together this year and published their best practices in the resource: *Social Takeover–Best Practices to Cover White Paper.*

When other members experienced swatting events over a few weekends, they quickly shared their lessons learned in an article entitled, *Thwarting Swatting at Attractions.*

A Member Benefit Hiding in Plain Sight

The IAAPA Research Resources Library is an invaluable resource for association members. For a young professional or person new to the industry, these curated insights provide an essential foundation for in-depth industry learning. Meanwhile, experienced professionals can benchmark their operations to industry best practices and leverage valuable insights from peers.

Built on the expertise of our member volunteers, IAAPA Resources are included in an IAAPA membership or available to purchase for non-members.

Having access to proven industry best practices gives IAAPA members another tool for asking better questions, identifying blind spots, and supporting your risk reduction journey. FW

Have a topic request?
IAAPA is always looking for new topics for resources to help members. Email: **safety@iaapa.org** with ideas.

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What Will You Learn After Expo?

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Aviva Ezring is IAAPA's senior director of professional development and education. She brings more than 20 years of experience leading live entertainment learning, and development initiatives to her work supporting professional growth across the global attractions industry.

THE INSIGHTS SHARED AT IAAPA EXPOS DON'T END when the show floor closes. The IAAPA Learning Library gives attractions professionals year-round access to a growing collection of on-demand courses and educational resources. Designed for learners at every career stage, the platform makes it easy to discover new skills, explore industry trends, and learn from experts across the globe—whenever and wherever learning fits into a busy professional's schedule.



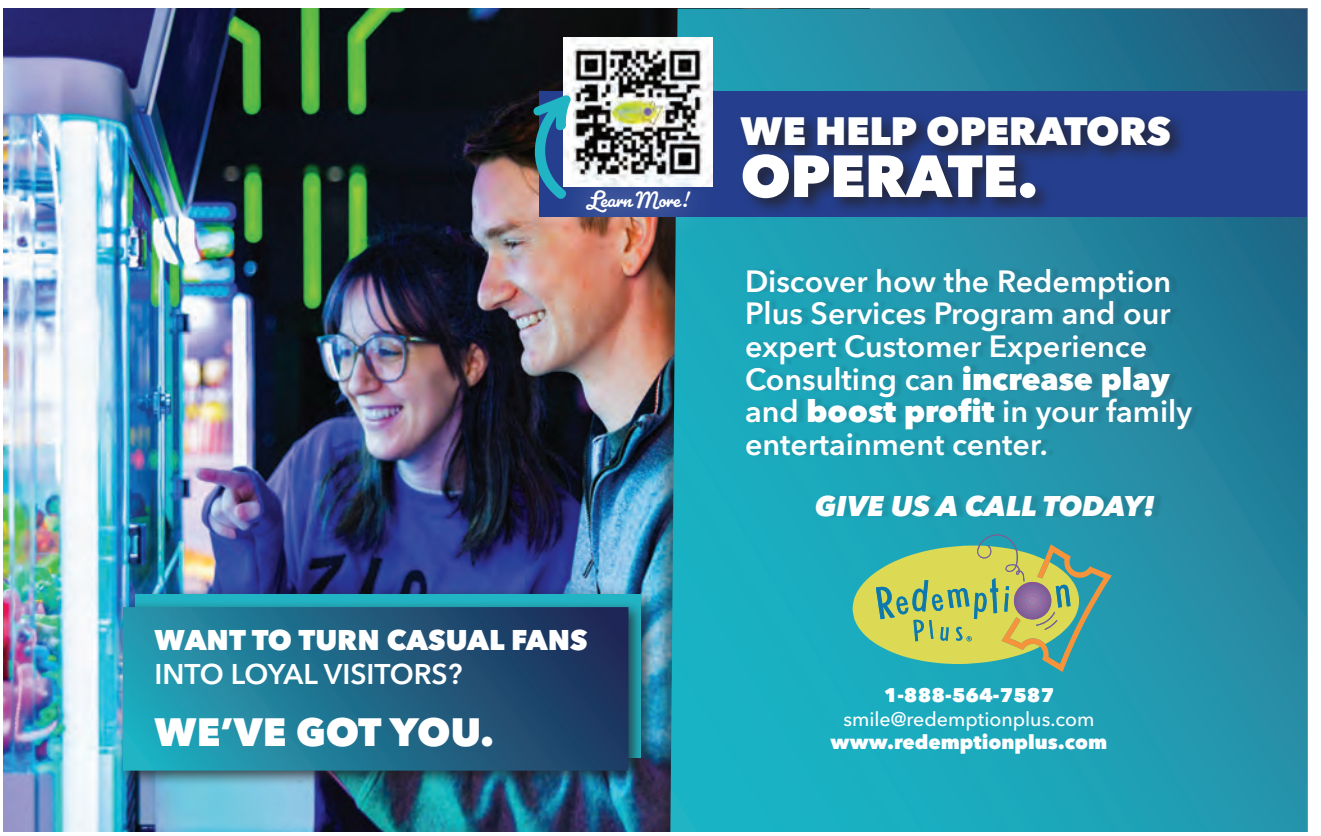
Much of the IAAPA Learning Library's growth comes through partnerships with IAAPA member organizations that bring specialized expertise to the industry. Study Academy USA helped develop the platform and has contributed more than 30 courses designed specifically for attractions professionals, while Morgan's Inclusion Institute has helped expand content focused on accessibility and inclusion. The introductory course in the curriculum codeveloped with IAAPA, Disability Awareness, is available for free to IAAPA members.

Safety and operations training have also expanded through a partnership with Edge Academy. Five new courses launched in August and are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, and Arabic.

The focus on multilingual content reflects the global nature of the attractions industry. Several courses are already available in multiple languages.

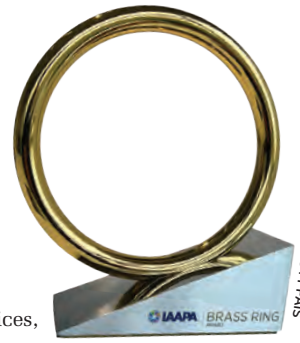
For professionals looking to continue learning in between IAAPA events, the IAAPA Learning Library offers opportunities to build practical skills, gain fresh perspectives, and stay connected to industry best practices. For IAAPA members looking for their next learning opportunity or curating training for their team, there's always something worth checking out in the IAAPA Learning Library. FW

See IAAPA's pre-approved provider page:



Insight from Leadership Conference featuring IAAPA Honors

IAAPA Brass Ring Award winners share best practices



SCOTT FAIS

ITS THE SYNAPSE where inspiration meets celebration: Leadership Conference featuring IAAPA Honors, takes place June 8-10 at Lisberg in Gothenburg, Sweden.

At the 2026 event at Xcaret in Mexico, professionals from across the globe connected to share best practices, ideas, theories, and methods—along with honoring the 2026 winners of the IAAPA Brass Ring Award.


XCARET


XCARET


XCARET

Finding Courage to Change

Best Collective Visual Merchandise Display: Year-Round Operation

Xcaret Park, Riviera Maya, Mexico

"You need to try something new. In the beginning we recognize that we had a great concept. Then we needed the courage to make it work even better. You have to participate. Something that works for me is to write it down. Then I go back and look at all the ideas collectively before making a decision."

— Jose Fernandez Perez, Sales and Commercial Manager

Importance of Frontline Staff

2026 Liseberg Applause Award

Warner Bros. World Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

"The teams on the ground—whether it was back of house, front of house—have really taken on the work. They work overnight, through the day; they are the ones who build those memories for our guests. And our guests keep coming back for those experiences. It's always the people, the life, that human touch that guests get thanks to the team we have."

— Hind Galadari, Park General Manager

How to Overcome Blockades

Showstopper Award for MLB All-Star Game Hank Aaron Tribute Home Run Comment

Image Engineering, Curtis Bay, Maryland

"When we face a roadblock, we take a step back; take a breath; slowdown. We then pull the team together and really talk through the issue and then all of the possible options as a team. Then we vet out what is going to be the best path forward—and what allows the highest likelihood for success."

— Ian Bottiglieri, Chief Operating Officer

Save the Date

Experience the best of the attractions industry in one of the world's most respected attractions, Liseberg June 8-June 10, 2027, at Leadership Conference featuring IAAPA Honors in Gothenburg, Sweden. Learn more at **IAAPA.org/Honors**

 by Eryka Washington

IAAPA Elects New Members to 2027 Global Board of Directors

Six professionals stand ready to support IAAPA members

DURING THEIR MEETING AT IAAPA EXPO EUROPE IN LONDON, the IAAPA Global Board of Directors elected six new board members, who will begin their terms in 2027.

The slate of new board members was developed by the IAAPA Governance Committee, who evaluated candidates based on their professional expertise, leadership experience, volunteer service, and ability to advance IAAPA's mission of connecting, growing, and inspiring the global attractions industry.

"The Governance Committee is committed to identifying leaders who represent the diversity, expertise, and innovation found throughout our global membership," says IAAPA Governance Committee Chair Massimiliano Freddi. "This year's board members bring exceptional experience from across the attractions industry and will help guide IAAPA as we continue to serve our members around the world," he says.

IAAPA's Global Board of Directors works in partnership with the IAAPA team to establish and approve the association's strategic priorities. The board oversees IAAPA's annual business plan and finances, provides guidance on products and services, and serves as ambassadors for IAAPA members and the global attractions industry.

The new board members include the following:



Denise Beckson, ICAE

Second Vice Chair, 2027–2030

Vice President/Chief Administrative & External Affairs Officer, Morey's Piers (North America region)

Denise Beckson, ICAE, brings more than 25 years of IAAPA leadership and volunteer service to the Global Board. She currently serves as chair of the IAAPA North America Regional Advisory Board and has held leadership roles on the IAAPA Finance, Executive Finance, Governance, and Strategic Planning committees. Beckson presently chairs the Bylaws & Policies Review Task Force, previously served on the Global Board from 2015–2017, and is a recipient of IAAPA's Meritorious Service Award. As a senior executive at Morey's Piers, a family-owned destination on the Jersey Shore, Beckson brings extensive experience in operations, governance, human resources, compliance, and external affairs.

Beckson's statewide engagement includes serving as chair of the New Jersey Restaurant and Hospitality Association, as well as fulfilling leadership roles with state business, tourism, and amusement associations. A respected advocate and trusted industry voice, Beckson is frequently called upon by national and industry media to provide perspective on issues affecting attractions and tourism. Her public affairs leadership has helped shape legislation, regulation, and public policy while advancing workforce development, safety, and professional standards. Beckson's combination of business leadership, association governance, public affairs expertise, and industry advocacy positions her to strengthen IAAPA's voice and influence, advance the industry's priorities, and serve its members with a global perspective.



Mario Centola

Facility Director, 2027–2029

EVP & COO International Operations & Worldwide Franchising, CEC Entertainment (North America Region)

Mario Centola brings extensive financial, operational, and technology leadership to the IAAPA Global Board. He currently serves on the IAAPA North America Regional Advisory Board and previously served on the Investment and Finance and Information Technology Committee. He also serves as a financial subject matter expert for IAAPA's Leadership Essentials Program through GoalMakers.

Recognized throughout the industry for his expertise in finance and technology, Centola is an active mentor, leadership development advocate, and frequent presenter on attraction and theme park financial management. His experience will help support IAAPA's continued focus on operational excellence and member success.



Mike Denninger

North America Regional Advisory Board Chair

Director, 2027-2029

Owner/Founder, Denninger Development, LLC (North America Region)

Mike Denninger is a recognized leader in attraction safety, security, and operational excellence, with more than 36 years of experience in the attractions industry and a professional background in engineering. With more than two decades of active involvement in IAAPA, he has served as chair of the IAAPA North America Safety & Security Committee, a member of the IAAPA North America Regional Advisory Board, and the Global Safety & Security Committee.

A frequent speaker at IAAPA events, Denninger is widely respected for his expertise in risk assessment, safety culture, attraction development, and operational best practices. His commitment to collaboration and advancing safety across the attractions industry will provide valuable leadership on the IAAPA Global Board.



Patrick Finnegan

Facility Director, 2027–2029

Senior Vice President, Operations, The Walt Disney Company (North America Region)

Patrick Finnegan is senior vice president of

Operations for Disneyland Resort and currently serves on the IAAPA North America Regional Advisory Board. A relationship-focused leader, Finnegan has built strong partnerships throughout the attractions industry and is committed to strengthening engagement between IAAPA and its North American members. His collaborative leadership style and operational expertise will support IAAPA's continued focus on delivering value to members around the world.



Lena Lee

Asia-Pacific Regional Advisory Board Chair Director, 2027–2029

Executive Vice President, Attractions and Destination Experience, Resorts World Sentosa (Asia-Pacific Region)

Lena Lee is executive vice president of attractions and destination experience at Resorts World Sentosa in Singapore and currently serves on the IAAPA Asia-Pacific Regional Advisory Board. Throughout her career, she has championed innovation, destination development, and exceptional guest experiences across the Asia-Pacific region. Lee spent time as an active IAAPA volunteer, leading IAAPA Presents programs, and serving as a frequent speaker on innovation and leadership. Her regional expertise and commitment to member engagement will bring valuable perspective to the IAAPA Global Board.



Amanda Thompson OBE

Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Advisory Board Chair Director, 2027–2029

CEO, Blackpool Pleasure Beach Ltd., President Stageworks Worldwide Productions (Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa Region)

Amanda Thompson OBE has dedicated more than 35 years of volunteer leadership to IAAPA and previously served as chairman of the IAAPA Board of Directors, helping guide the association through the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. She has also served on the global board, governance, finance, and CEO search committees, providing strategic leadership during several pivotal moments in IAAPA's history.

As managing director of Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Thompson brings a unique operator and supplier perspective, having exhibited at IAAPA Expos for more than 18 years. A respected industry speaker and thought leader, she continues to champion innovation, collaboration, and the long-term success of the global attractions industry. FW

2028 Board Applications

The application process for the 2028 IAAPA Global Board of Directors will open in early 2027 and will be available on **IAAPA.org/boardofdirectors**. Members interested in serving are encouraged to become actively involved with the Association through committees, task forces, speaking opportunities, and mentorship programs.



IAAPA Stands Ready to Support Members in 2027

IAAPA membership affords unparalleled advantages aimed at driving strategic growth and fostering professional development while catering to the varied needs of industry stakeholders by offering three membership categories: Attractions Facilities, Manufacturer/Supplier/Consultant, and Individual/Student.

IAAPA NEWS



News and Publications

Membership provides access to Funworld magazine, IAAPA News Daily, and **IAAPA.org/News,** offering industry trends, innovations, best practices, global news, event information, educational resources, and regional updates across print, digital, and online platforms.

Connections

Experience premier networking, innovation, and knowledge-sharing opportunities at IAAPA Expos and regional events. Online via IAAPA Connect+ app and IAAPA Connect+ Marketplace, access schedules, exhibitor information, wayfinding tools, and the chance to connect with fellow IAAPA event attendees. The IAAPA Job Board is the place to source top talent



and explore career opportunities within the global attractions industry.

Research and Resources

Members gain access to global attractions research, industry benchmarks, economic impact studies, and market outlooks, along with crisis communications resources and 24/7 support. In a crisis, call the 24/7 support line: +1 321-319-7602. Additional programs provide business solutions to improve revenue and operational efficiency, while the Hosted Buyer Program connects members with exhibitors and industry leaders to discover new products, trends, and 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 operators are encouragedto take advantage of IAAPA's Facility Excellence Self-Assessment to measure progress and evaluate the effectiveness of their safety procedures. Gain access to safety guidance, industry-leading standards, and comprehensive training initiatives as part of IAAPA's global efforts to promote safety and compliance.

Public Affairs and 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.



Michael Costello is the managing editor of IAAPA News. With 20 years working in the attractions industry at Conneaut Lake Park, Cedar Point, Universal Orlando, and Walt Disney World, he also volunteers in his free time with the National Amusement Park Historical Association. Connect with him on LinkedIn.

Visit **IAAPA.org** to explore the full scope of the association's offerings.



IAAPA Launches Insurance Solutions in United States

From FECs to manufacturers, all can benefit from new service



In response to the rising insurance rates and similar challenges attraction operators and manufacturers face, IAAPA is proud to announce the launch of IAAPA Insurance Solutions. This joint venture between IAAPA and Higginbotham Insurance agency—one of the largest independent insurance brokers in the U.S.—provides members with access to insurance and risk management specifically designed for the attractions industry.

The program is available now to IAAPA members in the United States—from independently-owned family entertainment centers to theme parks, as well as industry suppliers and manufacturers.

"IAAPA members have told us for years that the insurance marketplace doesn't always reflect the realities of operating an attraction," says Josh Powers, chief financial officer of IAAPA. "IAAPA Insurance








Solutions gives us an opportunity to address that challenge with a long-term industry focused approach rather than a short-term solution. Most importantly, the value it creates through this program comes back to support our members and the industry we serve."

The only requirement to take advantage of the new benefit is to be (or become) an IAAPA member.

Participants can expect numerous benefits from IAAPA Insurance, including access to expert insurance specialists who understand the attraction industry and its operations. There will also be a director based at the Orlando headquarters to serve as a dedicated point of contact. Coverage options include property and causality insurance, and employee benefits are also available.

IAAPA Insurance Solutions is dedicated to gathering information from member-driven insights about insurance needs across the industry to continue developing this unique program.

"Expo will give us an opportunity to introduce the program and connect directly with members, but our work continues well beyond the show," says Scott Callison, director of member relations, IAAPA Insurance Solutions. "We'll listen to the industry, identify evolving needs and share insights around emerging risk trends to help members better navigate a changing insurance environment."

Take the member survey, learn more about the program, and find contact details at **IAAPAinsurance.com**

IAAPA Insurance Solutions at IAAPA Expo 2026
Speak with an insurance expert at IAAPA Expo, Nov. 17-20 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando at booth S2853, South building.



This is a partial listing of upcoming IAAPA events. Event details are as of Oct. 1, 2026, and subject to change. For the most up-to-date information, visit **IAAPA.org/Events**

NOVEMBER

IAAPA LEGENDS: A Hall of Fame Celebratory Affair
16 | Orlando

IAAPA EXPO
16-20 | Orlando

IAAPA Safety Institute
25 | Tokyo

DECEMBER

IAAPA Theme Park Summit
14–15 | Paris and surrounding area

FEBRUARY 2027

IAAPA FEC Summit
7–9 | Atlanta

IAAPA Meetup: Ignite Your Career
24 | Orlando

MARCH

IAAPA Public Affairs Conference 2027
1-3 | Washington, D.C.

IAAPA Summit: Latin America, Caribbean 2027
8-10 | Panama City

APRIL

IAAPA EXPO MIDDLE EAST 2027
12-15 | Abu Dhabi

IAAPA North America Summit 2027
18-20 | Frisco, Texas

MAY

IAAPA Meetup: Vancouver Aquarium
6 | Vancouver

IAAPA Meetup: IAAPA HQ
19 | Orlando

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The Global Ambassador

2027 IAAPA Chairman Chris Perry's journey from bathhouse attendant to IAAPA Chairman

by Scott Fais, senior director of global editorial

ON A HAZY JULY MORNING, CHRIS PERRY BEAMS with an anticipatory glow. He's returned to the place of his upbringing in Naperville, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago, home to Centennial Beach—an aquatic attraction for generations of families—and the place where he first got bit by the attractions bug.

"This is where it all began," he says introspectively, his gaze drifting toward the 6.2-million-gallon aquamarine-colored pool, reminiscent of the giant pools that became staples at turn-of-the-century attractions.

Surrounded by a canopy of mature trees, Centennial Beach sits nestled between the DuPage River and narrow blocks of well-maintained homes fabricated from stone and brick. Dressed in a navy-colored polo shirt and comfortable khaki pants, Perry appears coiled, energized to retrace his origins.

"It just evokes all those same emotions from way back when," he says, pointing to a twisting staircase descending from the second-floor bathhouse to a ground-level lifeguard office. It was on these steps five decades earlier that a 14-year-old Perry worked for his father as a summer bathhouse attendant at Centennial Beach.

"I cleaned toilets, I checked passes, I worked as a cashier, I served nachos, and I was a lifeguard. It gives me a perspective that I appreciate, and it also helped me stay connected to our front line team members everywhere I have been," he says.

For Perry, the staircase serves as a visual metaphor for the steps taken that launched his global career as an auditor,



Chris Perry stands on the same steps leading from the men's locker room at Centennial Beach in summer 2026, following his father's footsteps. Dick Perry served as the facility manager each summer as Chris worked seasonally in a variety of roles at the community attraction.



DIGITAL EDITING: KRIS VAN DE SANDE

operator, manufacturer, and consultant in North America, the Middle East, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Funworld joined Perry as he reconnected with Centennial Beach during a tour where he reflected on his foundation as an operator and shared perspectives ahead of becoming the 2027 IAAPA chairman of the global board of directors.

Starting with a Splash

Perry's first job proved grounding: a bathhouse attendant positioned just outside of the men's locker room at Centennial Beach [the same spot where Perry is seated in Funworld's cover image]. In the blistering summer sun, he would check admission passes and inspect bags ensuring glass and alcohol did not find their way in.

The son of two educators, Dick and Sandi Perry, Chris says his parents were both vocal and inspiring.

"My parents were hugely supportive of me and my siblings. I was always led to believe that I could accomplish anything, however I needed to work for it," Perry shares.

As a competitive wrestler from age 4 onward, Perry says he too considered following his parents in a career that would allow him to embrace his passion for athletics.

"I wanted to be a coach. And they said 'In order to be a coach, you have to be a teacher.' I said, 'Okay, I'll get a teaching degree,'" he recalls.

Yet, as the summers went by, Perry graduated to the role of lifeguard, lifeguard instructor, instructor trainer, and eventually head lifeguard where he first connected with Jeff Ellis, founder of Ellis and Associates (E&A), the aquatic safety and risk-management company.

"I have known Jeff since I was 13 years old," Perry tells Funworld. Centennial Beach became an Ellis & Associates client in 1986 when Dick Perry took over as facility manager, making it one of E&A's earliest public-facility clients.

"I started out checking passes and cleaning the bathhouse. I never imagined where that first job would take me!"

— Chris Perry



Perry interacts with attendees at IAAPA Expo Asia in 2017.

IAAPA ARCHIVES

"From an early age, his drive, work ethic, and commitment to excellence were clear. Chris was always among the first to volunteer for training assignments and was eager to deepen his knowledge of aquatics," recalls Ellis, founder of E&A and a 2026 IAAPA Hall of Fame inductee.

Ellis lured Perry away from Centennial Beach, hiring him during his summer school breaks from Eastern Illinois University—where he attended on a wrestling scholarship—to perform audits at E&A-contracted facilities across the U.S.

"At first, I was only assigned the Midwest region, because E&A didn't want me traveling around the U.S. on my own as a 19 year old," recalls Perry.

Later, he would drive 30,000 miles from Chicagoland to Alaska, south to San Diego, and east to Texas, before returning home to Illinois, spending 100 days on the road performing aquatic safety operational audits for E&A. When Perry graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in health education, he had traveled to all 50 U.S. states.

"I have great respect for the dedication, knowledge, and leadership Chris continues to bring to our industry," Ellis tells Funworld.

Perry recalls how Ellis sent him a lead for his initial professional role as an aquatic coordinator for the City of St. Peters, Missouri. Afterward, Perry worked for the Jumeirah Group in Dubai; WhiteWater in Thailand; Royal Caribbean International in Miami; Baha Mar in The Bahamas; and Qiddiya Investment Company in Saudi Arabia.

Other novel roles included a student teaching stint in Sydney, Australia, a snorkeling instructor for Club Med in Huatulco, Mexico, and hosting "Epic Attractions" on The Travel Channel, where Perry provided cable television viewers with an all-access, backstage pass to the best attractions in the world.

In total, Perry, along with his wife, Lisa, and their two daughters, Noa and Ella, have spent 20 years abroad—with Chris living and working in seven countries.

"It is crazy to think of everywhere we have lived and worked and all the various places around the world we have traveled to as a family, and that it all started here at Centennial Beach as a bathhouse attendant!" he says.

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PERRY FAMILY

"I want the next generation to see the incredible career opportunities our industry offers."

— Chris Perry



CENTENNIAL BEACH



CENTENNIAL BEACH

TOP: Perry and his family, from left: daughter Ella, Chris, wife Lisa, and daughter Noa. MIDDLE: Centennial Beach opened in the summer of 1932 in a former limestone quarry as part of Naperville's centennial celebration. BOTTOM: Centennial Beach continues to thrive today.

And like that twisting staircase leading from the bathhouse, Perry's career has led him back to working with Ellis in his current role as chief strategy officer at Jeff Ellis Management, LLC.

"Chris's successful career has given him a distinctive set of skills and experience that make him a strong addition to our executive leadership team," Ellis tells Funworld. "His return also reflects a broader connection: several colleagues who began at Centennial Beach, and later served as E&A auditors, have since rejoined our executive team. For Chris, it is also a meaningful continuation of his father's legacy and his family's longstanding relationship with our company."

Positioning the Industry for Future Growth

Perry sees 2027 as a year about the future, about change, and about testing new ideas, along with harnessing the next generation of talent. Thus, Perry has a vision for how the association can become an even greater resource for members—and prospective members.

"I think because of my parents' background and my background in teaching, I naturally have a tendency to lean towards younger people and education," he says presaging his vision. "I feel that IAAPA should be the have-all and end-all for where the incoming workforce goes for all industry related information," he shares. "We, IAAPA, become the resource."

Perry's idea goes beyond just offering classified ads, rather, becoming a globally respected clearinghouse sharing accredited university degree programs, certification offerings, and internship opportunities for those looking to make the attractions industry their career—and those who aren't.

"We all know the challenge with labor. It's really getting people to understand what this industry has, where it can take you, and that it is a viable career path," Perry says.

By showcasing human resources, engineering, IT, sales, and finance roles (to name only a few), Perry believes talent can find new professional avenues, and thus, empower the attractions industry for accelerated growth and leadership in the decades ahead.

"This is at its infancy, but this is where we need to grow," he says. "I think when you capture people early—and get them hooked on the industry—man, there's endless possibilities," he says excitedly.

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JORDI MUNTAL

Perry receives a playful headlock from ProSlide Chairman and CEO Rick Hunter at IAAPA Expo Europe 2026 in London.

Year as Chairman

While Perry serves as IAAPA's 2027 chairman, he's quick to emphasize he is just one of a larger group of volunteers sitting on the IAAPA global board of directors.

"We bring 22 people together from all around the world—from some of the biggest companies, from different constituencies, from all geographies, from different member categories—and it's about figuring out how do we get everybody's input," Perry explains. He asserts "this is not Chris Perry's platform, but rather a collective."

"I think it's important to be able to leverage everybody's intellect," Perry says definitively. "I feel like the chairman's role is to get the best out of the board."

One key initative that Perry has spearhead over the past two years outlines the future of the attractions industry. Named Navigating the Future, Key Forces Shaping the Attractions Industry, the project serves as of IAAPA's first, long-term future-focused research initiatives exploring the opportunities, challenges, and scenarios that may influence the future of the attractions industry worldwide.

"We don't have a crystal ball," Perry says. "It's about identifying what are the forces that are going to shape the industry and helping members navigate that."

Chairing the IAAPA Vision 2035 Task Force and working with IAAPA's own in-house research team, Perry highlights the initative is to get IAAPA members conversing about what's next.

"If we can get people to ask questions—that they previously weren't asking themselves—to me, that's a huge success," he says.

Ambassador to All

As an operator, strategist, and educator, this global ambassador never forfeits an opportunity to inspire those questioning their next career move.

While disembarking the London Underground during IAAPA Expo Europe, a fellow passenger became interested in Perry's IAAPA Expo Europe 2026 lanyard.

"Do you mind if I ask what you do?" the 30-something asks Perry. Without missing a beat, he uses the opportunity to explain how IAAPA connects the global attractions industry.

"We have attendees that run theme parks, water parks, museums, but then we also have those who manufacture roller coasters, pumps and filtration systems, or sell food…" Perry says before stopping short to inquire, "What do you do?"

The gentleman responds that he's a governmental data analyst attending a conference at the same facility.

"But, I don't wake up excited every day," the man admits. "I see all of you come in and everybody's so engaged and interacting—it's a night and day difference from the conference I'm at."

Spontaneously, the gentleman pulls out his phone and shows Perry a photo of his backyard pool, complete with a three-meter slide. "This is me," the man says. "I belong in here … are there jobs?"

"Listen!" Perry responds, "Our industry has most every type of job that many other industries have!"

That same sense of excitement that a 14-year-old felt when going to work at the community pool back in Naperville, Illinois, still burns inside Perry today.

"When I look back, I don't know if I would change anything," Perry says. "Everything happens for a reason, and I think I landed in this for a reason—and I don't regret it." FW



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:

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Hot in ATLANTA

SIZZLING STRATEGIES INSIDE ATLANTA'S FECs & LBEs

By Evan Ponstingle

From attractions perched atop an old warehouse, to fresh concepts that are the result of years of research, family entertainment centers (FEC) and location-based entertainment (LBE) are hot in "Hotlanta."

Ahead of IAAPA FEC Summit taking place Feb. 7–9, 2027, in Atlanta, Funworld tapped regional operators for their expertise in the latest industry trends and to share strategies that move their facility forward.

Join FEC and LBE professionals at IAAPA FEC Summit, Feb. 7–9, 2027, in Atlanta for an immersive experience packed with expert-led education, strategic insights, and exclusive behind-the-scenes EDUTours of local entertainment facilities. Learn more at IAAPA.org/FECSummit



Evan Ponstingle is the Digital Content Associate for IAAPA. A graduate of Bowling Green State University, he has worked in a variety of roles at Kings Island, Hersheypark, and Cedar Point. Evan is the author of the book *Kings Island: A Ride Through Time*, and is passionate about telling the stories of the attractions industry. Connect with him on LinkedIn.

Hot in ATLANTA



FRESH FROM THE GROUND UP

Your 3rd Spot

In trending terms, home is called people's "first place" in life, with their workplace a second place. The location where people go to relax and socialize? That's the third place—hence the name Amp Up1 Hospitality uses on the marquee of their FEC.

Doug Warner, chief solutions officer for Amp Up1 Hospitality, explains the concept allowed him to analyze, "how folks interact differently, and what are the common threads that people really demand … from a psychological perspective, and what that escape looks like when they're trying to get out and have fun together."

Utilizing these observations, Warner and his business partners began exploring different ways to create the ultimate third place. "We basically culled all of that knowledge into one place and said, 'If we could start over from scratch, what would we do differently?'" Warner says. "How would we reduce friction? What, in terms of gaming offerings, would we present differently?" After spending two and a half years developing the concept, Your 3rd Spot opened in 2022.

"When we got to Atlanta, it became clear very quickly that we had the perfect place in terms of real estate and a landlord partner, but also a community that is receptive to entrepreneurship, new business, small business, and a place where they get excited about things to do," Warner explains. "In Atlanta, it's about what's new and cool and exciting, and we felt that warm welcome the minute we opened our doors."

Your 3rd Spot advertises they have more than 100 activities and experiences, from nostalgic arcade games and shuffleboard, to bowling and tabletop games, along with a diverse food and beverage menu. Culinary offerings are carefully curated to create a sense of discovery and a shared sense of community, bringing guests closer together.

"Our food program is small plates, which selfishly is the way that we love to experience food as a team the most," Warner explains. "Where you just order a bunch of different things to the table, everybody's taking a bite, they're kind of sharing their experience, they're trying new things—that again—leads into that sort of connection and discovery element of it."

The attraction has nearly 1,100 people in their membership program, with operators planning a second location in the greater Chicago area.

Warner encourages FEC Summit attendees to see how we do things differently at the facility.

"There's a sort of sophistication to our brand that we really enjoy, and I think people love." Warner says.

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Hot in ATLANTA



LEGO DISCOVERY CENTER

BUILDING BRICK BY BRICK

Lego Discovery Center

For those with a creative mind, Lego Discovery Center Atlanta offers families a place to use their imagination to build.

"There's a huge family draw here," explains Courtlyn Ward, schools and groups coordinator for Lego Discovery Center Atlanta. "A lot of people come to Atlanta to vacation. We have the Georgia Aquarium, we have the Atlanta Zoo, so bringing the Atlanta Discovery Center really did just make sense to this market."

Lego Discovery Center Atlanta offers 35,000 square feet of interactive experiences, including two rides—the Kingdom Quest dark ride and the 4D Cinema.

The multi-generational aspect is key to this FEC's appeal. "Lego is a toy for anybody of any age, we can have a five-year-old walk out there with like a 40-year-old dad, and they'll both have an equal amount of fun out there building cars in our car building area and racing," says Elizabeth Baker, master model builder at Lego Discovery Center Atlanta.

To keep a visit fresh, Lego Discovery Center Atlanta hosts different seasonal events, such as Brick-or-Treat during Halloween. It's a way to use the FEC to incentivize return visits.

"We can transform the entire attraction, so guests will have a brand-new experience when they come back and visit us in October or in December, or during the summer," Ward says.

Another aspect that makes Lego Discovery Center stand out is the employee culture. The FEC emphasizes empowering their guests' creativity; it is also a Certified Autism Center. "The staff here is very interactive," Baker says, explaining how the operator wants its staff to feel like a friend who believes in the creativity of its guests.

That sense of creativity allows guests to construct objects from pits of Lego bricks to getting advice from Lego staff. "[It's] sort of a novel experience that's a little bit more about human interaction and being creative together than is about passively consuming," Baker concludes.



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Hot in ATLANTA



SKYLINE PARK

FEC WITH A VIEW

Skyline Park

In the early 1900s, the Ponce de Leon amusement park thrived in Atlanta with Ferris wheels, the Loop the Loop roller coaster, and a mineral spring. By the early 1920s, the amusement park was replaced by a Sears catalog facility. One hundred years later, the location returned to its roots through Skyline Park, an attraction situated on the rooftop of the old Sears building.

Mandy Slater, the chief creative officer and co-founder of Skyline Park's parent company, Slater Hospitality, says she had no experience with attractions, when developers of Ponce City Market reached out.

"We got some consultants and some help on the front end, and we figured the rest out along the way," Slater tells Funworld.

Today, Skyline Park includes an 18-hole mini-golf course, midway games, a three-story slide, and the Heege Tower ride from Sunkid. The 9 Mile Station restaurant and 12 Cocktail Bar add food and beverage offerings. "We've kind of touched on all of those things that make it appealing to a wide group of people," she explains.

With its unique location, Skyline Park has found creative ways to maximize the space—and weather—for extra revenue.

Rooftop Terrace is a tented space available for private events and ticketed events—such as ice skating—during a typically less profitable winter season. "How do we get people up here to embrace the cold?" Slater asks of the inspiration to add skating. "Let's get them up to ice skate, and just embrace the winter. So that's turned a dead season the first year into one of our more profitable seasons," she says. Slater notes that outdoor activities encourage visitors to dress for the weather, so they are not surprised by the low temperatures.

Moving forward, Slater sees an opportunity to expand the Skyline Park concept. "I'd like to see what Skyline Park can do if it goes into other cities. I'm excited because I feel like we're 10 years in, and I feel like we're just getting started."

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Hot in ATLANTA



POKIDDO INDOOR PLAYGROUND

MORE THAN CHILD'S PLAY AT WORK

Pokiddo Indoor Playground

In nearby Duluth, Pokiddo Indoor Playground offers a multitude of attractions, from trampolines and foam pits to slides. When the FEC opened in 2025, it became the newest location in a chain that started in China and continues an expansion westward. Research led Pokiddo to Atlanta.

"We chose the Atlanta area because of the tremendous economic and population growth the region has experienced over the years," explains Willy Zheng, marketing and customer relations manager for Pokiddo USA. "Our Duluth location is an important starting point for us, and we are excited about continuing to expand Pokiddo into more communities in the future."

The Pokiddo brand helps share a spirit of fun with every guest that passes through. "One of my favorite things is walking into Pokiddo and seeing children running around, playing, laughing, and using all of their energy. Seeing families enjoying the space is what makes the business exciting for me," Zheng tells Funworld. He recommends operators develop a strong brand that translates to the guest experience when looking to set themselves apart from the competition.

"We don't want children and families to think of us as simply another indoor playground. We want them to remember the Pokiddo name, our characters, our atmosphere, and the experience they had here," Zheng says. "When a child asks their parents, 'Can we go to Pokiddo?' instead of just saying, 'Can we go to the playground?' that tells us we've created something memorable." Zheng concludes.



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Hot in ATLANTA



BEAT THE BOMB

MAKING A MESS—LITERALLY

Beat the Bomb

The clock is ticking in this messy FEC concept. Beat the Bomb encourages guests to compete in multiple challenges to disable a threat. And it's not just any challenge—lose and the attraction blasts guests with paint, foam, or slime. (Yes, hazmat suits are included.)

General Manager Barron Nicholls explains the concept "is an immersive gaming experience, similar to an escape room, but not quite an escape room. Our mission is for individual rooms in which you and a group of people all work together. The more levels you go up, the more points you earn, which transcends into time in order to beat the bomb in the fifth level."

Different missions feature different types of challenges, and for visitors who beat all three, they become eligible for a Cash Bomb Mission. Win and guests could receive $1,000.

Nicholls says that Beat the Bomb has found success in leaning into seasonal events, such as a Haunted Mission for the Halloween season, with a spooky red slime ending. "We try to do something fun and exciting every month with different programs and different activities, whether it's breast cancer awareness, Halloween, or St. Patrick's Day with our cocktails," Nicholls explains.

The LBE plays a key role in the Atlanta community. Whether hosting company team building events for locally based Chick-fil-A and Coca-Cola, or giving free tickets to nonprofits, Beat the Bomb is a brand seen outside its own walls.

"You may ride around the city and see the 'Bombing Mobile,'" Nicholls laughs as he explains the LBE's way to drum up publicity. "We have a fully wrapped SUV that drives around the city with a discount code on it for people to have an opportunity to come to Beat the Bomb."

The attraction stays on the cutting edge to provide a memorable guest experience. "We're always adding new games. We're always changing. We're evolving," Nicholls says.

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Hot in ATLANTA



ACTIVATE

CREATING THE REPEAT VISIT

Activate

A desire to create repeatable experiences led to the development of Activate. What began in Winnipeg, Manitoba, now includes more than 70 locations spanning North America, Europe, and the Middle East. Two of those locations can be found in the Atlanta area, in Buckhead and Alpharetta. "We feel like it's a city that really matches our vibe," explains Rachel Smith, vice president of marketing.

The location in Buckhead offers 14 different game arenas, and more than 200 game levels. "Each game runs one to three minutes and gets harder as you level up, Smith explains. Players wear an RFID wristband that tracks scores across every room, so you can see yourself climb the rankings visit after visit."

Smith says hosting birthdays, school and youth groups, and corporate team building do well since the games are cooperative, competitive, and quick to learn. Repeatability is also a key to the success of the brand.

"Our founders had been running escape rooms and kept hitting the same problem: once you solve the room, there's little reason to come back," Smith believes. Therefore, Activate introduces new games to keep the attraction feeling fresh and, well, active. "Returning guests always have something new to try," Smith says. "Because the platform is digital, we can keep it fresh with new levels, new games and new competitions, so a guest's 20th visit is as fun as their first."

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Hot in ATLANTA



SLOOMOO INSTITUTE

FEC MEETS ART GALLERY

Sloomoo Institute

The enduring popularity of slime now has an address with Atlanta's Sloomoo Institute.

Sara Schiller, co-founder and co-CEO, explains the attraction blends the sticky goo with contemporary art.

"We realized that this was something that we needed to bring to the world, but not just as selling a product of slime, but actually to get people to immerse themselves into the joy and fun of play and playing with slime," Schiller explains.

Sloomoo's first location opened in New York, with an expansion to Atlanta in 2022. "Atlanta is a community that's also open to new ideas and open to trying things and exploring," Schiller says about the decision to expand south.

Sloomoo Institute's activities involve getting hands-on experience and connecting with friends and loved ones.

"You are rolling up your hands and playing from beginning to end," Schiller says.

Aesthetically, Schiller also sees the importance of offering facets adults will appreciate through sophisticated design and STEM learning. "So, while we're family entertainment, adults will feel like they're in a world class museum," she says. Sloomoo's Atlanta location features educational exhibits, like a gigantic slime mold explaining single-celled organisms and how they collaborate in order to find food.

"Kids are in there thinking that they're just jumping around and playing, but they're actually learning," Schiller tells Funworld.

When it comes to staffing, Sloomoo makes it a point to hire employees who have intellectual differences. "So many families have people with intellectual differences, and when they walk in and see people who look like them or act like them, that subtle welcoming—that is real, honestly connecting with your guests—and we couldn't be more proud to have such a great workforce," Schiller states.

Whether guests played with slime as a kid, or appreciate art as an adult, Sloomoo aims to create an emotional connection for guests who should never feel they're too old to play and learn. "We're really feeling an emotional need," Schiller says. "And whenever you feel an emotional need, you know that you're tapping into something that has longevity." FW

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NEW RIDES AND ATTRACTIONS 2026

By Evan Ponstingle, Juliana Gilling, Michael Costello, Carly Neil, Amber Valois



FUNWORLD'S TRADITION OF ROUNDING UP WHAT'S NEW in the attractions industry continues in 2026 with this special section, which offers a snapshot of innovations shaping the future of the industry across IAAPA's member regions. From theme parks and water parks to family entertainment centers, museums, zoos, and aquariums, Funworld highlights how IAAPA's diverse membership brings new experiences to market to the delight of guests worldwide. These stories showcase the creative collaboration among operators, manufacturers, and suppliers that drives innovation and reflects the global reach of today's attractions industry.

HUSS



WHAT'S SPECIAL? Guests reconnect to their memories of the original ride and the park's heritage, all while generating thrills for the next generation.

Bounty's Revenge II

Adventure World, Perth, Australia

Huss Park Attractions

This Huss Park Attractions pirate ship set sail at Adventure World in Perth, Australia, just before the new year. Bounty's Revenge II replaces the park's original swinging ship, which was removed nine years ago. "Bounty's Revenge II celebrates the park's heritage, while strengthening our dry-ride offering with a refreshed and visually impactful attraction that also boasts a high rider throughput," says Andrew Sharry, CEO of Adventure World. The classic swinging ship once again provides a feeling of weightlessness in the belly for every member of the family.

"Ultimately, the strongest additions balance guest appeal with operational practicality and cost effectiveness, [these are] the ones that continue delivering true value well beyond their opening season," Sharry observes.

adventureworld.net.au

ZAMPERLA



WHAT'S SPECIAL? Collaboration with 35+ parks and feedback from informed guests helped perfect the ergonomics of the train's seat and restraints.

Giant Revolution

Lotte World Adventure Busan, Busan, South Korea

Zamperla

Zamperla's compact double heart coaster opened at Lotte World Busan in South Korea on Oct. 8. The new coaster marks one of the first installations of this coaster model, originally announced in 2021, as Zamperla continues to reinvent their coaster product lineup and push the envelope of innovation. Adam Sandy, roller coaster sales and marketing director for Zamperla, explains that the double heart coaster came from a need in the market that Zamperla identified. "We saw a need for coasters that had both a landmark presence and a reduced installation cost," Sandy explains. "The double heart's small footprint means it's much cheaper to install than a traditional coaster and can be shoehorned into spaces many coasters cannot." The coaster features the new lightning-style trains, which were created using feedback from operators.

adventurebusan.lotteworld.com

INTAMIN



WHAT'S SPECIAL? Updates include a larger gondola to boost capacity and custom theming that includes a giant monster bursting out of the ground.

King Claw

Dreamworld, Coomera, Australia

Intamin

Over the past few years, Australia's Dreamworld has transformed itself by adding new roller coasters, new themed lands, and refreshed animal habitats. In December 2025, Dreamworld unveiled its latest addition, King Claw. This Intamin gyro swing replaces the original Claw flat ride. "When the attraction reached a natural lifecycle decision point, we had an opportunity to preserve what people loved about it while making the experience bigger, faster, and more immersive for the next generation of guests," says Natalie Faulkner, public relations, communications, and partnerships manager at Dreamworld. "We weren't just looking to replace a ride; we wanted to reimagine the experience." Instead of merely replacing the original Claw with an identical model, Dreamworld used the opportunity to add a larger version that swings 50% higher as it soars above the heads of park guests.

dreamworld.com.au

Kong x Godzilla: The Ride

Lotte World Adventure, Seoul, South Korea

Sally Dark Rides

Lotte World Adventure in South Korea unveiled Sally Dark Rides' biggest animated figure to date.

Sally worked closely with the attraction development team at Lotte World, Legendary Entertainment (Kong), and TOHO (Godzilla) to craft a story and dark ride experience that aligned with the IP—and would check all the boxes for guest experience.

"As various areas of the ride were designed by Sally Dark Rides, the client would review and approve. Once we landed on a final design, production of the attraction was reviewed through the same pathways," explains Sally Dark Rides Chief Creative Officer Rich Hill on the development process.

The collaboration with the "Monsterverse" takes guests on an 11-minute journey that puts them right in the middle of an epic battle between two of cinema's most iconic monsters: King Kong and Godzilla. Screens, animatronics, and the dynamic motion of the ride vehicle combine to create a dark ride experience that Lotte World Adventure guests won't soon forget.

adventure.lotteworld.com

SALLY DARK RIDES



WHAT'S SPECIAL? The King Kong figure is so large, it came within 12 inches from the ceiling inside Sally's Jacksonville, Florida, production facility.

Maple Island

Lotte World Adventure, Seoul, South Korea

Zamperla

The enchanting new area at the South Korean theme park is based on MapleStory, the popular online role-playing game. Maple Island features themed retail, food and beverage, and three new rides from Zamperla. Arcana Ride is a speedway 8, which moves in a circle. EOS Tower is a sky tower that offers a more family-friendly alternative to the park's Gyro Drop ride. A junior coaster named Stone Express threads through the entire land, creating a compelling, kinetic area for guests of all ages. "Projects like this highlight what we do best: listening to a park's goals and turning them into a ride mix that fits the audience, the operation, and the story," says Davide Donadello, sales and operation manager for the China and Korea region for Zamperla.

adventure.lotteworld.com

ZAMPERLA



WHAT'S SPECIAL? The new addition was inspired from the park's popular MapleStory festivals, that are now a permanent, year-round themed land.

Monkie Kid

Legoland Shanghai Resort, Shanghai, China

Monkie Kid became the Lego Group's first original IP inspired by the Chinese novel "Journey to the West." The story proved to be an authentic foundation for the park's next themed land. The land's centerpiece is the Lego Monkie Kid Flower Fruit Mountain Adventure boat ride combining a floating vehicle with directional changes, dark ride scenes, and a splash down. Legoland Shanghai used the test-and-adjust phase a month before the ride opened, allowing guests to ride Monkie Kid Flower Fruit Mountain Adventure and used the guest feedback to help perfect the final attraction.

"Treat trial operations as part of the design process," advises Zach Xu, crisis public relations manager for Legoland Shanghai Resort. "Real guest reactions often reveal details that are difficult to anticipate during the design stage."

legolandshanghai.cn

LEGOLAND SHANGHAI RESORT



WHAT'S SPECIAL? Monkie Kid marks Legoland Shanghai's first expansion since opening in early July 2025.

WHITEWATER



Rainbow Storm Tower

Aloha Island World, VinWonders Vu Yen, Hải Phòng, Vietnam

WhiteWater

The Aloha Island World water park at VinWonders Vu Yen reached out to WhiteWater to help transform the park from a local park to a destination. "Travelers are increasingly seeking intense experiences, unique, and highly challenging," says Nguyen Viet Dung, water park manager at VinWonders Vu Yen. "Rainbow Storm is the answer to that need … driven by the desire to create a new landmark for the region."

vinwonders.com/en/vinwonders-vu-yen

JINMA RIDES



Soar Through the Clouds

Xiaogan Fantawild, Xiaogan, China

Jimma Rides

The new Xiaogan Fantawild theme park is themed to dinosaurs, with its flagship ride on the cutting-edge of technology. Soar Through the Clouds is a custom LSM launch coaster by Jinma Rides. Guest input helped guide the foundation of the coaster's concept.

"We monitored guest feedback from existing launch coasters and immersive projects," says Leo Lee, vice president and general manager of marketing and sales for Jinma Rides. "Riders wanted a stronger launch, more sustained speed, dense airtime, and smoothness. We used that to guide the track elements: top hat, camelback, overbanked turn, zero-g roll, switchback," Lee says.

He advises when starting a major project, operators should "start with clear guest and park goals, not just hardware. Choose technology that is reliable, serviceable, and supply-chain secure. Consider total cost—power, foundations, maintenance, throughput. Don't overlook comfort and accessibility."

fantawild.com/en/park.shtml

SUNWAY LAGOON



Sunway Lagoon Scream Park Refresh

Subang Jaya, Malaysia

Sunway Lagoon's year-round haunted attraction, Scream Park, received a total refresh for 2026. "We wanted to move beyond a conventional scare experience and create something more story-led, where guests could explore different environments, characters, and narratives while still experiencing the suspense, mystery, and surprises that Scream Park is known for," explains Jia Yi, assistant manager of brand strategy for Sunway Theme Parks, on what guided the decision to refresh Scream Park.

Yi suggests the importance of guest feedback when developing an attraction. "It is important to understand what your guests are looking for while continuing to introduce elements that feel fresh and unexpected," Yi says. "Strong storytelling, immersive environments, and memorable moments can transform an attraction from simply something guests experience into a complete journey."

sunwaylagoon.com

Tilt of Thunder

VinWonders, Nha Trang, Vietnam

Vekoma Rides

Vekoma turned heads in 2025 with the debut of Siren's Curse at Cedar Point. In 2026, the next installation of their cliffhanger tilt coaster model debuted at VinWonders in Nha Trang, Vietnam. "Tilt of Thunder demonstrates VinWonders' commitment to bringing world-class innovation to Vietnam while further strengthening Southeast Asia's position as a destination for cutting-edge theme park experiences," says Alex Ong, Vekoma sales director of southeast Asia. An eye-catching, 90-degree tilt track starts the coaster off, and a dynamic layout follows, with two inversions and a dive into an underground tunnel. Tilt of Thunder brings a new level of thrill to VinWonders, utilizing Vekoma's ride hardware to create a compelling guest experience. "Tilt of Thunder demonstrates how innovative technology can transform a single ride element into a complete, world-class thrill experience," Ong says.

vinwonders.com/vi/vinwonders-nha-trang

VEKOMA



Vũng Tàu Aqua Adventure

Sun World Vũng Tàu, Vietnam

ProSlide, WhiteWater

Marking the eighth collaboration between ProSlide and Sun Group, the water park features two anchor attractions: a 10-lane RallyRacer and a RocketBlast water coaster, alongside other ProSlide-designed slide complexes. The design of the water park and its attractions incorporates lessons learned from years of collaboration.

"Treat a long-term partnership as a compounding asset," suggests Steve Avery, senior vice president, business development–APAC with ProSlide. "The eighth project should be measurably smarter than the first, because you're carrying forward real performance data from guest, operator, maintainer, and industry feedback, not starting over each time."

Other new slides, spray toys, and interactive aquatic play structures were provided by WhiteWater. "WhiteWater's regional firsts and record-breaking attractions at Sun World Vung Tau have generated strong media attention," says Nguyen Thi Khanh Linh, general director of Sun World Vung Tau. "More importantly, they deliver exciting and joyful experiences that guests truly enjoy."

sunworld.vn/vi/vung-tau

PROSLIDE



Wings of Memory

Everland Resort, Yongin, South Korea

Cirque Eloise's permanent show for Everland Resort in South Korea opened in April. Wings of Memory sends acrobats through the fantastic tale of the protagonist Eyell, who travels through a world of mystical creatures.

"Based on [the surveys], we created an intuitive stage production that allows the whole family to easily immerse themselves, while achieving top-tier artistic detail," says Jaehyun Yoon, manager at Samsung C&T Corporation, parent company of Everland. "In addition, we analyzed guests' data related to visits to determine the performance running time optimized for the theme park environment." Yoon suggests thinking outside the box for other IAAPA members looking to plan their own spectacular.

everland.com

EVERLAND RESORT



PARC ASTÉRIX



WHAT'S SPECIAL? The project was delivered in just five months, pushing the boundaries of night-time entertainment.

Astérix et la Potion d'étoiles

Parc Astérix, Plailly, France

Magic Drone, Crystal, Fêtes et Feux, TobeConfirm, Dimmer, Laser System Europe

Parc Astérix's show Astérix et la Potion d'étoiles (Asterix and the Star Potion) turns the night sky into a stage for the hijinks of French comic hero Astérix and his friends Obelix and Idéfix. The spectacle serves as a nightly finale during the Gaulish Summer season, enticing guests to stay until the park's closing.

"Behind this experience lies a major technological feat," says Kevin Blandina, show manager at Parc Astérix. The show features more than 370 drones, multi-colored lasers, 60 water jets reaching up to 20 meters, a water screen, 2,500 pyrotechnic effects, and more than 150 projectors, orchestrated using high-precision 3D modeling.

parcasterix.fr

AVONTURENPARK DE TOVERTUIN VAN HOORNE STUDIOS



WHAT'S SPECIAL? The new park, Avonturenpark de Tovertuin, is designed for families with children under eight-years-old.

Avonturenpark de Tovertuin

Hoogerheide, Netherlands

Overal Vriendjes: ETF Ride Systems; Tantes; Muziekvaart: ABC Rides; Boswiel, Pannenkoekenmolen, and Vlindervlucht: SBF-VISA Group

A leading name in Dutch family entertainment, Van Hoorne Studios spreads joy with its characters across television, theater, cinemas, and in its holiday and adventure parks.

"Young fans can fully immerse themselves in the magical garden where Woezel, Pip, and their friends live," says Henk Janssen, communications specialist at Van Hoorne Studios about Avonturenpark de Tovertuin that opened as part of the completely revamped resort.

Overall Vriendjes (Friends Everywhere), an enchanting dark ride, allows children to see the fun that Woezel and Pip have in the magical garden. Guests can also enjoy a musical boat trip (Tantes Muziekvaart), board a Ferris wheel full of forest animals (Boswiel), and fly with butterflies (Vlindervlucht).

avonturenparkdetovertuin.nl

PORTAVENTURA WORLD



WHAT'S SPECIAL? Coral Bay gives returning visitors something new to discover and makes the Park an even more important part of a multi-day stay.

Coral Bay, La Leyenda Perdida

Caribe Aquatic Park at PortAventura World, Tarragona, Spain

ProSlide, WhiteWater

PortAventura World strengthens its resort offerings with the opening of Coral Bay, La Leyenda Perdida (The Lost Legend), a highly themed area at Caribe Aquatic Park. "Coral Bay comes from listening to our guests. Families told us they wanted more experiences they could enjoy together in the water," says David Carnero, chief customer and commercial officer at PortAventura World.

"Every attraction had to work for a wide range of ages," Carnero says. Coral Bay's innovative attractions include Cyclone, Europe's first family water coaster, and Pirate Bay, the world's first multi-adventure pool with an aquatic obstacle course. Splash Port caters to younger children, while The Crab offers five slides. With rest areas and a themed dining space, El Bucanero, families can comfortably spend the day there.

portaventuraworld.com

Cornwall Coaster

Hansa-Park, Sierksdorf, Germany

Gerstlauer, Audiogazer

Hansa-Park's latest roller coaster evokes the charm of Cornwall, England, and its dramatic landscapes. Guests set off on a scenic railway ride through the English countryside from a vintage-style St. Austell station. As a finishing touch, Hansa-Park will recreate the Cornish landmark Roche Rock, "a very complex project," according to Claudia Leicht, a member of Hansa-Park's board of executives. Once the theming is complete, the Cornwall Coaster will be "our first fully immersive coaster in the park," she says.

The recent addition meets guests' expectations for a roller coaster that the entire family can enjoy. "It rounds off our coaster portfolio in a highly family-friendly way," Leicht says, while highlighting Hansa-Park's focus on the interconnected stories of the Hanseatic League.

hansapark.de



HANSA-PARK FREIZEIT UND FAMILIENPARK GMBH CO.

Edenya

Pairi Daiza

Brugelette, Belgium

Edenya was a natural progression for Pairi Daiza, which welcomed nearly 2.9 million visitors in 2025 and had an almost fully booked resort. "As the project took shape, we realized we were creating something truly extraordinary," explains Eric Domb, founder of Pairi Daiza. As one of the world's largest covered zoological ecosystems, the new addition also boasts a large collection of cultivated plant species in its indoor tropical garden. The facility encompasses an underwater restaurant and immersive accommodations.

Animal welfare is a priority. "We want visitors to feel they are guests in the animals' habitats," Domb says. He sees a broader lesson for the industry. "True immersion is not created by theming alone. The story, animal welfare, architecture, technology, and operations all have to work together from the beginning."

Pairi Daiza has invested more than €215 million in Edenya.

pairidaiza.eu



PAIRI DAIZA

Fireline Redwood

Fraispertuis-City, Jeanménil, France

Vekoma Rides

Fraispertuis-City, the amusement park in the Vosges region of France, celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2026 with Fireline Redwood, a roller coaster that honors the hotshot crews who battle wildland fires in the United States with an accompanying tribute to firefighters worldwide.

With the park's terrain at a premium, Fraispertuis-City needed a compact ride that would fit seamlessly into the existing site. "Opting for a Family Boomerang model allowed us to optimize space while introducing a new type of thrill to our park," says Patrice Fleurent, park director.

As riders race towards a spike set inside a fire-scarred redwood tree, smoke, fire, lighting effects, a custom soundtrack heightens the atmosphere.

Fireline Redwood fits perfectly with the Sawmill area added in 2025 and this year's Ours'Hauts, a Zierer Family Freefall Tower.

fraispertuis-city.fr



ANDROCAM PRODUCTIONS ANDROLAND

DISNEYLAND PARIS



Frozen Ever After

Disney Adventure World, Marne-la-Vallée, France

Frozen Ever After is warming hearts at Disney Adventure World. The dark ride sits in the World of Frozen, one of the fresh visitor experiences at Disneyland Paris' second park, which entered a new era on March 29, 2026, with a new name.

Frozen Ever After conjures the world of the "Frozen" movies as the story pops off the silver screen and into the three dimensional. Guests glide past Anna, Elsa, and Olaf, singing hits such as "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" and "Let it Go." Elaborate sets, sophisticated animatronics, and audio-visual technologies work in harmony to captivate guests.

World of Frozen "truly brings the kingdom of Arendelle to life," says Michel den Dulk, vice president and portfolio executive creative director, Disneyland Paris at Walt Disney Imagineering.

Beyond Frozen Ever After, guests can see the new A Celebration in Arendelle show, be whisked away on gondolas under glowing lanterns on the Raiponce Tangled Spin ride, or watch The Disney Cascade of Lights nighttime spectacular light up Adventure Bay.

disneylandparis.com

POLIN WATERPARKS



Kupua, The Lost Island

Acqua Village Follonica, Follonica, Italy

Polin Waterparks

Guests who venture into Acqua Village Follonica will discover a forgotten civilization reclaimed by the jungle: Kupua, The Lost Island. The water park's new themed area has a mythic quality, with temple-inspired structures, tropical vegetation, and Tiki elements.

Kona—The Temple Slide is a standout attraction. Designed and manufactured by Polin Waterparks, the Turbolance-model slide rises 18 meters above the park, giving guests panoramic views from the top. The park has made theming a key part of the investment. Kona plunges riders into darkness before propelling them uphill into the light, where they reverse course and drop into a splash pool. The ride joins Apo, The Ring Slide, continuing the collaboration between Acqua Village Follonica and Polin Waterparks.

acquavillage.it/en/acqua-village-follonica/

CLAUDIO SOSTIZZO



L'Aventure du Sel (The Salt Adventure)

Mines de Sel de Bex (Bex Salt Mines), Bex, Switzerland

"The Bex Salt Mines have an extraordinary heritage, and we wanted to find a new way of sharing it with today's visitors. Our aim was to preserve the identity of the site while reinventing the way its story is told for different generations," says Mona Heiniger, head of marketing and visitor experience at Salines Suisses SA.

L'Aventure du Sel (The Salt Adventure) is the result. The experience takes visitors deep into the Bex Salt Mines, starting with a journey aboard the miners' train. Next, a guided tour follows a fully redesigned route that blends salt-mining history with new lighting, sound, and immersive scenography.

One of the highlights is a new underground slide. Visitors can also taste natural brine and discover how the Fleur des Alpes salt crystals are produced.

"We are planning to redevelop the outdoor area of the Bex Salt Mines, extending the experience beyond the mine and making Bex a full-day destination," Heiniger confirms."

salina-helvetica.ch/en/mines

Querion Hypermedia Entertainment Park

Piechowice, Poland

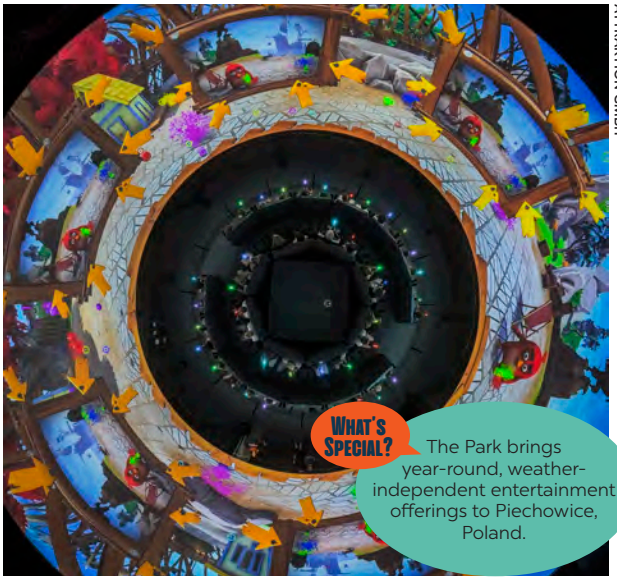
Attraktion!

Querion Hypermedia Entertainment Park brings high-tech indoor entertainment to Poland's Karkonosze region. Górskie Resorty Group, one of the country's largest hotel groups, is behind the €20 million development. Querion "aligns with the growing demand for all-season, technology-driven tourism in the region," says Dariusz Surynt, CEO of Górskie Resorty Group. Around seven million tourists a year visit the Karkonosze Mountains.

The 4,000-square-meter indoor park offers media-based attractions, immersive architecture, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and interactive storytelling, alongside a shop and bistro.

Attractions include a 360-degree interactive projection ride system combining a rotation platform, a Rovio Entertainment and Attraktion!-designed game featuring Angry Birds, a 50-seat Attraktion! FlyXD Flying Theater, an Explorer 5D Stand Up Motion Theater experience, and a 52-seat 4D/5D Motion Theater.

querion.pl/en



ATTRAKTION GMBH

The Truth Chamber

German Spy Museum, Berlin, Germany

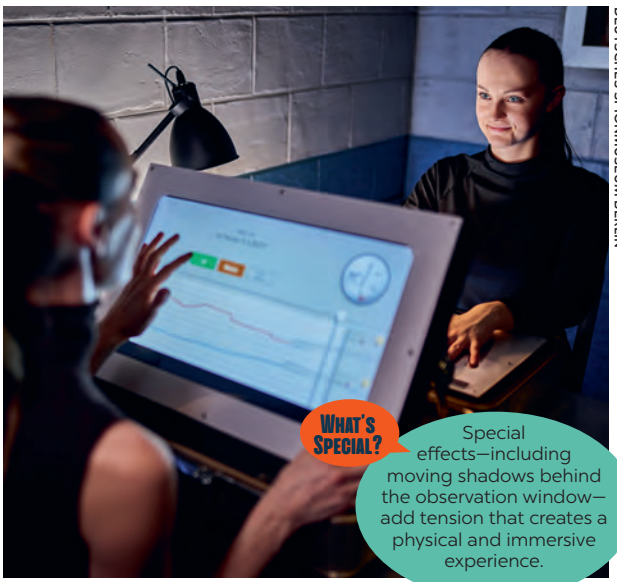
The Room Laboratories

Visitors face the moment of truth in the German Spy Museum's new interactive attraction. Following the success of its lie detector experience launched in 2019, the museum has collaborated with immersive specialists The Room Laboratories on The Truth Chamber.

Curiosity builds in the waiting area—inspired by FBI headquarters, the J. Edgar Hoover Building—where guests explore the polygraph's history. Guests can test each other in two interrogation rooms equipped with lie detectors.

"The visitor's own physiological responses become part of the experience," explains Robert Rückel, director of the German Spy Museum and the Deutschlandmuseum. "The lie detector measures pulse and skin conductivity, while the participant's heartbeat translates into sound and influences the lighting."

deutsches-spionagemuseum.de



DEUTSCHES SPIONMUSEUM BERLIN

Valgard – Realm of the Vikings

Paultons Park, Hampshire, England

Gerstlauer, ART Engineering, Leisure Expert Group

Paultons Park drew upon the spirit of adventure for its latest expansion, Valgard—Realm of the Vikings. Costing around £13 million, Valgard ranks among the family-run theme park's largest investments.

"For us, though, it's about much more than the headline investment figure. We've invested in the rides, theming, landscaping, infrastructure, food, and the overall guest experience to create something we hope will remain a major part of Paultons for many years to come," says Rob Griffiths, head of marketing and communications at the park.

Two flagship rides lie at Valgard's heart. "Drakon is our first-ever inverting coaster. It's a genuinely thrilling experience while still fitting naturally into the wider story and landscape of Valgard," Griffiths says.

paultonspark.co.uk



PAULTONS PARK LTD.

HAPPY CITY VIVA ENVIGADO



Happy City Viva Envigado

Envigado, Colombia

SBF-VISA Group

The 2026 transformation of Happy City's Viva Envigado location turned the family entertainment destination into a larger, immersive jungle-themed attraction featuring 11,000 square meters of indoor and outdoor experiences. The capital investment includes a rooftop expansion that adds approximately 5,000 square meters of experience to the attraction, including the Montaña Rusa family steel roller coaster from SBF-VISA Group, alongside attractions such as Savanna Express—a train ride from Santori Rides, and additional mechanical rides to complete the package. The expansion also includes a renovated arcade area and new food options.

happycity.com.co

AQUAFOZ



AquaFoz

Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil

Grupo Cataratas

AquaFoz is a new aquarium attraction in Foz do Iguaçu, complementing the city's portfolio of nature and tourism attractions. The attraction's concept focuses on the relationship between rivers, oceans, and conservation, giving the facility an educational component focusing on aquatic biodiversity within 28 exhibits.

"We want every visitor to understand the force of life that is born in the rivers and transforms into the ocean—and how we are all part of this current of care," says Pablo Morbis, CEO of Grupo Cataratas.

AquaFoz recreates freshwater and saltwater environments utilizing 3.3 million liters of water. The ocean tank, home to several marine species, holds more than 2 million liters of water. The attraction was developed by Grupo Cataratas and officially opened to the public in late 2025, near the city's major tourism corridor that surrounds Iguaçu Falls and other regional attractions. The attraction is transformative in nature, reinforcing the importance of water conservation.

aquafoz.com.br

ARTIK



Artik

Estado de México, México

Artik is a new indoor snow-themed entertainment attraction in Estado de México, designed to bring winter activities to a region where outdoor snow experiences are uncommon. The facility offers nine attractions across approximately 5,000 square meters and incorporates real snow-based play, slides, climbing, and other activities that fill the space vacated by a former cinema. The attraction describes itself as Mexico's first snow park and provides a combination of snow caves, slides, zip lines, obstacle-style activities, a cinema, and food court.

"One of the things we're particularly proud of is that Artik offers different types of entertainment within the same complex. Some visitors come for the adrenaline, others for the snow, and many simply want to spend a great day together," says Fernanda Lira representative of Artik.

The indoor format allows visitors to experience a winter-themed environment throughout the year. Opened in late 2025, the facility complements the offerings of the Espacio Esmeralda in Atizapán, in Mexico City's metropolitan area..

go.artik.com.mx

Dave and Buster's

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Dave & Buster's Santo Domingo brings the American entertainment center format to the Dominican Republic, combining dining, arcade games, sports viewing, traditional bowling, Fly'N Ducks duckpin bowling, and event spaces, all under one 3,200 square meter roof. "We placed particular emphasis on group experiences, birthdays, corporate events, shared food, and spaces where guests can move naturally between dining and entertainment," says Frank Ortega, senior project manager, Grupo Pais.

In line with the company's standard, this new location at the Blue Mall Santo Domingo, is thoughtfully tailored for the local market. "The result remains recognizably Dave & Buster's, while reflecting the social and family-oriented way guests use entertainment venues in Santo Domingo," says Ortega.

daveandbusters.do



DAVE & BUSTER'S SANTO DOMINGO

What's Special? Dave & Buster's Santo Domingo became the brand's first franchise in Latin America.

Estação Alles Park

Santa Catarina, Brazil

In Feb. of 2026, Estação Alles Park opened in Alles Park's family-oriented entertainment complex in Santa Catarina, Brazil. Within the destination's winter village aesthetic of themed attractions, Estação Alles Park includes a miniature world with immersive and sensory storytelling.

"The main goal was to transform this story into an experience that could be enjoyed by different generations. Every element was thoughtfully designed to spark curiosity and imagination—from the train station theming and starry-night entertainment—to the sounds, scents, and small details that invite guests to look closer and discover new stories," says Esther Schantz, supervisor of marketing at Estação Alles Park. The story begins in the 19th century, when the fictional character Mr. Whelson discovers, beyond the railway tracks, an unexpected destination: Alles Dorf, the village where the Alles Park characters live.

estacao.allespark.com.br



ESTAÇÃO ALLES PARK

What's Special? Inspired by the region's German heritage, Estação Alles Park includes six illuminated scenes featuring more than 25,000 miniatures, sound, lighting, scents, hidden characters, and easter eggs.

Inflalandia Quack

Guadalajara, Mexico

Inflalandia Quack is a family of indoor family entertainment attractions with a big yellow rubber duckie as it's mascot. At press time, the company operates nine locations across Mexico—2026 brought two new facilities to the chain. Located in the Guadalajara metropolitan area's Centro Comercial La Perla shopping complex, the FEC features bowling, laser tag, and inflatable attractions such as Sweet Quack, a themed circuit inspired by a world of candy and desserts. At approximately 6,000 square meters, the Cancún location is Inflalandia's largest location to date. Its main attraction is a 2,200 square meter inflatable circuit. The attraction also features the company's first inflatable laser tag experience, which is themed to the region's local beach atmosphere at the park. As the company expands, new attention is placed on expanding on the original concept. "Every new location represents an opportunity to learn from the market, adapt our concepts, and develop new forms of entertainment," says Fernanda Meneses Escorta with Inflalandia Quack.

inflalandia.com



INFLALANDIA QUACK

What's Special? This is the first Inflalandia Quack location to feature three distinct themed inflatable play zones under one roof.

KUZÁ BEACH & ADVENTURE PARK



WHAT'S SPECIAL?
KUZÁ is distinctive for bringing water slides to its 66-acre natural setting, that includes a beach, jungle, mangrove, and coral reef ecosystems.

KUZÁ BEACH AND ADVENTURE PARK

Cozumel, Mexico

KUZÁ Beach & Adventure Park is a destination resort in Cozumel combining water attractions, nature experiences, snorkeling, beach activities, and family entertainment. Its new water park includes slides, interactive splash areas, a children's splash zone, a lazy river, and other aquatic experiences. The broader destination also incorporates ziplining, kayaking, paddleboarding, snorkeling and beach activities. Kuzá officially launched the new water park in April 2026 and promoted an all-inclusive full experience pass combining water attractions, beach access, food, beverages, and other amenities. "More than ever, travelers are looking for complete, versatile, and memorable experiences. At Kuzá, we've integrated fun, adventure, gastronomy, and service into a single offering that transforms the way Cozumel is experienced," says Claudia Sosa, commercial director of the park.

kuzapark.com

HASBRO



WHAT'S SPECIAL?
Elegant interiors inspired by Monopoly, include playful game elements at the tables and surprise interactions with the Monopoly banker..

MONOPOLY STEAKHOUSE

Nuevo León, Mexico

Hasbro, Timeless Brands

Monopoly Steakhouse is a new entertainment-themed dining concept in San Pedro Garza García, Nuevo León. Combining a premium steakhouse menu with themed experiences and event spaces, Timeless Brands developed the project under a licensing agreement with Hasbro. Opened in May 2026, the upscale restaurant transforms the iconic board game into an immersive dining experience at Plaza Áuriga, a modern shopping, dining, and entertainment complex. The attraction combines premium steaks and cocktails with Monopoly-inspired design, music, and entertainment, representing a crossover between licensed intellectual property, themed dining, and location-based entertainment.

monopolysteakhouse.mx

VIVO OUTLET



WHAT'S SPECIAL?
A mix of physical challenges and interactive entertainment appeals to families with children of different ages.

MR. JOY

Los Toros, Chile; Alameda, Chile; Quito, Ecuador

Mr. Joy continues its expansion across Latin America in 2026, with three new openings, including those at VIVO Outlet Parque Los Toros and at Mallplaza Alameda in Chile and the latest—Riocentro Quito in Ecuador.

Mr. Joy attractions include adventure and physical challenges such as climbing walls, obstacle-style experiences, suspended walkways, jumping attractions, slides, play areas for younger children, laser challenges, arcade games, roller skating, bumper cars, and food and beverage options alongside birthday party rooms. The offerings reinforce the brand's focus on creating spaces where visitors of all ages can play, connect, and share quality time together.

"Our purpose is to deliver a high-quality entertainment experience that combines fun, innovation and safety, while offering fair and accessible pricing for families across different socioeconomic backgrounds," says Santiago Dávila, regional manager of expansion, implementation & projects.

Speedway Stunt Coaster

Six Flags Mexico, Oaxtepec, Mexico City, Mexico

Vekoma Rides

Speedway Stunt Coaster raced into Six Flags Mexico in early 2026. As the park's 10th roller coaster, the new ride is a Vekoma family boomerang rebound model. The ride features approximately 205 meters of track, reaches speeds of around 60 km/h, and includes a 23-meter initial drop before sending riders through a sequence that ultimately runs backward. Its cinematic theme places guests inside a racing movie, emphasizing stunt-action imagery and immersive theming.

"With Speedway Stunt Coaster, our goal was to strengthen our family entertainment offerings and continue evolving so that every member of the family can find an attraction designed for everyone," says Daniela Juárez, public relations supervisor at Six Flags México.

A minimum height requirement of 95 centimeters allows for the youngest of dare devils to ride.

sixflags.com/mexico/



VEKOMA

Stukas and Infinito

Aquopolis, Mar del Plata, Argentina

Aquakita

Stukas and Infinito is a new multi-slide tower installed this year at Aqiopolis water park in Mar del Plata, Argentina. Manufactured by Aquakita, the installation combines two 20-meter drop slide experiences within a single project. Aquopolis installed the attraction to meet the demands of increased guest traffic to the park while fulfilling guest desires for what the Valeria Cañón, director of Aquopolis describes as "dynamic and extreme." What makes the attraction innovative for Aquopolis is the high-speed racing aspect, coupled with the open style slides that create a sense of competition in the creation of shared experience. "Additionally, the wave effects give visitors a light, fast-paced, high-adrenaline experience," says Cañón.

aquopolis.com.ar



AQUAKITA

Vila dos Smurfs

São Paulo, Brazil

Vila dos Smurfs Park opened in São Paulo in July, creating an immersive indoor theme park based entirely around the Smurfs franchise. Located in the Saúde district, the attraction covers more than 5,000 square meters and features 15 attractions. The experience begins the Smurfs' village, Enchanted Forest, and Gargamel's cabin. Its standout experiences include Smurfly, a flying-theater simulator that recreates a hang-gliding journey over the Smurfs' world, Toca do Cruel, an indoor roller coaster in the dark, and an interactive encounter with Papa Smurf that uses real-time technology to engage with visitors. Attractions incorporate technology, storytelling, immersive scenery, and live entertainment. Operators developed the attraction in partnership with Peyo Company—the organization that owns the Smurfs intellectual property.

viladossmurfspark.com.br



VILA DOS SMURFS PARK SÃO PAULO

RED SEA GLOBAL



Adrena at The Red Sea

Umluj-Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

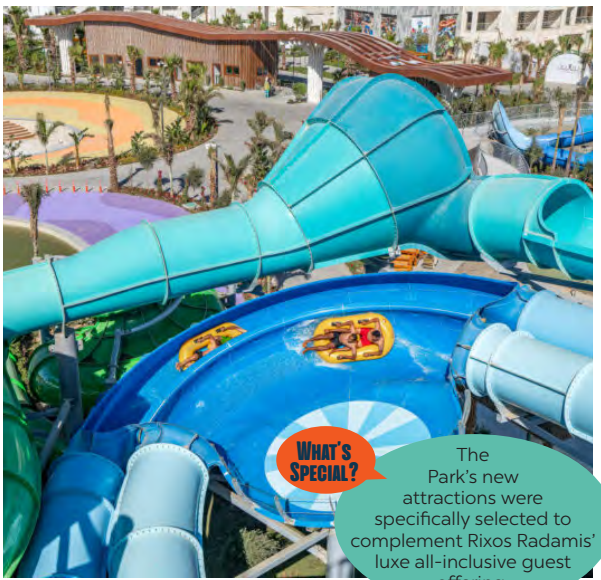
Red Sea Global (RSG)

Adrena is a unique blend of indoor and outdoor attractions combining natural environments with action sports, such as cliff diving, a wakeboarding park, saltwater surf pool, snorkel trail, and water slides. For Peter Boyack, executive vice president of business development at WhiteWater MEI and Africa, Adrena is a "clear shift away from the traditional waterpark venue."

While Adrena is for thrill seekers of all ages, the goal of this destination is to speak to the "energy, the community, and the connection with nature" found within a coastal lifestyle, says John Pagano, group CEO of Red Sea Global. "We've built Adrena with sustainability at its core, demonstrating our commitment to regenerative tourism and ensuring an unforgettable experience for every guest."

redseaglobal.com/en/portfolio/projects/adrena/

PROSLIDE



Aquamania Jungle Park

Rixos Radamis, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt

Latif Group, ProSlide

Several regional firsts can be found at the new Aquamania Jungle Park at Rixos Radamis. The park's multiple attractions from ProSlide feature the first pair of Hive 20 features, offering high speeds, helix turns, and panoramic sightlines. Aquamania is also home to the region's first pair of SwitchBacks as well as a four-lane RallyRacer and a RocketBlast water coaster. The sum of these attractions is a family-friendly experience that guests of all ages can enjoy together. "Destinations like Aquamania at Rixos Radamis continue to raise the bar for integrated resort entertainment, and we're excited to see guests experience these rides for the first time," says ProSlide's Aaron Wilson, senior vice president of business development of EMEA and LATAM.

rixos.com/hotel-resort/rixos-radamis-sharm-el-sheikh

WHITEWATER



Aquarabia Qiddiya City

Qiddiya City, Saudi Arabia

Qiddiya Investment Company, Sub Sea Systems, WhiteWater

Aquarabia, adjacent to Six Flags Qiddiya City, offers families numerous water attractions to enjoy during their visit to the region. The goal of Aquarabia is to "fulfill the diverse entertainment needs of our community, contribute to the diversification of our economy, and create job opportunities in the tourism sector," says Abdullah Aldawood, managing director and board member of Qiddiya Investment Company. To maximize the guest experience, ticket bundles are offered for Aquarabia and Six Flags Qiddiya City. Peter Boyack, WhiteWater executive vice president of business development, Middle East & Africa, adds, "At WhiteWater, the decision-making for Aquarabia was driven by Qiddiya wanting to push boundaries, break world records, and give the local audience a park to be truly proud of."

aquarabiaqiddiyacity.com/en

The Family Entertainment Centre

Msheireb Galleria, Doha, Qatar

Ground Control Entertainment

Ground Control Entertainment expanded its portfolio in 2026 with the launch of The Family Entertainment Centre with Nerf Action Experience, Play-Doh Fun Factor, and the Ground Control arcade under one roof. According to Operation Director Ghaith Abou Nabout, Ground Control's expansion targets a "growing demand for more active, immersive, and social entertainment experiences, particularly for older children, teenagers, and families."

Expanding beyond traditional entertainment is an aspect Nabout suggests facility operators consider when looking to expand. "Do not add an attraction simply because it is popular. Make sure it fits your market, your target audience, and your overall guest journey," Nabout shares. "Operators should also consider capacity, throughput, safety, staffing, and repeat-play potential from the beginning. A successful expansion needs to work operationally as well as creatively."

feverup.com/m/619373



NERF ACTION XPERIENCE

WHAT'S SPECIAL? Nerf Action Xperience was added to Msheireb Galleria to introduce an experience where guests become physical.

Grand Hyatt Waterpark

Grand Hyatt Dubai Hotel, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

WhiteWater

Diversifying attraction offerings to target a different guest demographic drives much of the decision making for developing Grand Hyatt's Dubai Waterpark, which opened in November 2025. "Guest preferences and broader hospitality trends played an important role in shaping the project," says Dhrishty Grandi, Grand Hyatt Dubai marketing and communications manager. "We considered feedback highlighting the growing demand for family-friendly experiences, interactive leisure offerings, and destinations where guests can enjoy multiple experiences within a single resort." WhiteWater's Peter Boyack notes that decision-making during the design process was guided by a need to focus on increased occupancy and time spent on the property. "It has completely transformed the hotel guest experience, brought back old customers, and created new customers, who continue to visit with their families time and time again."

grandhyattdubaiwaterpark.com



WHITEWATER

WHAT'S SPECIAL? WhiteWater led conversation and exercises to craft a blend of attractions that would cater to the entire family.

Leo and Loona Kids Park

The Avenues Mall Bahrain, Bahrain

Zamania Holdings Investment in Commercial Enterprises and Management Co. L.L.C.

In May, parent company Zamania Holdings expanded its Leo & Loona Kids Park brand into The Avenues Mall Bahrain. The new 2,300-square-meter facility features more than 30 interactive attractions for children under 12 with their families, alongside dedicated event rooms and a full-service restaurant.

Simply having an available location is not enough when expanding; the entire ecosystem must be considered. "Localize without losing the core of your brand. The brand should remain recognizable, but the commercial strategy, partnerships, communication, and programming should respond to the local audience," says Haiqa Anwar, marketing manager for Leo & Loona.

leoloona.ae



LEO & LOONA KIDS PARK

WHAT'S SPECIAL? Bahrain is attractive to developers thanks to its strong family culture and accessibility to visitors from neighboring GCC markets.

NICKELODEON



Nickelodeon Play!

Rixos, Istanbul, Türkiye

Nickelodeon Play! officially found its home in February 2026 at Rixios Tersane Istanbul, driven by Istanbul's historic peninsula, tourism profile, and a growing demand for family-centric experiences. The center is designed to a year-round family entertainment center with play zones, rides, and character experiences.

Nurdan Uras Acar, Incharge sales manager at Nickelodeon Play! says, "The objective was to develop an experience where families could spend quality time together and where children could feel immersed in a world they already know and love. Acar notes that while the kids are at the center of Nickelodeon Play!, their parents' experiences are just as important, "creating an environment where families feel comfortable, safe, and well looked after is essential to encouraging repeat visits and building long-term guest loyalty."

nickelodeonplayistanbul.com/en

ORANGE HUB: WTC MALL ABU DHABI



Orange Hub

WTC Mall Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

IdeaCrate Edutainment Company

IdeaCrate's new Orange Hub FEC features a four-lane interactive bowling alley, laser tag arena, soft play areas, and an extensive arcade that gives the entire family a place to play together.

"At approximately 27,000 square feet, Orange Hub gave us the opportunity to create a larger, more comprehensive family entertainment experience than Orange Wheels," says Shifa Yusuffali, founder and CEO of IdeaCrate. Yusuffali credits the knowledge of guest behavior as what influences Orange Hub's decision-making, reporting that nearly every guest experiences multiple attractions while visiting, and roughly half return within 90 days. "Those behaviors tell us something important," Yusuffali says. "Families are not necessarily looking for one attraction. They are looking for an experience that gives different members of the family reasons to participate, stay longer, and come back."

orangehub.ae/

ORANGE WHEELS



Orange Wheels

Jumeirah Beach Residence, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

IdeaCrate Edutainment Company

The indoor play area concept from IdeaCrate offers kids a place to engage in activities like crafts and fun zones. Trained professionals, called Playmates, guide children through age-appropriate activities while parents can unwind at a neighboring Orange Cafe. "Our approach to expansion today is very different from when we opened our first location," says Shifa Yusuffali, founder and CEO of IdeaCrate. "Each new site builds on what we have learned from the locations before it." For Orange Wheels, guest insight plays a major role in decisions made around expansion. "Parents and children experience our venues differently, so we have to understand both perspectives. A child may be focused entirely on the next thing they want to do; the parent is also thinking about comfort, visibility, cleanliness, food, value, and whether they would choose to come back."

orangewheels.com/en

SEVEN Abha

Abha, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Entertainment Ventures

Saudi Entertainment Ventures (SEVEN) opened its first entertainment district in Abha, Saudi Arabia. "We are proud of this journey to begin in Aseer Region, delivering distinctive experiences that enrich quality of life and contribute to achieving the ambitions of Saudi Vision 2030," SEVEN Chairman Abdullah Al Dawood shared for the attraction's opening. SEVEN Abha is home to multiple entertainment experiences, including cinemas, thrill rides, electric go-karting, bowling, and golf. In total, SEVEN is investing $13 billion in over a dozen entertainment destinations like this one. The goal of these districts is "developing entertainment destinations that are accessible, welcoming, and closely connected to the communities they serve, offering experiences that visitors can return to as part of their everyday lives," Al Dawood shares.



ZAWYA

WHAT'S SPECIAL? SEVEN Abha marks a major milestone in Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to develop the nation's entertainment and sports sector.

Six Flags Qiddiya City

Qiddiya City, Saudi Arabia

Qiddiya Investment Company (QIC)

The concept of the "power of play" is a fundamental element in the design and overall experience of Six Flags Qiddiya City, which opened on Dec. 31, 2025. The park features more than two dozen attractions, dining locations, and shopping venues. Brian McAmmer, president of Six Flags Qiddiya City, notes that the park is "the largest and most significant investment by the Six Flags brand to date." For a global region focused on innovation and thrilling guest experiences, McAmmer adds, "What has been achieved in Qiddiya City sets a new benchmark for how theme parks can be developed in terms of scale, integration, and overall visitor experience." Park leadership notes that the opening of Six Flags Qiddiya City marks a major milestone for Vision 2030, an initiative by Saudi Arabia that aims to establish the country as a global entertainment destination.

sixflagsqiddiyacity.com/en



SIX FLAGS QIDDIYA CITY

WHAT'S SPECIAL? The park combines record-breaking roller coasters, immersive themed lands, and high-thrill attractions in a landmark destination.

X Distrikt

Dubai Festival City Mall, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Immersive Experiences

Dubai Festival City Mall is home to X Distrikt, a 62,000-square-foot entertainment district with interactive and immersive environments for the entire family. The creation of the space was the "natural next step," says Marina Bachvarova, head of business development at Immersive Experiences, the United Arab Emirates-based entertainment company behind X Distrikt. "Over the years, we have gained valuable insight into how families, schools, and groups use entertainment spaces, and how different ages, interests, and levels of activity can be brought together within one destination."

X Distrikt prides itself on bringing together different audiences and allowing each guest to create their own journey within one connected destination.

xdistrikt.ae



X DISTRIKT

WHAT'S SPECIAL? Four distinct environments include Woo-hoo!, Xstrike Outpost, Dare and MultiVRse, each catering to different age groups.



YAS WATERWORLD ABU DHABI

Yas Waterworld Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

WhiteWater

Yas Waterworld's 2026 expansion consisted of 11 new attractions, including Matamir's Drop and Matamir Twist & Matamir Lights, which feature immersive lighting effects. While WhiteWater's Peter Boyack says this latest expansion gave facility owner Miral the opportunity to continue to push boundaries, there was a lot of behind-the-scenes work that went into knowing what was needed and where. "Decision-making was driven by operators conducting deep analysis from existing day guests and annual pass holders to listen, find gaps and blind spots, and give customers what they felt was currently missing from the park," Boyack shares.

"This expansion marks an important milestone," says Jonathan Brown, chief portfolio officer at Miral. "We are enhancing the park's offering with fresh thrills and immersive adventures for guests of all ages."

yaswaterworld.com



Carly Neil has covered the attractions industry for more than half a decade, with her love of theme parks spanning a lifetime. Her reporting on all things Disney, Universal, and beyond has reached millions of readers worldwide. Carly calls New England home, but you'll frequently spot her on roller coasters across the country. Connect with her on LinkedIn.



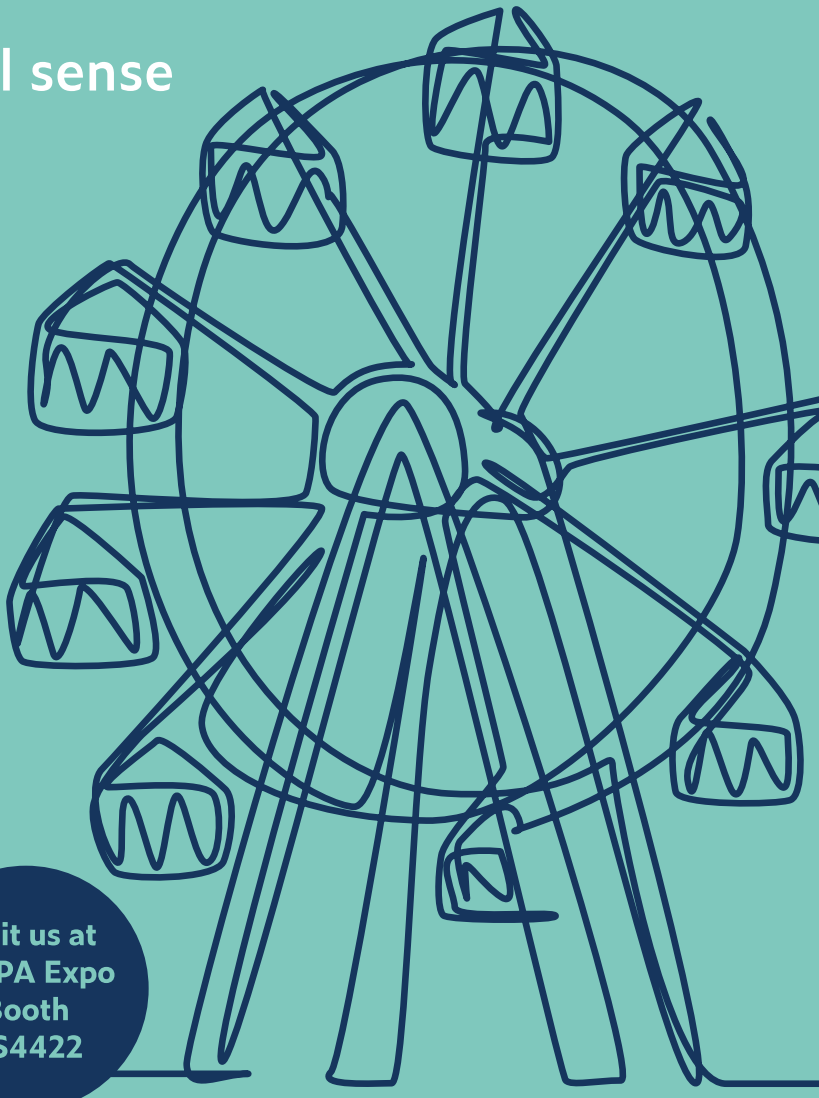
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SEAWORLD SAN ANTONIO



Barracuda Strike

SeaWorld San Antonio, San Antonio

Bolliger & Mabillard (B&M)

Barracuda Strike, a new suspended roller coaster manufactured by Bolliger & Mabillard, officially opened in July. Inspired by the speed and power of its predatory namesake, the ride suspends guests beneath the track, immediately sending them up a 90-foot hill before reaching the top speed of 44 mph. Riders also experience the highlight of dramatically gliding over the park's central lake. "We focused on understanding what SeaWorld wanted to achieve for its guests and how we could create a family thrill experience that felt unique to the park. That included looking beyond the coaster itself and considering how the ride would interact with the lake, an existing coaster, surrounding landscape, theming and overall guest experience," says Jonathan Smith, project developer with B&M.

seaworld.com/san-antonio/

ADVENTURE AQUARIUM



The Boardwalk

Adventure Aquarium, Camden, New Jersey

Herschend Family Entertainment

The Adventure Aquarium in Camden, New Jersey, opened The Boardwalk, a family-focused area of the aquarium for guests of all ages to interact with the animals. The area features the new Horseshoe Crab Harbor, allowing hands-on interaction with horseshoe crabs native to New Jersey. "Horseshoe crabs have been on Earth for over 400 million years, long before the dinosaurs, and they remain a vital part of our coastal environment today. We're proud to shine a spotlight on this remarkable species that lives right here in our home state," says Nikki Grandinetti, general curator. Designed after the vintage style of the mid-Atlantic boardwalks, the area features planks and sand-inspired flooring as well as lifeguard-style seating for staff. Guests enjoy an ocean-themed virtual reality experience, face painting, caricature artists, and beachfront photo/mural zone that work together to create an immersive experience.

adventureaquarium.com

CALAWAY PARK



Calaway Park: Facility-Wide Upgrades

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

On May 16, Calaway Park opened for the season with a new park entrance, new parking lots, and an admission area that expanded to 21,000 square feet with new admission booths to accommodate arriving guests. "We used guest and team member feedback, consultation with industry experts, and park data to design a space that not only serves our guests now but well into the future," says Bob Williams, general manager, when asked how the operator uses feedback and data to guide development. Attraction-wise, Calaway Park opened Meg and the Quest for the Holy Spork—a new 3D movie that debuted at the Cinemagic 3D theatre. Two new live shows debuted on the Celebration Square Stage. The park also debuted the Calaway Fun AR app for visitors interact with various attractions, as well as take pictures at various photo shoots around the park. The app also provides status information about rides, menus, and showtimes.

calawaypark.com

Congo Falls

San Antonio Zoo, San Antonio

PGAV Destinations

Congo Falls is an immersive gorilla habitat that marks the return of western lowland gorillas to the San Antonio Zoo after more than 35 years. The 2-acre habitat includes three unique areas—Lowland Basin, Indoor Rainforest, and Gorilla Gorge—with lush terrain that features interactive browsing gardens, climbing structures, and a 30-foot waterfall. A 70-foot tower offers 360-degree views, giving visitors high vantage points of the gorillas. President and CEO Tim Morrow says "Congo Falls is more than an attraction; it's a testament of our commitment to secure a future for wildlife." Guests will also encounter "Gorillas on the Line" collection boxes to encourage recycling old cell phones and electronics throughout the habitat.

sazoo.org/congo-falls/



SAN ANTONIO ZOO

Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring The Muppets

Disney's Hollywood Studios, Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista, Florida

Walt Disney Imagineering, Vekoma Rides

With a turnaround time of two months after closing in March and reopening in May, the recent update of the beloved roller coaster includes new queue décor, animatronics, and soundtrack featuring Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem. The Rock 'n' Roller Coaster Starring The Muppets' new storyline shares that G-Force Records is under new management by The Muppets as riders arrive for their VIP tour of the studios. But The Electric Mayhem is scheduled to headline a massive concert, and it's up to the riders to jump into a L.I.M.O., a custom Muppets Lab vehicle, to get the band to the venue on time. The original ride layout itself, manufactured by Vekoma Rides, remains the same as the previous Aerosmith version, including the 0-to-57 mph launch and the three inversions.

disneyworld.disney.go.com/attractions/hollywood-studios



WALT DISNEY WORLD

Flying Fox

Kentucky Kingdom, Louisville, Kentucky

Vekoma Rides

Kentucky Kingdom's new family-friendly, inverted coaster, designed by Vekoma Rides, honors the state's agriculture and aviation history. Herschend Creative Studios—the park's in-house creative team—designed the immersive storytelling from the red-barn queue to the hand-painted murals and the engaging audio narrative. Riders step into a training flight with fictional crop-dusting legend Jeb Fox aboard his trusty biplane, the Flying Fox. "At Kentucky Kingdom, our mission is to create memories worth repeating, and the addition of Flying Fox is the next exciting chapter in that journey," says Sarah Worrell, general manager of Kentucky Kingdom.

kentuckykingdom.com



VEKOMA

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER



Fraggle Rock: A Space-y Adventure

Kennedy Space Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida

The Producers Group / The Jim Henson Company

Opened just in time for the new year, Fraggle Rock: A Space-y Adventure is written, directed, and choreographed by John Tartaglia, vice president of development and production for The Jim Henson Company. Staged inside the Universe Theater, the edutainment show lasts approximately 20 minutes and includes costumed walkaround characters. The show follows the Fraggles leaving their magical caves to explore NASA's space program and meet real-life space explorers to learn more about the Artemis missions. "We're honored to partner with The Jim Henson Company, known for its innovation, imagination, and storytelling for young audiences and families, to create a show that will inspire dreamers of all ages to look up, explore, and picture their own place among the stars," says Therrin Portze, COO of Kennedy Space Center.

kennedyspacecenter.com

LEGOLAND



Galacticoaster + Lego Galaxy

Legoland Florida / Legoland California

ART Engineering / Huss Park Attractions

Merlin Entertainments debuted its largest in-park investment in the United States, spending $90 million to launch Lego Galaxy at both Legoland Florida Resort in February and Legoland California Resort in March. Both locations share a near-identical layout with the flagship attraction, Galacticoaster, manufactured by ART Engineering. "With multiple launches, controlled rotating vehicles, and immersive space-themed environments, this attraction offers something entirely unique for families. A standout feature is the custom-designed ride vehicles, which sit four guests side-by-side in a single row," says Georg Behringer, managing director of ART Engineering. The California resort features an exclusive additional ride named G-Force Test Facility, a Huss Park Attractions ride, to simulate the high-energy swing, turn and tilt of astronaut training. Meanwhile, the Florida resort complements its coaster with play areas and character meet-and-greets.

legoland.com/florida | legoland.com/california

BUSCH GARDENS TAMPA BAY



Lion and Hyena Ridge

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, Tampa, Florida

The Lion and Hyena Ridge opened in July, extending the existing Edge of Africa section of the park by an additional 38,000 square feet, and it is the largest zoological expansion of the park in over a decade. Guests decide whether they are Team Lion or Team Hyena as they learn about each animal through colorful infographics, then witnessing the animals up close with a 270-degree viewing area featuring rock formations, water features, and multilevel climbing areas. "This immersive experience brings guests face to face with these incredible animals while showcasing our continued commitment to exceptional animal care and creating unforgettable experiences for our guests," says Andrew Schaffer, vice president of design and engineering at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay.

buschgardens.com/tampa

Mountain Mayhem Coaster

Massanutten Family Adventure Park, Massanutten, Virginia

MND Group

The new downhill attraction gives riders full control over their speed using a manual braking system. The 3,380-foot track, manufactured by MND Group, covers move than 2,100 feet of terrain and features two 360-degree spirals. Reaching speeds of up to 25 mph, the ride lasts approximately six minutes. "We are delighted to have built this monorail coaster for Massanutten Resort," says Xavier Gallot-Lavellée, president of MND. "I would like to once again thank them for their trust. Design, comfort, and safety are integral parts of this monorail coaster."

massresort.com/play/mountain-coaster/



MASSNUTTEN FAMILY ADVENTURE PARK

Museum of Ice Cream Las Vegas

Las Vegas

Figure8

At a massive 30,000 square feet, Museum of Ice Cream Las Vegas is the brand's largest location so far. Located inside Zone 2 of Area15, the attraction has 14 experiences, including The Golden Scoop, the world's largest all-you-can-eat ice cream buffet; the largest sprinkle pool in the brand's history where visitors sink amongst thousands of sprinkles for selfies; and The Cone-Sino, which features ice cream-themed casino games. Guests can also get temporary tattoos in the Lucky Cherry Ink parlor as well as an Ice Cream Hotel, where guests can find themselves in interactive areas such as the S'mores Suite. "The biggest lesson is that people remember how an experience makes them feel more than what they saw," Manish Vora, CEO and founder, says of the importance. "Great attractions create emotional connection, not just visual spectacle."

museumoficecream.com/las-vegas/



MUSEUM OF ICE CREAM

National Geographic Museum of Exploration

Washington, D.C.

Moment Factory

The new 100,000-square-foot facility of public and exhibition space debuted in June. The opening exhibits include Rolex Explorers Landing, showcasing gear and stories of National Geographic Explorers, as well as The Archives, featuring maps, historical artifacts, and footage celebrating 138 years of storytelling with the National Geographic Society. "The National Geographic Museum of Exploration represents our next bold step, continuing our long-standing legacy in the heart of the nation's capital with a dynamic space where visitors don't just walk through history—they step directly into our world, connecting iconic discoveries from our past with the real-time science and storytellers shaping our planet today," says Emily Dunham, chief campus and experience officer.

moe.nationalgeographic.org/



MOMENT FACTORY

JENKINSONS BOARDWALK



Patriot's Run

Jenkinson's Boardwalk, Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey

SBF-VISA Group

Patriot's Run opened just in time to celebrate America's 250th anniversary in July. Reaching the height of 40 feet, with 1,100 feet of track, and reaching up to 25 mph, Jenkinson's Boardwalk considers this to be one of the largest investments in the park's nearly 100-year history. "Adding a new family roller coaster that was larger, faster, and more exciting than our previous coasters had been on our wish list for quite some time. We had a blank canvas when it came to the ride's name and theme, and we wanted to make it meaningful. With America celebrating its 250th birthday in 2026, an American-themed roller coaster felt like a fitting tribute," says Alex Taylor, marketing manager.

jenkinsons.com/rides/patriots-run/

ENCHANTED FOREST WATER SAFARI



Paul Bunyan's Log Haul

Enchanted Forest Water Safari, Old Forge, New York

SBF-VISA Group

In June, Enchanted Forest Water Safari opened their family-friendly spinning coaster, Paul Bunyan's Log Haul. Manufactured by SBF-VISA Group, the free-spinning cars follow the figure-eight layout, with each car seating up to four guests, back-to-back, at a time. The attraction opened in time for the park's 70th anniversary season and was named in honor of the park's 19-foot-tall Paul Bunyan statue. "It's fast, fun, and full of surprises—everything our guests love!" says James Harhi, CEO of Enchanted Parks, which operates Enchanted Forest Water Safari.

watersafari.com

KINGS ISLAND



Phantom Theater: Opening Nightmare

Kings Island, Mason, Ohio

Alterface, Sally Dark Rides

From 1992 to 2002, guests heard the echoing words of Maestro as he said, "You'll be ba-ack!" as they exited Kings Island's Phantom Theater dark ride. In 2026, the iconic character made good on that promise to park guests with the opening of Phantom Theater: Opening Nightmare. "To be able to be here and bring this ride back to life was a true honor, but also a real responsibility, too," says Drew Hunter, vice president of creative design for Sally Dark Rides. The updated version of the ride includes interactive flashlight technology by Alterface to capture whimsical Ghost Notes that are wreaking havoc throughout the theater. Dozens of animatronics bring classic scenes and the theater's legendary headliners to vivid life.

visitkingsisland.com

Presque Isle Plunge | Big Water Bend | Winding Waters

Waldameer & Water World, Erie, Pennsylvania
ProSlide

As a part of a major $12 million transformation, Waldameer & Water World debuted three new attractions for the 2026 season. In June, the park opened two five-person raft slides: Presque Isle Plunge and Big Water Bend. Presque Isle Plunge features a near-vertical TornadoWave wall, manufactured by ProSlide, that gives riders a brief feeling of weightlessness, while Big Water Bend includes a translucent helix stretching over the river below. Expanding the park's relaxation options, the Winding Waters lazy river opened in September. In regard to what prompted the decision to add these attractions, Brian Gorman, CEO explains, "It was necessary to continue to upgrade and improve the dated sections of our water park. We have a great relationship with ProSlide and knew we wanted to continue to work with them for our most recent expansion."

waldameer.com



WALDAMEER AND WATER WORLD

Quantum Accelerator

Six Flags New England, Agawam, Massachusetts
Intamin

The Quantum Accelerator coaster opened in April in Agawam, Massachusetts, built by Intamin. Officially announced by Intamin at IAAPA Expo 2024, the coaster features two launches: After leaving the station, riders accelerate from 0 to 30 mph, followed by a mid-course launch topping out at 45 mph. During the ride, guests experience 11 moments of weightlessness and pivot 90 degrees in an overbanked turn that rotates them completely sideways. "This coaster is sure to become a favorite among guests of all ages. It's the perfect complement to our world-class lineup and reinforces Six Flags New England as the go-to destination for family fun," says Bill Falzone, park manager.

sixflags.com/newengland



SIX FLAGS NEW ENGLAND

Shoreline Pier / Barrels O'Fun

Six Flags Great Adventure, Jackson, New Jersey
Reverchon Industries

A brand-new area, Shoreline Pier, opened in July at Six Flags Great Adventure. Inspired by the New Jersey boardwalks, Park President Michael Fehnel says, Shoreline Pier celebrates "the motion, the magic, the tastes, the thrills, and the timeless sense of adventure," of New Jersey's seaside attractions. Guests will find Barrels O'Fun, a family spinning coaster, manufactured by Reverchon Industries, with wooden barrel-inspired vehicles that dip, twist and spin on its track. Other rides include Flying Scooters, Wave Swinger, Hypno Twister and Super Roundup. For food and beverage options, the area offers boardwalk-style bites including Jersey-style disco fries, Italian ice and Gabagool-On-A-Stick. Visitors are also treated to live music, stilt walkers, acrobats, and dancers.

sixflags.com/greatadventure/shoreline-pier



SIX FLAGS GREAT ADVENTURE

SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS



Tormenta Rampaging Run

Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington, Texas

Bolliger & Mabillard (B&M)

Six Flags Over Texas officially opened Rancho de la Torementa, the fictional Spanish village-themed area of the park, in July. It includes a restaurant, Cocina Abuela, serving Latin American-inspired food, and a giga dive coaster named Tormenta Rampaging Run. Inspired by Spain's longstanding traditions of the running of the bulls, Tormenta reaches the speed of 87 mph and spans almost 4,200 feet of track. Riders are released at 287 feet to drop at an angle of 95 degrees and then experience a 218-foot inversion in the air. "We wanted our [65th] anniversary season to do more than look back at the past. We wanted to introduce something that would help define the park for the next generation. Tormenta: Rampaging Run does exactly that. It's the world's tallest, fastest and longest giga dive coaster and breaks six world records, giving us a signature attraction worthy of an important milestone," says, Pete Carmichael, park president.



Amber Valois is the associate editor of Funworld at IAAPA. She has worked in the attractions industry for several years with experience spanning marketing, retail, and production. She is passionate about the creativity, storytelling, and innovation that bring attractions and guest experiences to life. Connect with her on LinkedIn.



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It's Perfectly Good!

Ride restoration benefits vs. costs

by Sophie Brookover



MICHAEL COSTELLO

Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, New Jersey, operates a historic English-style carousel that reportedly dates to 1881.

WHETHER THEY'RE LABELED CLASSIC, VINTAGE, LEGACY, OR HERITAGE, older rides remain mainstays at many amusement parks worldwide. While each holds meaning for visitors decade after decade, their longevity is tied to unique maintenance and refurbishment schedules needed to keep these treasured rides running safely and smoothly.

Operators at four parks across Europe and the United States—Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Pleasure Beach Resort in Blackpool, England, De Waarbeek in the Netherlands, and Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson, New Jersey—speak with Funworld about the enduring popularity of their heritage rides.

The Power of Nostalgia

In a world where novelty is both highly prized and ubiquitous, the simpler pleasures of introducing one's children and grandchildren to the wholesome experiences of one's own childhood feel almost luxurious. Parks like Tivoli Gardens and Pleasure Beach Resort, founded in 1843 and 1896, respectively, are proud of their deep roots and their careful stewardship of their most historic rides. Tivoli's most popular ride is its wood-construction roller coaster (conveniently named The Roller Coaster), which dates back to 1914.

"Legacy rides are the reason people are coming back again and again for generations," says Kasper Schumacher, co-head of operations. The park's deep commitment to ride longevity is the source of its motto, "Tivoli is always, like never before."

Andy Hygate, Pleasure Beach Resort's operations director, describes his seaside park's slate of rides as a healthy combination of nostalgia and up-to-date thrills, honoring the past in the park's 130th season of operation with a 1:3 ratio of heritage to new rides.

The park's oldest ride, Sir Hiram Maxim's Flying Machines, opened in 1904 and remains a popular ride—and is also the first one visitors see upon entering the resort.

"Our internal research tells us that classic rides are a niche driver of visitors," explains Hygate. "[While] the main driver is new and exciting rides, so we try to offer a wide variety." This balance is exemplified by a carousel built in the 1920s to the brand-new Aviktas gyro swing ride from Intamin.

Maintenance Behind the Magic

Magic doesn't come for free, of course, and all attractions require routine inspections and maintenance to run safely. Vintage doesn't mean cost savings. Keeping aging rides running smoothly and safely often requires an extra investment of time, expert labor, and money.

"[Our goal is] to preserve these attractions for future generations, while ensuring they fully meet today's safety standards," explains Mikael Rutger, creative director at De Waarbeek.

GREG NUSE



Sir Hiram Maxim's Captive Flying Machines opened at Blackpool Pleasure Beach in England on Aug. 1, 1904. Designed by inventor Sir Hiram Stevens Maxim, the ride features rotating arms with suspended cars that swing outward as they spin, simulating the sensation of flight.

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"Lead times can be longer, and in some cases, the original manufacturers or companies [that built the rides] are no longer in business," Rutger says. In cases such as the Rodelbaan roller coaster, whose steel construction dates back to 1930, "every single bolt and nut required has to be custom-made because there is simply no off-the-shelf solution available."

To address the similar creative and practical challenges presented by Tivoli's Roller Coaster, Schumacher says the park works with a machinist to produce new spare parts based on original and updated technical drawings. Tivoli's maintenance department also replaces one-eighth of the Roller Coaster's wooden track each winter, with supplemental work provided by up to 10 skilled carpenters from around the Copenhagen area who take on a three-month job to devote their time and expertise. Schumacher is grateful "to have very skilled and experienced woodworkers working on this track," many of whom have been returning annually for over a decade.

Both De Waarbeek's Rutger and Tony Rossi, director of construction and maintenance at Six Flags Great Adventure, credit the sophistication of technological advances with extending ride lifespans. Rutger reports that "today's lubricant technologies are far more effective and longer-lasting than what was available when many of these attractions were originally built." His park's maintenance team also uses a dedicated app to track all required servicing.

"[It's] invaluable—particularly for older attractions—where staying ahead of potential issues is so important." For his part, Rossi appreciates the potential of ultrasonic testing and the clarity and sharpness of images captured by maintenance drones.

Refurbishment to Replacement

Tivoli takes refurbishment seriously as demonstrated by the complete rebuilds of its 1960s-era Trolley Car several times and its multiple conversions of the vehicle's engine from diesel, to gas, to electric—until the vehicle outlived its service life. The park then worked with Severn Lamb

to make a complete replica of the original. Even though "it was very expensive, it is really beautiful, more sustainable, and a lot more comfortable for both guests and ride operators," shares Schumacher. This approach provides a brand-new ride that meets visitors' enthusiasm for vintage experiences.

Across the Atlantic, Six Flags Great Adventure inked headlines when making tough decisions. While the park imploded its 456-foot-tall Kingda Ka roller coaster in 2025 and retired its SkyRide in 2023 (originally installed at the 1964 World's Fair in New York), the facility recently rebuilt and refabricated its Saw Mill Log Flume, made by Arrow Development in 1974.

Rossi recounts the complexity of the flume project, which included obtaining permits to place new, code-compliant footers footers in the park-owned lake. The process was a long and expensive one, but "the company decided we were going to invest the time, the money, and the resources to make it better than it was." Six Flags worked with Holland Fiberglass to produce the new flume sections as exact replicas of the classic ones. The update is so seamless that "if you did not know it was redone, you'd never know," Rossi says with pride.

Riding into Retirement

How do attraction operators know when it's time to usher a beloved ride into retirement? All four operators agree the decision is driven by safety, cost, ride popularity, and return on investment. De Waarbeek's Rutger draws a succinct line in the sand: "If we cannot guarantee the safety of a ride to the standards we and our guests expect, it cannot remain in operation."

The decision-making teams at Pleasure Beach Resort rely on data. Hygate explains the park tracks "our throughputs on down to each individual ride to look at patterns of guest visits" to watch which rides are losing popularity. Rossi says costs are calculated that incorporate parts, time spent on inspection, and maintenance.

When rides do need to be retired, operators can look for ways to make it a milestone event. Pleasure Beach Resort "threw a party for the final evening" of its 1960s-era Grand Prix car ride, Hygate says. "Guests came to ride it one last time. It gave us a way to handle the closure of a ride in a way people appreciated." Six Flags Great Adventure donated vehicles and a piece of track to the National Coaster Museum in Plainview, Texas, upon the retirement of Kingda Ka, which stood as the tallest operating roller coaster in the world for nearly two decades. FW



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:





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Mock 'n' Roll: The Zero-Proof Spirit Trend

Mocktails drive revenue as a healthier, non-alcoholic alternative

by Juliana Gilling and Jodi Helmer

AS MOCKTAILS—NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES—become theme park menu stars, attractions continue to develop sophisticated mocktail programs featuring premium ingredients, elaborate presentations, and branded souvenir vessels to enhance the guest experience.

"[Mocktails are] integral," says Will Ramsey, vice president of sales at Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta. "We started hearing the buzz in the events industry that mocktails were coming up in popularity … and we leaned into it."

Changing drinking habits and a growing demand for alcohol-free options are reflected in Gallup polls: only 54% of U.S. adults reported drinking alcohol in 2025—the lowest level recorded since Gallup began tracking alcohol consumption in the 1930s.

Funworld takes a global look at the growing trend of serving (and capitalizing on) Mocktails.

Full Theme Ahead

Mocktails are not limited to one region or continent. Attractions operators across the globe can benefit from the trend.

"For Efteling, it is important that guests are fully immersed in the themed world they are visiting," says Dennis Krijgh, manager of food and beverage services at Efteling. "They also respond to the growing interest in alcohol-free alternatives, without compromising on flavor, presentation, or experience."

The Efteling theme park resort in the Netherlands serves mocktails year-round, adapting the selection according to the season. "In winter, for example, we serve a warm apple mocktail and the Winter Twilight Mocktail, featuring warming winter spices," Krijgh says.

Frozen mocktails are available to guests during the summer, capitalizing on the popularity of slush drinks among younger guests, while also offering a refreshing, themed option for a broader audience.

Mocktails are not just refreshments. Creative food and beverage teams see their zero-proof offerings as an extension of the visitor experience.

Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta partnered with Wolfgang Puck Catering's mocktail program to mirror the sophistication of traditional cocktails. The menu includes a ginger basil refresher—made with ginger basil elixir, sparkling water, and lemon juice—and a blackberry thyme spritz made



DRINK DATA:

The Museum of Ice Cream sees the highest demand for mocktails among the 18- to 25-year-old demographic who visit on date nights, girls' nights out, and guests starting the weekend early on a Thursday night.

with blackberry thyme syrup, sparkling water, and a thyme and blackberry garnish. Themed drinks are added to the menu for special events.

Island H2O Water Park in Kissimmee, Florida, created an expansive menu of nonalcoholic, island-themed drinks and frozen mocktails with names like Tropical Trio Cooler, Island Storm, Watermelon Wave, and Frozen Pina Not-a-Lada to fit the park's island and tropical vibe.

"When developing a cocktail or mocktail for the park, I always start by looking at how the beverage can support the overall guest experience and park atmosphere," says Joshua Yasuk, the water park's director of food and beverage.

Shaking Up Revenue Streams

While guest demand may be driving the trend, operators also see clear financial benefits. Mocktails occupy a profitable middle ground between fountain beverages and alcoholic drinks. They command premium pricing while remaining accessible to a broader audience.

"The days of the fountain drink as the default are over," says Manish Vora, CEO and founder of the Museum of Ice Cream. With locations across North America and Asia, Vora believes that when a guest sees a beautifully crafted drink they're not doing a cost-benefit analysis; "they're saying 'Yes' to the experience, and that 'Yes' shows up in our numbers."

Yasuk in Florida agrees. He says that mocktails' higher perceived value is linked to above-average guest spending.

"We have found that guests are willing to pay for unique experiences, especially when presentation and theming are involved," Yasuk adds. "These beverages often encourage incremental purchases, increase overall guest spend, and support higher-margin beverage programs."

"Families want something special for their kids that doesn't feel like it was designed as a consolation prize, and adults want sophistication without compromise," says Vora. "Gen Z [ages 14-29] is rewriting the entire playbook around what it means to have a good time, and they are not willing to trade quality for sobriety."



EFTELING

> They're just beautiful drinks. All of this 'Instagrammable' food and drink is just a whole other level of what we're trying to do.
>
> *— Will Ramsey, Georgia Aquarium*

Memorable Moments

Reoewein Niesten, CEO and founder of Conceptional B.V., a specialized food and beverage (F&B) consultancy agency based in the Netherlands, recalls a memorable mocktail moment. "It was the frozen piña colada and frozen mojito mocktail at Efteling on a sunny day. It was the great treat we needed."

He points to other examples across attractions. In Sweden, Liseberg's Mei Rose Rooftop Bar and Bistro mocktail menu includes blends of watermelon, lime, and soda; strawberry and hibiscus; and wild rose, juniper, and citrus. Europa-Park's resorts in Germany and the Cocktail Bar at the Plopsaland Theater Hotel in Belgium also offer carefully curated mocktails to suit all tastes.

Niesten encourages attraction operators to embrace the trend for distinctive, themed, IP-oriented, nonalcoholic beverages.



EFTELING



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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CLARA RICE





DRINK DATA:

Interest in zero-proof beverages is on the rise across all demographics, according to Datassential.

"Make it part of your food and beverage vision and food and beverage master planning for the seasonal offer segment or add it to your beverage offer if it's operationally and commercially viable. But be mindful of where you promote them. Weather conditions in outdoor parks in Spain differ from those in Sweden, for example, creating different needs and flavors," Niesten shares.

Beyond their Instagram appeal, mocktails offer attractions a new revenue opportunity: Premium drinks can command €7-11, compared with €3-5 for a soft drink. "They should increasingly be seen as a premium beverage category, not merely as an alcohol substitute," Niesten tells Funworld.

Recipe for Success

For TOCA Social, billed as the world's first interactive soccer and dining attraction, the biggest benefit of alcohol-free drinks is inclusivity, says Mike Parnham, TOCA's global head of operations.

TOCA Social has three United Kingdom sites, a facility at the Westfield CNIT shopping mall near Paris, and is in expansion mode across the United States and Mexico.

Parnham shares insight on how TOCA Social approaches its mocktails.

"First, we use quality zero-proof spirits to recreate classic TOCA Social cocktails without the alcohol, so guests can enjoy a similar experience and flavor profile. Second, we create refreshing long drinks using combinations of juices, sodas, fruits, and other flavors," he says.

The company works closely with its brand partners and frontline staff to develop drinks. "Some of the best ideas come from the team behind the bar making and talking about drinks every day," Parnham says. "Ultimately, whether someone orders a cocktail or a mocktail, we want the reaction to be exactly the same: 'That's a great drink.'"



Integrated Attraction

Dan Zubaida, a partner at OC&C Strategy Consultants, sees the potential to capture spend from a growing segment of consumers who want an indulgent treat without the alcohol. While satisfied guests are also likely to linger longer, however, "if people feel a venue isn't inclusive, they may go elsewhere," he says. "You're simply leaving money on the table if you're not serving consumers' needs."

What do guests think? Clara Rice, director of global marketing and growth at Adirondack Studios, understands this personally. "When I was in Costa Rica, my mocktails came in a pineapple, and the passionfruit was probably harvested down the road—you could taste the 'Pura Vida' in every sip. When I visited Hobbiton Movie Set Tours in New Zealand, it was an emotional, magical, once-in-a-lifetime experience to sip a Frogmorton Ginger Beer at the Green Dragon Inn, looking up at Bag End at sunset."

But she adds a word of caution to operators: "Please do not name a cocktail and its mocktail counterpart the same thing! One honest mistake could risk a guest's entire sobriety journey, ruining more than just their evening."



EFTELING

Rice believes improving alcohol-free options like mocktails can equate to a better overall experience, higher per-capita spend, and a greater chance of repeat visitation, resulting in increased word of mouth, raised visitor satisfaction ratings, and stronger F&B revenue for attractions operators. In her words, "I say 'cheers' to that."

Innovative attractions have proven that beverages can do much more than quench thirst. They can generate revenue, broaden inclusivity, create social media moments, and become another tool for storytelling, one glass at a time.FW

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by Todd Andrus

Orlando Expo Brings The Magic

Largest IAAPA Expo ever comes to the Orange County Convention Center this November

THERE ARE MOMENTS IN YOUR CAREER when you get the opportunity to see something you love from an entirely new perspective. For me, stepping into my new role as vice president and executive director of IAAPA North America is one of those moments. I can think of no better way to celebrate this chapter than by welcoming our global industry to Orlando for IAAPA Expo 2026.

I am so excited for this year's event. It will be our largest, most immersive Expo ever, brimming with new ways for our members to connect, learn, and experience the very best our industry has to offer. I'm especially looking forward to seeing the new activations coming to the show floor. These interactive spaces will enhance the trade show floor experience with new opportunities to engage, discover, and be inspired.

This year, Expo attendees will benefit from the largest education program in its history with more than 170 EDUSessions. An incredible reflection of the knowledge, creativity, and expertise that exists within our global attraction community, this is a benefit I hope you will take full advantage of. Whether you are looking for new ideas, practical solutions, leadership insights, or a fresh perspective on the future of our industry, there will be something for you.

I'm also eager to see our new EDUTours, including opportunities to get behind the scenes at Walt Disney World, Bonnet Springs Park, and Kia Center. These experiences offer something uniquely valuable—the chance to step outside and learn directly from the people and places creating memorable guest experiences every day.

Hosting IAAPA Expo feels especially meaningful to me because Orlando has served as my home for more than 20 years.



PB AND J STUDIOS

The media lines up ahead of a press conference on the trade show floor at IAAPA Expo 2025.

I've built a career here, made lifelong friends, and experienced firsthand what makes this destination so special. I can't wait to welcome my global friends to my hometown and share the magic that makes Orlando one of the world's great destinations for entertainment, attractions, and hospitality.

What makes this new role particularly exciting is the opportunity to be on the other side of the industry. From my first theme park job in college as a costume character, I've built a career immersed in attractions, learning what it takes to create experiences that bring people together, and keep them coming back. Now, I have the privilege of taking that knowledge and using it to shape our offerings to bring more value to our IAAPA members and the industry at large. That is what excites me most about this new chapter—serving an industry I love while supporting our members in their success.

IAAPA Expo 2026 will be an incredible gathering of our global community. I'm ready to learn, connect, celebrate, and—most importantly—welcome all of you to Orlando.

I can't wait to see you at IAAPA Expo 2026 and to show you a little of what makes my home so magical. FW



Todd Andrus, vice president and executive director of IAAPA North America, oversees regional operations, member engagement, strategy, programs, events, and advocacy. A longtime IAAPA education volunteer, Todd also serves on local boards and chambers. Connect with him on LinkedIn:

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