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ride winners

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**AMUSEMENT  
TODAY**

**BONUS  
SECTION**

BONUS SECTION

AUGUST 1999

1B

*Winners named in 2nd annual survey*

## *Amusement Today's* 1999 Golden Ticket Awards

As you may recall, *Amusement Today* introduced a survey in 1998 to poll the well-traveled park experts and experienced enthusiasts to recognize the Best of the Best within the amusement industry. With an even larger response this year — and not to mention new parks and a mother lode of new coasters for the 1999 season — the results, as always, prove very interesting.

### Survey overview

The poll group selected to complete the survey certainly could boast some well-traveled experience. A greater familiarity with the North American coasters is apparent among those chosen, but the wood and steel coaster lists each show overseas entries. Anyone who believes a single vote doesn't count only has to glance at the point totals to see the value of each opinion.

Using various sources, selected aficionados were evenly balanced by dividing the United States into four geographical regions, with an equal number of surveys sent to each region. Incidentally, all 50 states had a representative to receive a survey. An additional amount of surveys were sent outside the United States to represent foreign expertise.

Of the surveys returned, the southern region, eastern region, and north central United States each represented 25 percent of the votes cast. The west coast region accounted for 17 percent of the votes, and foreign surveys accounted for the remaining 8 percent. Industry manufacturers, park management and the staff of *Amusement Today* were not included in survey recipients.

### New for 1999

Because the surveys had to be sent back to *Amusement Today* postmarked by July 6, new-for-'99 installations had a challenge to work their way into the ranks in such a short time. This amazing feat was accomplished by



eight steel coasters. The top performer was Superman Ride of Steel, the only 1999 coaster to break into the top ten in just a few short weeks. Other new steel creations to appear on the list are Raging Bull at No. 14, Medusa at No. 16, Top Gun at No. 18, and Apollo's Chariot in 20th place.

Both of Universal's Islands of Adventure coasters, the Incredible Hulk and Dueling Dragons, landed on the list at No. 19 and No. 21, respectively. Completing new-for-'99 steel coasters is SeaWorld San Antonio's Steel Eel at No. 23.

The only new wooden coaster to appear on the list is Knott's Berry Farm's Ghost Rider, which opened to rave reviews last December. Two 1998 masterpieces, Visionland's Rampage and Michigan's Adventure's Shivering Timbers, both reached the top five in their second year of existence.

### Something old...

But modern coasters didn't necessarily have all the fun. Coney Island's Cyclone, the 1927 benchmark for all wooden coasters, still rides in the top 10 at No. 8 after 72 years. Blackpool

Pleasure Beach's Grand National also appears on the list this year. The venerable racing coaster was built in 1935.

Relocation has proven to be quite the success story for many rides, as the No. 5, No. 6 and No. 21 wooden roller coasters — Comet at Great Escape, Phoenix at Knoebel's Grove and Wild One at Six Flags America, respectively — had been moved from former homes, only to be reborn winners at their new parks and a true triumph for preservation to coaster enthusiasts.

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# AWARDS

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Also of note is the continued enjoyment of the Coaster at Playland in British Columbia. With the Pacific National Exhibition still in uncertain negotiations to move, it appears this classic will continue to roll for at least a few years more before fears of the wrecking ball rise anew.

## An international look

A familiarity with the North American coasters is obvious with the surveys returned. However, many experienced enthusiasts continue to travel the globe in search of the great ride beyond their borders. An obvious example is Oakwood's Megafobia. The Wales coaster lands in top five on nearly every survey on which it appears — with the majority of the time taking the No. 1 spot. This renowned excellence makes it the top international ride on our list and in the wooden top 10.

Likewise, a more remote location is Parc Asterix in France, where Tonnerre de Zeus captured those enthusiasts who made it there. It ranks in the top five of every survey panelist who has experienced it. Just mere points from making our list, look for it to rise in future years as more experts get to France.

## Park categories

The park and ride categories allow the Best of the Best to truly shine. The abundance of parks and rides submitted clearly shows that the industry is doing several things right.

Again this year, Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio leads the way for Best Amusement Park to visit. Strong contenders that follow are Busch Gardens Williamsburg, the traditionally classic Kennywood, and the brand-new superpark Islands of Adventure.

The uniqueness of New Braunfels' Schlitterbahn gives it a clear and unbeatable lead for Best Waterpark. On the banks of the spring-fed Comal River, its amazing mix of attractions continues to delight waterpark guests in record numbers. Also splashing in is Wildwater Kingdom in Allentown, Pa., and tying for

third are Walt Disney World's Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon.

The outstanding and courteous staff at Holiday World in Santa Claus, Ind. repeatedly earn top marks for Friendliest Staff. Knoebel's Grove and Walt Disney World round out the category this year.

The biggest lead of any category is Busch Gardens Williamsburg for Best Landscaping. While most agree that the majority of the parks look nice and are well kept, Williamsburg takes command in this category by claiming over half of all votes cast. A distant second is held by the lushly landscaped Walt Disney World and England's Alton Towers.

The return of *Rockin' at Rockville* showcases the live performances of Fiesta Texas, a park long known for outstanding shows. Its first-place status this year for Best Shows illustrates that parent company Six Flags/Premier Parks has not lost sight of the park's roots. Also placing highly are Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tenn.

Yum. People are enjoying the food at parks out there. Twenty-seven parks were nominated for the Best Food category. Ironically, the results declared a three-way tie with Busch Gardens Williamsburg, Kennywood, and Knoebel's Grove sharing the accolades.

Various comments from those who took the survey indicated that by and large, the parks they visit are very clean. Certain parks seemed recognizably so, with Busch Gardens

Williamsburg receiving top honors for Cleanest Park. Walt Disney World and Holiday World also rate highly.

Long lines or slow lines are the bane of many park guests. A clear winner in this category is Cedar Point for Best Capacity. The park's fast-moving lines are an exemplary blueprint for the industry to follow. Walt Disney World and Kennywood are recognized in this category as well.

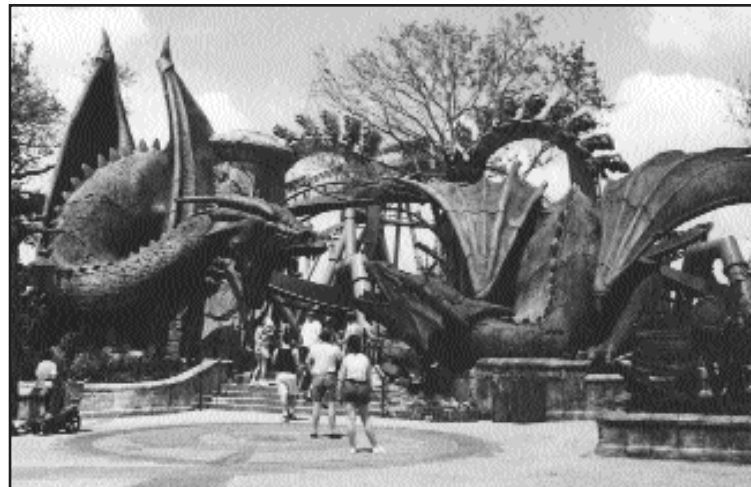
Themed experiences are a big goal for parks today. The lush and dramatic theming of Universal's Islands of Adventure is spectacular. Its new Dueling Dragons is bestowed the honor of Best Theming in this year's survey. Also of note are Alton Tower's Nemesis, Disneyland's Indiana Jones and Walt Disney World's Twilight Zone Tower of Terror.

Schlitterbahn's Master Blaster all but monopolized the Best Waterpark Ride. The only other contender is the Pepsi Aquablast at Wildwater Kingdom.

Best (noncoaster) Ride went to Intamin for their Giant Drop rides, with frequent mention of AstroWorld's Dungeon Drop. Also popular are the tower rides by S&S Sports, delivering Space Shot and Turbo Drop experiences.

The Amazing Adventures of Spiderman not only rounds out the best noncoaster rides, but tops the list for Best Indoor Attraction. Haunted is also "in," with five attractions mentioned and Knoebel's Haunted Mansion tying Spiderman for first. Disney's Indiana Jones scores high marks for third.

— Tim Baldwin



Photos by AT, Fiesta Texas

IOA's dramatic entrance, queuing, and trains for Dueling Dragons take top bill for Best Theming. Below, Fiesta Texas' *Rockin' at Rockville* is part of the outstanding variety that lands the park in first place for Best Shows.



## Thank You!

1998 Golden Ticket Awards



Voted  
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The Raven: Voted  
one of the Best  
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Thank you to the staff and to all the readers of *Amusement Today* for this honor. As the first-ever recipient of the Golden Ticket Award for Friendliest Staff, we'd like to thank all of our staff members for a job well done.

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The Golden Ticket Awards Bonus Section was produced by the staff of *Amusement Today*.

Golden Ticket Awards were bestowed upon all first-place finishers in each category. *Amusement Today* congratulates the many fine parks that won or placed in this year's categories.

*Amusement Today* would like to thank Ted Davidson and Corporate Graphics in Arlington, Texas for the design of the Golden Ticket Award logos.

We would also like to thank the many people who took the time to return our survey forms and participate in the polling process. If you were not selected to vote, and would like your name added to the selection list, please drop us a postcard and we'll be glad to add it to next year's list of names. Remember, industry employees are ineligible to vote.

# Park and ride winners

Ranked by percentage of votes cast

## Best Amusement/Theme Park

Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	20%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	14%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	13%
Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	10%

## Best Waterpark

Schlitterbahn	New Braunfels, Texas	43%
Wildwater Kingdom	Allentown, Pa.	8%
Typhoon Lagoon/Blizzard Beach	Orlando, Fla.	7%

## Friendliest Park Staff

Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	29%
Knoebel's Grove	Elysburg, Pa.	9%
Walt Disney World	Orlando, Fla.	8%

## Best Landscaping

Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	58%
Walt Disney World	Orlando, Fla.	7%
Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	6%

## Best Shows

Fiesta Texas	San Antonio, Texas	20%
Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	17%
Dollywood	Pigeon Forge, Tenn.	9%

## Best Food

Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	17%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	17%
Knoebel's Grove	Elysburg, Pa.	17%

## Cleanest Park

Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	27%
Walt Disney World	Orlando, Fla.	16%
Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	10%

## Best Capacity (fastest-moving lines)

Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	40%
Walt Disney World	Orlando, Fla.	14%
Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	9%

## Best Theming (ride, attraction or queue)

Dueling Dragons	Islands of Adventure	15%
Nemesis	Alton Towers	13%
Indiana Jones and the Temple of the Forbidden Eye	Disneyland	11%
Twilight Zone Tower of Terror	Disney-MGM Studios	10%

## Best Waterpark Ride

Master Blaster	Schlitterbahn	46%
Pepsi Aqua Blast	Wildwater Kingdom	7%

## Best Noncoaster Ride

Giant Drops	Intamin	19%
Space Shots/Turbo Drops	S&S Sports	17%
Amazing Adventures of Spiderman	Islands of Adventure	7%

## Best Indoor Attraction (noncoaster)

Amazing Adventures of Spiderman	Islands of Adventure	17%
Haunted Mansion	Knoebel's Grove	17%
Indiana Jones...Forbidden Eye	Disneyland	9%

# STEELING THE 1999 GOLDEN TICKET AWARDS

**NO. 3**



Steel Force  
Dorney Park  
Allentown, Pa.

**NO. 9**



Mamba  
Worlds of Fun  
Kansas City, Mo.

**NO. 25**



Steel Eel  
SeaWorld San Antonio  
San Antonio, Texas

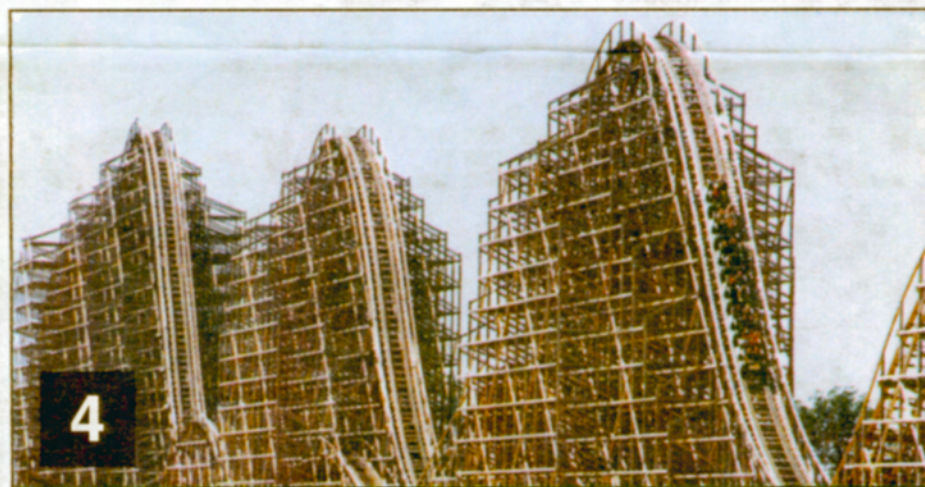
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for the Top 25  
votes in the  
1999 Golden  
Ticket awards

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Top clockwise: (2) Holiday World's Raven; (3) Visionland's Rampage; (4) Michigan Adventure's Shivering Timbers; (10) Oakwood's Megaphobia; (13) Knott's GhostRider and (24) Morey's Great White

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# THE LIST

## Top 25 wooden roller coasters

RANK	COASTER	YEAR	PARK	LOCATION	POINTS
1	Texas Giant	1990	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	515
2	Raven	1995	Holiday World	Santa Claus, Ind.	391
3	Rampage	1998	Visionland	Bessemer, Ala.	345
4	Shivering Timbers	1998	Michigan's Adventure	Muskegon, Mich.	338
5	Comet	1994*	The Great Escape	Lake George, N.Y.	286
6	Phoenix	1985*	Knoebel's Grove	Elysburg, Pa.	279
7	Beast	1979	Paramount's Kings Island	Kings Mills, Ohio	274
8	Cyclone	1927	Astroland (Coney Island)	Brooklyn, N.Y.	241
9	Georgia Cyclone	1990	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, GA.	220
10	Megafobia	1996	Oakwood	Pembrookshire, Wales	185
11	Thunderbolt	1968	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	181
12	Wildcat	1996	Hersheypark	Hershey, Pa.	170
13	Ghost Rider	1998	Knott's Berry Farm	Buena Park, Calif.	164
14	Timberwolf	1989	Worlds of Fun	Kansas City, Mo.	131
15	Cyclone	1983	Riverside Park	Agawam, Mass.	106
16	Giant Dipper	1924	Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk	Santa Cruz, Calif.	103
17	Grizzly	1982	Paramount's Kings Dominion	Doswell, Va.	100
18	Mean Streak	1991	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	98
19	Viper	1995	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	80
20	Coaster	1958	Playland	Vancouver, B.C., Canada	68
21	Wild One	1986*	Six Flags America	Largo, Md.	64
22	Jack Rabbit	1920	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	62
23	Grand National	1935	Blackpool Pleasure Beach	Blackpool, England	61
24	Great White	1996	Wild Wheels Pier	Wildwood, N.J.	51
25	Big Dipper	1926	Geauga Lake	Aurora, Ohio	49

Fast Facts: Custom Coasters Inc., co-owned by Denise Dinn Larrick, built six of the coasters listed; the Charlie Dinn family has involvement with 13 coasters listed. A Great Coasters International ride is just outside the top 10. Design work by the late Curtis Summers appears on five entries. John Pierce was involved with construction work on one entry. Veteran designers Cobb, Keenan, Prior and Church, Vettel, and Schmeck exhibit their craft on the list, along with two entries from John Miller. PTC trains run on 17 of the 25 coasters listed.

\* Indicates coasters relocated from other parks. The Great Escape's Comet was originally built in 1947 at Crystal Beach, Ontario, Canada. Phoenix at Knoebels Grove was moved from Playland Park in San Antonio, Texas, where it was built in 1947. The Wild One at Adventure World was moved from its 1917 home at Paragon Park in Hull, Mass.

Point totals were tallied from an exclusive number of experienced park patrons equally selected from four geographic regions of the United States, with an additional amount from outside the USA. Top choice received 10 points, with the 10th choice receiving one point. Point totals are listed on the charts.

Compiled by Amusement Today

# THE LIST

## Top 25 steel roller coasters

RANK	COASTER	YEAR	PARK	LOCATION	POINTS
1	Magnum XL-200	1989	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	637
2	Montu	1996	Busch Gardens Tampa	Tampa, Fla.	391
3	Steel Force	1997	Dorney Park	Allentown, Pa.	364
4	Alpengeist	1997	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	319
5	Kumba	1993	Busch Gardens Tampa	Tampa, Fla.	293
6	Raptor	1994	Cedar Point	Sandusky, Ohio	260
7	Desperado	1994	Buffalo Bill's Casino	Primm, Nev.	189
8	Mind Bender	1978	Six Flags Over Georgia	Atlanta, Ga.	174
9	Mamba	1998	Worlds of Fun	Kansas City, Mo.	151
10	Superman Ride of Steel	1999	Six Flags Darien Lake	Darien Center, N.Y.	147
11	Steel Phantom	1991	Kennywood	West Mifflin, Pa.	127
12	Shockwave	1978	Six Flags Over Texas	Arlington, Texas	117
13	Nemesis	1994	Alton Towers	Staffordshire, England	97
14	Raging Bull	1999	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	96
15	Big Bad Wolf	1984	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	95
16	Medusa	1999	Six Flags Great Adventure	Jackson, N.J.	94
17	Mindbender	1985	Galaxyland	Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	93
18	Top Gun	1999	Paramount's Carowinds	Charlotte, N.C.	77
19	Incredible Hulk	1999	Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	75
20	Apollo's Chariot	1999	Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Williamsburg, Va.	69
21	Dueling Dragons	1999	Universal's Islands of Adventure	Orlando, Fla.	64
22	Viper	1990	Six Flags Magic Mountain	Valencia, Calif.	63
23	Steel Eel	1999	SeaWorld San Antonio	San Antonio, Texas	61
24	Texas Tornado	1998*	AstroWorld	Houston, Texas	59
25	Batman the Ride	1992	Six Flags Great America	Gurnee, Ill.	57

Fast Facts: Bolliger and Mabillard designed and manufactured an amazing twelve of the 25 coasters listed. This list also features five coasters built by Arrow Dynamics. Four classic Schwarzkopf designs appear on the list. The latest three installations by Morgan Manufacturing land in the top 25. Intamin's newest coaster takes its place in the top 10.

\* The Texas Tornado, previously called Taz's Texas Tornado, originally traveled the German fair circuit under the name Thriller. It was built in 1985.

Point totals were tallied from an exclusive number of experienced park patrons equally selected from four geographic regions of the United States with an additional amount from outside the USA. Top choice received 10 points, with the 10th choice receiving one point. Point totals are listed on the charts.



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- #3 Steel Force® - Dorney Park
- #6 Raptor® - Cedar Point
- #9 Mamba - Worlds of Fun

**BEST WOODEN COASTERS:**

- #13 GhostRider - Knott's Berry Farm
- #14 Timber Wolf - Worlds of Fun
- #18 Mean Streak - Cedar Point

**BEST WATER PARK:**

- #2 Wildwater Kingdom - Dorney Park

**BEST WATER PARK RIDE:**

- #2 Pepsi Aquablast - Wildwater Kingdom



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