

SUMMER 2010

\$4.00

Southern Hospitality

magazine™

TRAVELER

Meet
**BRIAN GAY &
BRYCE JOHNSON**

THRILLS & CHILLS
**ATTRACTIONS &
WATER PARKS**

WET & WILD
RAFTING IN THE
SMOKIES

SOUTHERN
TOURS
HAUNTED WALKS,
CULINARY TRAILS
& MORE





Photo Credit: Kevin Kolczynski, Universal Orlando Resort



Harry Potter film stars Robbie Coltrane, Matthew Lewis, Emma Watson, and Oliver and James Phelps began their sneak peek tour of The Wizarding World of Harry Potter by entering Hogsmeade. The group was invited to Universal Orlando Resort for a first-look at the immersive environment, and spent the day visiting many of the iconic locations made famous in the popular Harry Potter series. The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resort is now open.

Looking for Thrills and Chills?

by Deborah Brauser

As temperatures rise, many people seize the opportunity to embrace their inner child by heading toward one of the many, many theme parks and water parks located all over the Southeast.

They all offer plenty of thrills and excitement, but what if you've been to a particular park before? Is it worth a repeat visit this season? Here's a quick look at some of this year's newest offerings.



Harry Potter's Here!

Orlando is the undisputed king of amusement parks, with four Disney, two Universal and two SeaWorld parks all located in the area, along with four giant (and themed) water parks. But the biggest buzz this year surrounds an

insanely popular boy wizard.

The brand new 22-acre Wizarding World of Harry Potter opened June 18 at Universal's Islands of Adventure and has been deemed a "game changer" by theme park insiders. This means that while Disney has long been their main focus, many fans are now planning Orlando trips specifically geared toward this exciting new adventure land.

The most iconic feature of the new world within Universal's gates is a 15-story replica of Hogwarts Castle, which houses a dark ride called Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey. The area also includes a replica of Hogsmeade Village, with The Owlery meeting space and Post, restaurants with menus including the often-discussed Butterbeer and stores such as Ollivander's Wand Shop and Zonko's Jokes.

"I'm really hoping it feels like I stepped into one of the Harry Potter movies," says Kathy Copeland, from Sallisaw, Okla. "I can't wait to

walk around and just see everything."

The area has also re-themed two of its previous attractions. The kids' Flying Unicorn is now the Flight of the Hippogriff, and the popular Dueling Dragons roller coaster has become the Dragon Challenge.

Next door to Islands of Adventure, the Universal Studios theme park houses Orlando's newest, most musically advanced roller coaster—the Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit. This new coaster, which starts with a 90-degree lift up a 17-story incline, lets guests actually choose their own ride soundtrack from a touchpad's 30-song playlist. As the ride catapults through its first-of-its-kind non-inverted loop and other twisting maneuvers, music is pumped out through individual sound systems built into the seats, ensuring that your song is the only one you hear.

(Continued on page 10)

Thrills and Chills Continued from page 9

Catch a Ride on a Giant Manta

SeaWorld Orlando has long been known for its fun and innovative animal shows, but it's stepped up its thrill ride coolness factor with last summer's introduction of Manta, a bright blue roller coaster with a manta-shaped front car that sends guests hurtling through in-line spins and pretzel loops, skimming a lagoon and narrowly missing a waterfall.

Oh, and did we mention this is a "flying coaster"? That means riders experience the whole thing face down! In fact, SeaWorld describes the experience as feeling like "you're riding on the belly of a massive 12-foot manta ray as it glides and twists and soars above the ocean."

Interestingly, the heart-pumping ride, which was built to be surprisingly quiet (so as not to disturb the various animals it races by), is connected to a large and very peaceful

aquarium full of playful sea creatures, including 230 stingrays, various exotic fish and even an octopus. The new 250,000-gallon aquarium can be seen in both the Manta's riders' queue and a non-riders' walk-through area.

VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA

Two Dale Earnhardt Coasters

Kings Dominion, a 400-acre amusement and water park in Doswell, Va., just opened its brand new giga-coaster, The Intimidator 305, to honor NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt. Calling itself "the tallest and fastest gravity driven roller coaster on the East Coast,"

this ride is 305 feet tall and speeds along at up to 92 miles per hour.

"Roller coaster enthusiasts and Dale Earnhardt fans alike will be thrilled to take a lap around the twisting track of this mammoth scream machine," says Pat Jones, the park's general manager.

In addition to its 14 other thrill rides, King's Dominion also offers several kid-friendly areas and a 20-acre water park included in the price of admission.

Sister park Carowinds, located in Charlotte, N.C., recently opened its own Earnhardt-themed coaster, The Intimidator. Although it's

(Continued on page 12)

The Intimidator 305, Kings Dominion



Planet Snoopy, Carowinds





The Intimidator, Carowinds



Slick Rock Racer, Dollywood



Thrills and Chills

Continued from page 10

not quite as tall or as fast as the other coaster, it has plenty of stomach-dropping twists and turns along its 5,316 feet of track and features a victory lane and a video tribute within its queue area.

Carowinds also just opened a new 12-acre Planet Snoopy play area with Peanuts-themed rides, including three kids' roller coasters, a live stage show and meet-and-greets with Charlie Brown, Lucy and Snoopy himself. It's also showcasing the fun *Snoopy Rocks on Ice!* from June through August. Its 20-acre water park, Boomerang Bay, is also included in the theme park's admission price.

Small Town With Big Parks

Although it lies a little outside the traditional Southeast region, Pigeon Forge, Tenn., is home to several exciting new additions worth mentioning. This spring saw the grand opening of the brand new Titanic Museum, located inside a three-deck reproduction of the ship. The new museum features artifacts, more than 20 galleries, several interactive tours and replicas of the ship's grand staircase and cabins.

The town is also home to Dollywood, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary with its new Adventure Mountain, a grouping of four challenging rope courses with interactive planks and obstacles laid out over two acres. The new area also includes the kid-friendly Camp TeachItTooMee.

In addition, Splash Country, Dollywood's next-door 35-acre water park, has just opened the Slick Rock Racer—a new multi-lane slide that spans 300 feet. It'll join the other 23 adventure slides and thrill rides there with names such as Bear Mountain Fire Tower, Mountain Scream and the Raging River Rapids.

More Thrills to be Found

Although these are just some of the newest highlights, all theme parks and water parks can provide thrills, laughs and lasting memories. No matter which ones you choose, rest assured you're bound to have a great time. Just be prepared for lines and crowds, drink plenty of water, use sun block and don't rush. Take the time to explore what interests you most, and remember—it's all about having fun!

Texas

Six Flags Over Texas, in Arlington: www.sixflags.com/overTexas

Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, in Arlington: www.sixflags.com/hurricaneharbortexas

Six Flags Fiesta Texas, in San Antonio: www.sixflags.com/fiestaTexas

SeaWorld Adventure Park, in San Antonio: www.seaworld.com/sanantonio

Schlitterbahn Waterparks, in Galveston, New Braunfels and South Padre Island: www.schlitterbahn.com



Mega Wedgie, Six Flags, Texas

OTHER STATES

Alabama

Alabama Adventure Theme and Water Park, in Bessemer:

www.alabamaadventure.com

Waterville USA, in Gulf Shores: www.watervilleusa.com

North Carolina

Wet 'n Wild Emerald Pointe Water Park, in Greensboro: www.emeraldpointe.com

South Carolina

Family Kingdom Amusement and Water Park, in Myrtle Beach:

www.family-kingdom.com

Myrtle Waves Water Park, in Myrtle Beach: www.myrtlewaves.com

Wild Water and Wheels, in Surfside Beach: www.wild-water.com

Virginia

Busch Gardens Williamsburg: www.buschgardens.com/bgw

Water Country USA, in Williamsburg: www.watercountryusa.com



Boomerang, Wild Adventures, Georgia



Bonzai Pipeline, Wild Adventures, Georgia

The all new The Wiggles Water World is now open at Six Flags White Water, Georgia



Georgia

Six Flags Over Georgia, in Atlanta: www.sixflags.com/overgeorgia
Six Flags White Water, in Atlanta: www.sixflags.com/whitewater
Wild Adventures Theme and Water Park, in Valdosta: www.wildadventures.net



Louisiana

Dixie Landin' Family Theme Park and Blue Bayou Waterpark, in Baton Rouge: www.bluebayou.com

Azuka Slide, Dixie Landing, Louisiana

