

Roller Coasters

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Ready for Takeoff

Thrillseekers hit the jackpot when visiting Ohio and the 32 roller coasters located within two of the state's theme parks.

By Nancy Dickinson



Cedar Point's Top Thrill Dragster takes riders 420 feet above ground.
Cedar Point, Sandusky, Ohio

With more than 20 miles of track and more than a full hour of back-to-back riding time, according to American Coasters Enthusiasts Club, Ohio is second only to California in offering visitors the greatest number of active roller coasters within its borders.

As of 2000, California had 57 coasters to Ohio's 43, and both states have added more since. Of Ohio's 43 or more roller coasters, 32 are located in two amusement parks—Cedar Point in Sandusky and Kings Island in Kings Mill. Without doubt, the Buckeye State is ready to thrill roller coaster enthusiasts of all types and ages.

Being a four-hour drive apart, the parks have always enjoyed a good relationship. But what was once a friendly rivalry has become a full partnership. Since 2006, Cedar Fair Entertainment Co. owns both parks. And with names such as Iron Dragon, Firehawk, Millennium Force and Flight of Fear, both parks offer roller coasters that excite, thrill, titillate, electrify and exhilarate.

Cedar Point

Cedar Point's Top Thrill Dragster—a 17-second ride that reaches 120 mph in 3.6 seconds—takes riders to a height of 420 feet. Top Thrill Dragster attracts roller coaster enthusiasts from around the world. Some consider it to be a mecca for coaster junkies.



The world's longest wooden roller coaster is The Beast at Kings Island.

Kings Island

As one of the tallest roller coasters in the country, Millennium Force has received a number of awards for height. Built in 2000, Millennium Force offers a 300-foot drop on the first hill and reaches 93 mph. Featuring a track length of 6,595 feet, this ride is an out-and-back coaster, with the return trip featuring shorter hills designed to maximize air time while riding. There are only two other coasters in the country longer than Millennium Force and both are wooden coasters located at Kings Island.

With rides such as these, Cedar Point has consistently maintained its position as one of the top 10 amusement parks in the country since opening in 1870. (Cedar point is the second-oldest amusement park in North America.) Always popular with its visitors, the park received recognition from Amusement Today magazine in 2009 as the Best Amusement Park in the World for the 12th consecutive year. Cedar Point consistently receives acknowledgment from various organizations for having the best roller coasters in the country as well as friendliest staff and cleanest park. Plus, the Maverick roller coaster won an award for being Best New Ride of 2007.

Kings Island

Kings Island also is an adrenalin rush, thanks to coasters such as The Beast and Firehawk, among several others.

When The Beast debuted in 1979, the tagline attached to it was, "The biggest, baddest, longest, fastest wooden roller coaster in the world." Since then, other roller coasters have been built that might strain the validity of this statement, but The Beast still holds the records of being the longest wooden roller coaster in the world and the longest roller coaster in the United States.





The Diamondback at Kings Island reaches 80 mph and features stadium seating.
Kings Island

The Beast has won several awards and has received recognition in many forms, including Ohio author R.L. Stine's book, appropriately called *The Beast*, about the roller coaster and the legend that it's haunted. With a track length of 7,329 feet and a four-minute-50-second ride, The Beast has remained unrivaled in the wooden roller coaster arena.

Firehawk is an innovative flying roller coaster that takes riders 115 feet in the air through five inversions at a speed of more than 50 mph. All this is happening while the riders are facing the ground.

Never one to rest on its laurels, Kings Island continues to excite visitors with an almost annual introduction of a new roller coaster, and 2009 was no different with the much-anticipated opening of Diamondback, an all-steel roller coaster. Diamondback falls under the category of hypercoaster as its first drop is 215 feet and reaches 80 mph, with a refreshing splashdown toward the end of the ride.

What makes Diamondback unique to other roller coasters is the V-shaped stadium-seating layout that lends an airy, almost airborne feeling to the ride. With 5,282 feet of track, two helixes and 10 drops, all of more than 100 feet, Diamondback gives riders a thrilling three minutes of ride time on a coaster that is already on its way to winning awards; in its inaugural year, it was ranked the seventh-best steel roller coaster by Amusement Today magazine.

Season Passes

Now that Cedar Fair Entertainment owns both parks as well as 10 others, for just a few dollars more than a standard season pass, platinum season passes grant pass holders entrance to all of amusement parks and several waterparks, with parking included in the pass.

For more information, contact Kings Island at www.visitkingsisland.com, Cedar Point at www.cedarpoint.com, and the Ohio Division of Travel and Tourism at <http://consumer.discoverohio.com/default.aspx>. For vacation-planning assistance, contact your AAA Travel agent or AAA.com/travel.

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