

Tuesday, July 29, 2003

DAILY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

Try Missouri for roller coasters

By CONNIE FARROW
Associated Press Writer

BRANSON, Mo. (AP) — Aaron Girard let out one of those screams that start deep in the belly and cause the throat to ache as the wooden roller coaster he was riding entered its first drop: a 310-degree, double-down spiral.

When the Ozark WildCat came to a stop 90 seconds later, the 7-year-old from Wichita, Kan., had one thing to say: "I want to ride it again."

The \$4 million coaster is the centerpiece thrill ride at Celebration City, the new theme park which formally opened in May on the western edge of Branson.

It's attracting vacationers — such as the Girard family — to southwest Missouri. It is also increasing the state's visibility among roller coaster enthusiasts who have long flocked to Six Flags St. Louis, Kansas City's Worlds of Fun and Branson's Silver Dollar City, which is Celebration City's sister theme park.

Ohio and California are the roller coaster kings, but Missouri has begun to attract more attention, said Jeff Mast of Independence, a regional representative for the 8,000-member American Coaster Enthusiasts.

"We've got a lot of quality rides, and a good selection of rides," Mast said.

Six Flags, located in the St. Louis suburb of Eureka, has five roller coasters, while Worlds of Fun and Silver Dollar City each have four. Along with the wooden Ozark WildCat, Celebration City also has two steel coasters — Thunderbolt and Jack Rabbit.

"I think a roller coaster becomes a park icon as far as guests are concerned," said Elizabeth Gotley, spokeswoman for Six Flags St. Louis. "There's a certain segment of your audience that will identify you with your coasters."

That's one of the reasons that theme park operators are constantly looking for the latest and greatest technology.

"Coasters are a status symbol," Gotley said. "If you are going to live in a certain neighborhood, you have to drive a certain car. If you are going to be in the theme park industry, you better have a great coaster."

Cristy Welsh, spokeswoman for Worlds of Fun in Kansas City, agreed that the trend is to "one-up" the other parks. Of course, the new kid on the block generally is toppled in a year or two.

Ozark WildCat is the first wooden roller coaster in southwest Missouri. It soars eight stories high and is a natural fit with the tree-lined landscape surrounding the park, said Steve Honeycutt, general manager of Celebration City.

The track stretches 2,600 feet, considerably shorter than Six Flags' wooden The Boss (5,051 feet) and wooden Screamin' Eagle (3,872 feet) and Worlds of Fun's wooden Timber Wolf (4,320 feet).

But roller coaster fans are not necessarily looking for the biggest or fastest ride.

"It's a top-notch coaster," said Barry Hon, 31, of Fort Myers, Fla., after trying out the WildCat. "I would put it at number two on my list."

Hon has ridden 125 other roller coasters across the United States and drove to Branson specifically for a turn on Ozark WildCat. Lightning Racer at Hershey park in



People ride the Ozarks WildCat at Celebration City theme park in Branson. The coaster's unique feature is 310-degree spiraling double-down first drop. AP photo

There are 16 roller coasters to choose from

Missouri has four theme parks with a variety of steel and wooden roller coasters. Here are some details.

CELEBRATION CITY (Branson)

Ozarks WildCat — 2,600-foot wood track reaching 45 mph. Unique feature is 310-degree spiraling double-down first drop. Tallest drop is 80 feet. Ride lasts 1 minute, 30 seconds.

Thunderbolt — 1,430-foot steel track reaching 35 mph. Tallest vertical drop is 30 feet. Ride time not available.

Jack Rabbit — 1,300-foot steel track reaching 35 mph. Tallest drop is 45 feet. Ride time not available.

SILVER DOLLAR CITY (Branson)

Wildfire — 3,073-foot steel track reaching 66 mph. Unique feature is half-loop-half-roll, then a full loop, followed by a cobra roll with two back-to-back inversions. Tallest drop is 155 feet. Ride time not available.

Buzzsaw Falls — 1,720-foot steel track. Tallest drop is 65 feet. Ride time not available.

Thunderation — 3,022-foot

steel track reaching 48 mph. Tallest drop is 81 feet. Ride time is 2 minutes, 10 seconds.

Fire in the Hole — 1,520-foot steel indoor track reaching 30 mph. Tallest drop is 24 feet. Ride time is 3 minutes.

WORLDS OF FUN (Kansas City)

Timber Wolf — 4,230-foot wood track reaching 53 mph. Hairpin curve takes riders into 56-degree helix. Tallest drop is 95 feet. Ride time is 2 minutes, 10 seconds.

Mamba — 5,600-foot steel track reaching 75 mph. It was one of the biggest expansions in the park's history. Tallest drop is 205 feet. Ride time is 3 minutes.

Orient Express — 3,470-foot steel track reaching 50 mph. Unique feature is two interlocking Kamikaze Curves, plus five drops. Tallest drop is 115 feet. Ride time is 2 minutes, 30 seconds.

Boomerang — 875-foot steel track reaching 48 mph. Tallest drop is 125 feet. Ride time 45 seconds.

SIX FLAGS ST. LOUIS (Eureka)

The Boss — 5,051-foot

wood track reaching 66 mph. Unique feature is 570-degree helix spiral and 150-foot double-down double-down drop. Tallest drop is 150 feet. Ride time is 3 minutes.

Screamin' Eagle — 3,872-foot wood track reaching 62 mph. It was tallest, longest and fastest wooden coaster when it opened in 1976. Tallest drop is 92 feet. Ride time is 2 minutes, 30 seconds.

Batman The Ride — 2,693-foot steel track reaching 50 mph. Features five head-over-heels experiences as train travels on the inside of the loops and includes two vertical outside loops and a zero gravity roll. Tallest drop is 87 feet. Ride time is 2 minutes.

Mr. Freeze — 1,382-foot steel track reaching 70 mph. Features linear induction technology that catapults riders from zero to 70 mph, rocketing passengers straight up and sending them back through the ride in reverse. Height is 226 feet. Ride time is 1 minute, 45 seconds. Ninja — 2,430-foot steel track reaching 65 mph. Tallest drop is 69 feet. Ride time is 2 minutes.

Hershey, Pa., is his favorite wood coaster.

"The WildCat has lots of good turns, good speed and it's smooth," Hon said after taking his 10th ride.

Mast's group, American Coaster Enthusiasts, doesn't bother ranking roller coasters because riders' tastes are too varied.

There are two things most so-called professional riders look for: Gut-wrenching drops and good "air time," those few seconds when riders feel as though they are floating.

Mast gives high marks on both counts to The Orient Express at Worlds of Fun, a 23-year-old steel coaster that remains his favorite.

But he was so excited about Ozark WildCat that he made several trips from his home in Independence to Branson to monitor construction by Great Coasters International Inc. of Sunbury, Pa.

"The woodies have more personality," Mast said. "They bombard you with different senses."

There has been a revival of wooden roller coasters since the 1970s, said Jeff Pike, vice president of Great Coasters.

Six Flags at St. Louis dominated the national race toward bigger and better coasters in 1976 when it opened Screamin' Eagle. At the time, it was the tallest, longest and fastest wooden

coaster in the world.

The trend now is toward rides with curves, twists and bunny-hops that keep the rider guessing what is coming next.

Ozark WildCat is the first wooden roller coaster to have a 310-degree twist all the way to the bottom of the first drop, Pike said.

It's what won the hearts of young Aaron Girard and his father, Mike Girard.

"It's scary," Aaron said.

Mike Girard said he enjoyed the nostalgia aspect of the wooden coaster, but he prefers steel coasters because of their speed.

"It's a personal thing," he said. "They're all fun."

IN THE
COURT
COUNTY
PROBATE
(Sec. 471,
& 473.4)

William
J.

In the Estate
James V. M.
Deceased.

Estate No.

NOT
LETTERS

To all persons
in the Estate
V. MASON

On JUNE
CHARLOTTE
was appointed
Representative
Estate of
MASON,

the Probate
COURT,
Missouri.

Address of
Representative
County Box
Bluff, MO

All creditors
of the decedent
are to file claims
in six months
date of this
notice.

For a full
and complete
description of
this notice,
see the full
notice in the
Missouri
State Bar
Journal.

Attest:
I, Clerk of the
Court, do hereby
certify that the
above is a true
and correct
copy of the
notice as filed
in the Probate
Court.

Witness my
hand and the
seal of the
Court at
Bluff, Missouri,
this 29th day
of July, 2003.

Clerk of the
Court

Date of
death was
2002.

Date of
test in July.

708, 15, 22

IN THE
COURT
COUNTY
PROBATE
(Sec. 471,
& 473.4)

William
J.

In the Estate
Maggie L.
Deceased.

Estate No.

NOT
LETTERS

To all persons
in the Estate
Maggie L.

On JUNE
CHARLOTTE
was appointed
Representative
Estate of
MASON,

the Probate
COURT,
Missouri.

Address of
Representative
County Box
Bluff, MO

All creditors
of the decedent
are to file claims
in six months
date of this
notice.

For a full
and complete
description of
this notice,
see the full
notice in the
Missouri
State Bar
Journal.

Attest:
I, Clerk of the
Court, do hereby
certify that the
above is a true
and correct
copy of the
notice as filed
in the Probate
Court.

Clerk of the
Court

Date of
death was
2002.

Date of
test in July.

708, 15, 22

IN THE
COURT
COUNTY
PROBATE
(Sec. 471,
& 473.4)

William
J.

In the Estate
Maggie L.
Deceased.

Estate No.

NOT
LETTERS

To all persons
in the Estate
Maggie L.

On JUNE
CHARLOTTE
was appointed
Representative
Estate of
MASON,

the Probate
COURT,
Missouri.

Address of
Representative
County Box
Bluff, MO

All creditors
of the decedent
are to file claims
in six months
date of this
notice.

For a full
and complete
description of
this notice,
see the full
notice in the
Missouri
State Bar
Journal.

Attest:
I, Clerk of the
Court, do hereby
certify that the
above is a true
and correct
copy of the
notice as filed
in the Probate
Court.

Clerk of the
Court

Pay for some MU chancellors to include donations

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The salaries of some University of Missouri campus chancellors will start to include donated funds, the university system's president said.

University of Missouri President Elson

Floyd explained the university has found it doesn't get enough state money to hire and retain chancellors. He said most people considered for the St. Louis job already earned more than Blanche Touhill, who

number of other states," he said, including Kansas.

Floyd said outside donors would not have influence over the chancellor. He said endowed professorships are funded all or in