26 Amusing Facts About Amusement Parks - mental_floss List Show (Ep.218)

List Show
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Hi, I'm John Green. Welcome to my salon. This is Mental Floss on YouTube Did you know that something similar to ferris wheels existed in 17th century Bulgaria?

They were called pleasure wheels. The term ferris wheel came about when George Washington Gale-I-have-too-many-names Ferris Jr. created one for the world's Columbian exhibition in 1893.

And that is the first of many facts about amusement parks that I'm going to share with you today.

(Intro)

Some of the earliest amusement parks were called "trolley parks". During the 19th century in the US, many people used trolleys or street cars to get from place to place and some of those trolley lines would end in parks, which started as picnic areas and then slowly added things like roller coasters and ferris wheels.

Speaking of early amusement parks, one of the earliest roller coasters in the US was the Mauch Chunk Switchback Railway in Pennsylvania. It became popular during the 1800s, when people would ride down this old mine track.

It was a different time when you could just hitch some cars to an abandoned mine and call it a rollercoaster, and actually, they did have safety features, including anti-rollback devices, which are still used on roller coasters today. That was necessary, by the way, because rumour has it that the railway went up to one hundred miles per hour.

When Disneyland was opened in 1955, "Tomorrowland" was designed to look like a year in the distant future: 1986.

Sadly they failed the two biggest innovations of 1986: legwarmers and ALF.

They didn't even correctly guess that there would be time traveling DeLoreans.

Another thing that happened when Disneyland opened: cats showed up, literally hundreds of stray cats and to this day, employees allow them to fill up the park while it's closed because they keep the mice away. You would think that Disney would be friendly to mice, but apparently not.

There's a roller coaster at the Copenhagen theme park "Bonbon-Land" called "Hunderpruten," which translates to "Farting Dog" because, you know, nothing goes together like bonbons and dog farts.

Steven Spielberg helped create the Jurassic Park ride at Universal Studios Hollywood. He even said, "I had the idea to do a ride even before we shot the movie." Now, that is modern filmmaking. The water ride has a slow buildup that leads to an eighty-five-food drop. Spielberg rides it up until that point and then he gets let out. By the way, it cost a hundred ten million dollars to build that ride, which was almost double the film's budget. It would have been cheaper just to use mini crochet dinosaurs, plus that movie would have been adorable.

Similarly, Dolly Parton can't ride most of the thrill rides and roller coasters at her amusement park, Dollywood, because she experiences motion sickness.

Speaking of motion sickness, perhaps you're familiar with The Scrambler. Australians call it The Cha-Cha, people from the UK refer to it as The Twist. Personally, I call it The Puke-a-Whirl.

London's Amora exhibition is sometimes referred to as the "sex theme park." Although there aren't any roller coasters, Amora is a sex-themed attraction that teaches visitors about sexual health, relationships and so on. There's also an interactive element. There's an interactive element? Oh, apparently it's just like touch screens and stuff.

And then there's Dickens World in Kent. The park, of course, immerses you in the world of Charles Dickens, combining his real life with his fiction. There's even a Great Expectations boat ride, which is twice as fun when you bring Dolly Parton because she'll puke on Pip.

Currently, the tallest roller coaster in the world is the Kingda Ka at Six Flags Great Adventure in New Jersey. After speeding up to one hundred twenty eight miles per hour, the coaster reaches 456 feet, which is 150 feet taller than the Statue of Liberty, the real one, not our Lego one.

Herbert Sellner invented the Tilt-A-Whirl in 1926. He got the idea by putting his son in a chair, placing the chair on the kitchen table and then moving the table back and forth, presumably until his child became sick. By the way, a brand new Tilt-A-Whirl only costs $300,000 dollars, so if you watch enough Mental Floss videos, we might be able to afford one for our office. No pressure.

In 2012, the French politician Yves Jégo announced plans for Napoleonland. The attractions would be reenactments of battles like Waterloo and Trafalgar and there would be a spectacle revolving around the guillotining of Louis XVI. Construction was supposed to begin in 2014 but surprisingly, it hasn't yet. Maybe because it was going to cost around 200 million Euro.

Speaking of French leaders, we have Louis XIV to thank for fun houses. It was said that the hall of mirrors in the Palace of Versailles actually inspired fun house mirrors.

Another amusement park attraction that's older than you'd expect, the pirate ship ride. It was invented in the 1890s. The original title was The Ocean Wave. It was invented in Oklahoma because, you know, people didn't know what ocean waves were like there.

Going back even earlier in time, carousels were inspired by a jousting event in the Middle Ages. People would gallop horses in a circle while tossing balls around. The word "carousel" even came from an Italian word meaning "little battle."

Diggerland is an amusement park in the UK that's completely construction-themed. In fact, all the attractions are made out of construction equipment and it is very popular, as you will know if you have a four-year-old son. In fact, there are four, soon to be five, locations.

New Jersey's Action Park, which closed in 1996, has become somewhat legendary for being disastrous. Like one of its attractions was a looping water slide, which had a loop in it like a roller coaster loop. Needless to say, it was extremely dangerous and rarely operational because, you know, you can't, people, loop, no.

A former employee of Action Park has claimed that he was offered $100 cash to test the loop slide. He said "$100 did not buy enough booze to drown out that memory."

In 2011, Butlin Resorts in the UK got made fun of quite a bit when they posted "no bumping" signs around their bumper car rides. Most customers thought the signs were jokes because the cars are kind of, you know, designed for bumping. But it wasn't a joke. People were told to drive around in circles and not bump each other. The company cited health and safety reasons. Shockingly, that wasn't

the same company that operated Action Park.

You already know from our episode on fun that Holiday World here in Indiana was the first ever theme park. But maybe you'd like to know why. Its creator, Louis J. Koch was saddened by the name of the town Santa Claus, Indiana because he worried about the children who went to visit the town only to discover that Santa did not live there. Of course, the real Santa lives on our wall of magic. Not this guy, he's fake, but that one.

At the Colombian theme park, Hacienda Nápoles, the archway is made from the same plane that brought a bunch of cocaine to the United States courtesy of drug lord Pablo Escobar. The theme park is located on his estate. In addition to being the highest observation tower in the United States, the Stratosphere in Las Vegas is the world's highest amusement park. Wait a second Meredith, are you sure it's not Hacienda Napoles? Nope, apparently indeed it is the Stratosphere. There are four rides up there at about 1000 feet, the tallest one reaches 1,081 feet. It was too high for a crane to build the rides so the parts had to be brought up via helicopter.

Now if you thought I was going to get through this episode without talking about the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, you must be new here. The head of the park's design team, Thierry Coup, had to cast actors to play Godric Gryffindor, Salazar Slytherin, Rowena Ravenclaw and Helga Hufflepuff in portraits, since they weren't in the films. The good news: he did get J.K. Rowling's stamp of approval.

In 2012, a man named Richard Rodriguez rode the Pepsi Max Big One and the Big Dipper roller coasters at Blackpool Pleasure Beach in the UK for 112 consecutive days. With a total of 405 hours and 40 minutes on the rides, he holds the world record for longest roller coaster marathon, which is pretty impressive, but I hold the world record for longest Swamp People marathon, and that's not nothing. By the way, it's also 405 hours and 40 minutes.

And finally, I return to my salon to tell you another roller coaster related world record. In 2010, 102 people set the world record for most naked people riding a roller coaster. They all rode the Green Scream roller coaster at Adventure Island in Essex, which actually required three separate groups because there were so many naked people.

Thanks for watching Mental Floss here on YouTube, which is made with the help of all of these nice people. Every week, we endeavor to answer one of your mind-blowing questions. This week's question comes from Nicole Duchich, who asks "why does the hair on your body only grow to a certain point then stop while the hair on your head grows continuously?" Good question, Nicole. The hair on your body is known as androgenic hair and is actually a different type of hair than the hair on your head, which is known as terminal hair. Androgenic hair has a shorter growing phase than terminal hair, like a few months versus a few years, so that's why it ends up being shorter.

If you have a mind-blowing question that we can answer, please leave it below in comments. Thank you again for watching, and as they say in my hometown, don't forget to be awesome.