

What Makes a Great Amusement Park?

Amusement parks have brought fun to families ever since the first park opened in Denmark over 400 years ago. Before there were amusement parks, people went to traveling fairs to enjoy food, games, rides and shows. Then someone had the idea of keeping a fair open in one place all the time. And the amusement park was born.



Some people go to amusement parks just for the food. There's the usual stuff, of course: cotton candy, corn dogs and tiny donuts. But you can also get strange foods like crispy chicken feet and bacon pickle balls. Or how about hot dogs and fries made from crickets? There's plenty of protein in these little critters, but you might find yourself chirping all night!

Other people like "theme parks" where all of the rides, shows, and even snacks have a common theme. Sea World lets you swim with dolphins or a ride the Shipwreck Rapids. At The World of Harry Potter, you can ride the Dragon Challenge and eat at The Three Broomsticks Café. The world's most famous theme park, Disneyland, offers an entire world of fantasy all in one place. You can float through a haunted house, sail with pirates, slide down a mountain or soar through space - without ever leaving the park.

But most park lovers go for the rides. Some rides spin you around and some splash you into a pool of water. Some rides toss you in the air and some plunge you into the dark. People stand in line for the Ferris wheels, cable cars and log rides. But the most popular rides of all are the roller coasters. All over the world, amusement parks compete to build the fastest, the tallest and the wildest roller coasters.

The tallest roller coaster in the world is Kingda Ka in the USA. But the fastest roller coaster is in Abu Dhabi. It's called Formula Rossa and it goes 149 miles an hour. With all that speed, it needs a lot of track. That's why it's the world's longest roller coaster as well.

Great roller coasters are a combination of length, height, speed and airtime. "The ride should provide non-stop action from start to finish," says Paul Ruben. He is a theme park diehard who has ridden 830 different roller coasters in his life. He likes a roller coaster where you spend so much time in the air that you hardly need a seat!

Fans agree on one thing. The most important thing about a roller coaster is what the rider does *after* the ride. The goal of any good roller coaster is to make you want to ride it again. And again. But you might want to wait till *after* the ride to eat those cricket dogs.

BEFORE YOU READ

Have you ever been to an amusement park or theme park or fair? List about 6 things you might expect to do or ride or eat at the park.

WHILE YOU READ

Do you ever read with a highlighter in your hand? As you read, think about what you already know about Amusement Parks. Highlight any facts that are new to you. (If you don't have a highlighter, just use a yellow marker or even a pencil.)

AFTER YOU'RE FINISHED READING

1. Go back to your list of things you might expect to find at an Amusement Park. Put a check mark beside any that you found in the reading.
2. What is the difference between an Amusement Park and a Theme Park?
3. What are the four main things that make a roller coaster great?
4. Read the very last sentence. Why does the author say you should wait until after the ride?
5. Do some Internet Research: What are the five biggest roller coasters in the world today? Where are they found?



Are you interested in reading a whole book that takes place in
an Amusement Park?

In *Roller Coaster*, two kids hide out in the Fun House overnight and take a wild ride
on the roller coaster.

[Click here to read some pages from this book.](#)

