

Commercial Attractions

In addition to the heritage attractions just discussed, a host of commercial attractions have been developed to meet travelers' leisure-time needs. Whether it's the thrill of the roller-coaster plunge, the excitement of gaming, or the joy of an armload of boxes after a day at the mall, both tourists and locals welcome the opportunity to visit and enjoy these attractions.

Amusement Parks

The first amusement parks, which were called *pleasure gardens*, were built in England and France. Some of the largest and most popular amusement parks such as Gardaland on Italy's Lake Garda and Tivoli in Denmark attract millions of visitors each year. As the name *pleasure garden* implies, these attractions began as manicured gardens designed to provide a temporary escape for city dwellers from the everyday drudgeries of life. Rides such as carousels, games, and food and drink stands were added to these pleasure gardens to meet guest needs.

The idea of parks with rides and other entertainment activities soon found its way to the United States. Interest in amusements in the United States heightened when the Ferris wheel was introduced at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. The name for this new amusement that became the centerpiece of most early amusement parks was taken from its inventor, George Washington Gales Ferris.

Lights, sounds, rides, games of chance, food, and a flurry of activities proved to be natural draws for those early thrill-seeking visitors to such places as Coney Island in Brooklyn or the Steel Pier in Atlantic City. Many smaller amusement parks in the United States were originally located at the edge of town, where the trolley lines stopped. These amusement parks, called "trolley parks," were established as marketing tools to encourage ridership during the slow weekend periods. As automobiles and buses replaced trolleys, these and other amusement parks faded in popularity as their captive audiences disappeared. However, the concept of family fun and amusement was kept alive during the first half of the 20th century by traveling carnivals that moved across the country as a source of entertainment at many fairs and festivals until a landmark event that occurred in 1955. That year marked the opening of Disneyland in Anaheim, California.

Disneyland was much more than an amusement park. Although it drew on some of the basic attributes of an amusement park, Disneyland was the first theme park, and its opening served to rekindle respectability and interest in amusement parks.⁹ Since that time, the operations of amusement parks have become more sophisticated, with technology playing a far more important role. However, the basics of fun, excitement, and fantasy remain the keys to amusement park successes.

Amusement parks, family entertainment centers, and water parks serve as important recreational outlets for their host communities and also attract considerable tourism interest from the region. Some of the larger amusement parks that may

FYI ROLLER COASTERS

Looking for a thrill? Amusement park operators know you are, and are meeting that need by pushing the limits of what the human body can stand with continuing advances in roller coaster technology. With drops of over 400 hundred feet, speeds

approaching 150 miles an hour, turns of over 120 degrees and 4 plus G-forces, adrenaline rushes are the norm. How high, fast, dramatic, and powerful will next year's ride experience be? The answer lies in design technologies and ultimate limits of what the human body

can stand during a safe yet terrifying thrill experience. With the addition of virtual reality to these rides, the only limits faced by ride designers are their imaginations.