



*Ferries wheels, freefall drop towers, and roller coasters are the hallmarks of a major amusement park.* Dave King/Dorling Kindersley, Ltd

be recognizable to you include Six Flags/Elitch's Garden in Denver; Kentucky Kingdom in Louisville; Kennywood Park (one of the original trolley parks) in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania; Grand Slam Canyon in Las Vegas; and Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio (the largest in North America). Like so many tourism service providers, there is no industry-specific classification system for these entertainment attractions.

## Theme Parks

The distinction between amusement and theme parks is beginning to blur, but there are several unique characteristics that set them apart. Theme parks create a destination in themselves. By combining entertainment, food, and beverages and an environment different from that found outside the gates, visitors are allowed to escape reality as they enter. Through the magic of technology and elaborate staging, theme parks can replicate almost any location in the world. As visitors are transported into this simulated environment, they are afforded the luxury of being in another location without the expense or any of the potential problems of faraway travel.<sup>10</sup> It is predicted that, "[T]he popularity of theme parks and attractions will continue to grow as theme parks and attractions are more and more associated with the new vacation experience that includes the convenience of on-property accommodations, food services, recreation, shopping, recreational and entertainment activities, and other tourist services" (p. 146).<sup>11</sup>

There may be a tendency on the part of North Americans to think that they are the center of amusement park attractions. However, remember that the idea was imported from Europe and a trip to that continent will show that it has not lost its place in the theme park spotlight. Disneyland Paris; Europa Park in Rust, Germany; De Efteling Leisure Park in Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands; and Port Aventura in Salou, Spain, are Europe's most popular theme parks.<sup>12</sup> Other park locations around the world, such as Tokyo Disneyland in Japan; Dreamworld at Coomera on Australia's Gold Coast; Lotte World in Seoul, Korea; Ferrari World Abu Dhabi; Hopi Hari in Sao Paulo, Brazil; Window of the World in Shenzhen, China; and Burlington Amusement Park on Prince Edward Island, Canada, serve to highlight the international appeal of these attractions.

Increasingly, in the creation of theme parks, we see labor, expertise, capital, and management flowing freely around the world. "People do drawings in China for delivery in Los Angeles the next morning; expatriates move around to work in India, Latin America, and Eastern Europe."<sup>10</sup>

"The contemporary American typically associates theme parks with concepts of permanence, gardened park-like settings and single price admission" (p. 51).<sup>13</sup> Theme parks meeting these criteria range from elaborate parks such as Disney World in Florida and Canada's Wonderland in Toronto to local and specialty theme parks such as Worlds of Fun in Kansas City, Missouri, and Six Flags over Georgia, in Atlanta, providing a wide range of choices for the consumer. To differentiate product offerings and compete successfully, theme park operators must become more aware of consumer perceptions and