

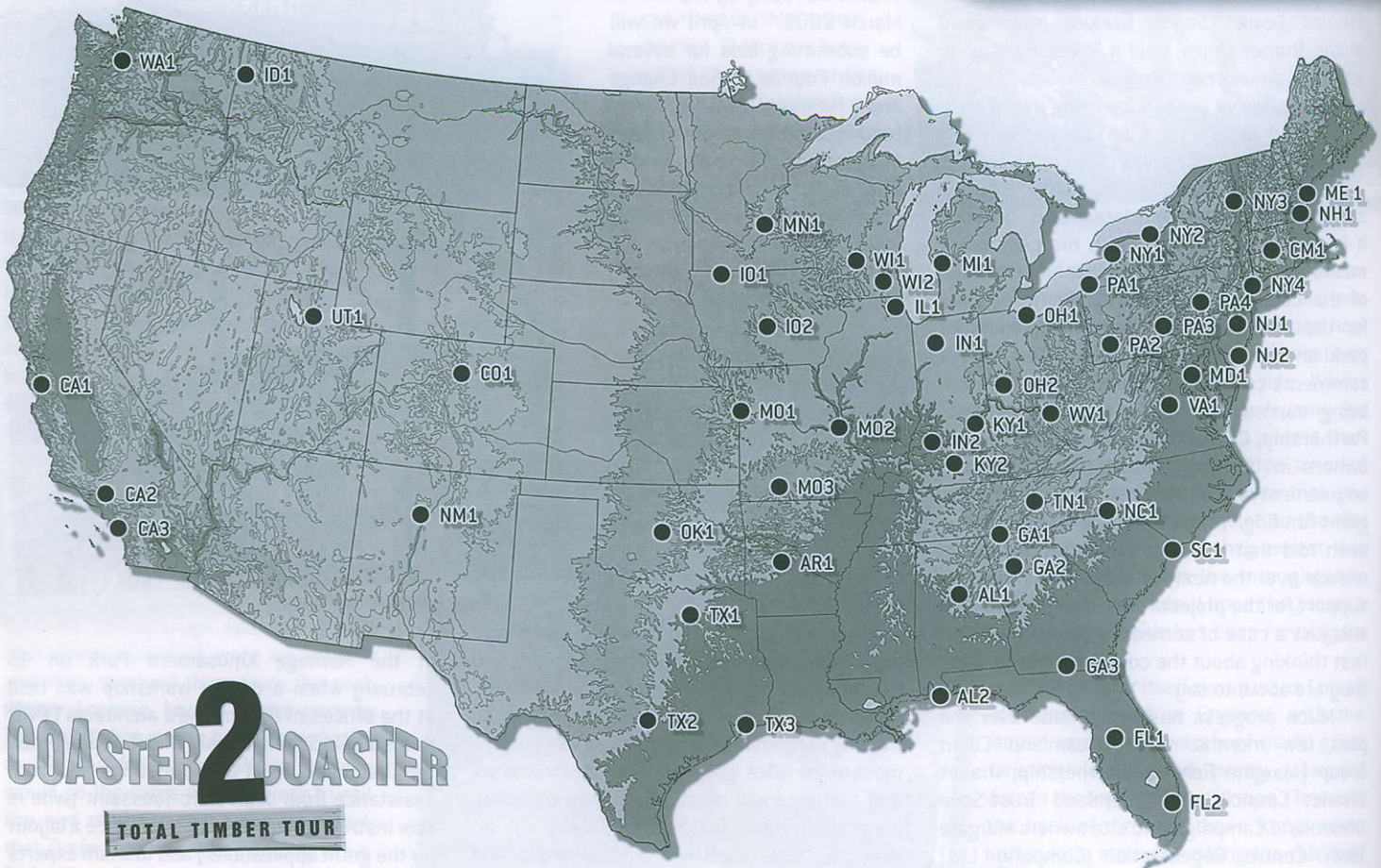
# FIRST DROP 83



Wood-a  
Could-a  
Should-a

# ALL THE COASTERS

By Adrian Whitcombe - UK



## COASTER<sup>2</sup>COASTER

TOTAL TIMBER TOUR

**D**uring August 2008, Ian Booth and I set out on a journey across the United States to sweep up all our unriden wooden coasters there. We only had nine to ride to put us in a position to say we had ridden every wooden coaster in the U.S. with the exception of those under construction at the time of the trip, and those standing but not operating.

The tour was dubbed the "Total Timber Tour" and was nine months in the planning. It generated media interest from our local TV, radio and press in Nottingham, England. It was to cover more than 11,265 km (7,000 miles) and cross 23 state lines in over 21 days. We had a trip website, [www.coaster2coaster.com](http://www.coaster2coaster.com), where we posted a daily blog of the trip and averaged over 3,500 hits a day.

The climax of the tour was at Puyallup Fair in Seattle, Washington. Indeed, the whole trip was organised around this fair, as the coaster there only operates for two weeks in September and a few days in April, making it a hard credit to gain.

Unfortunately, after a very smooth start, on Labor Day, the 12th day of the trip, we failed our mission. We were to ride the *Cannonball Run* at Waterville USA. At the time, we were obviously disappointed, but it was Mother Nature and Hurricane Gustav that prevented us from venturing anywhere near the park. Indeed, the previous day, an official evacuation of the Gulf Coast had been ordered ahead of the pending storm; and Waterville lay within the

evacuation zone, so any likelihood of operation had Gustav changed its course was still zero. We continued with the planned tour and began writing this article a couple of days later while travelling north-west to Seattle.

So how long did it take to complete all but one wooden coaster in the United States? Well, Ian's first woodie was 19 years ago: the *Florida Hurricane* at the now defunct Boardwalk & Baseball (Orlando, Florida). My first woodie was the mighty *Texas Cyclone* at AstroWorld. Since then we have been back to the States 16 times on various trips. It wasn't until November 2007, when completing Mitch Hawker's internet wood-coaster poll, that we realised there were so few left for us to ride. The trip idea began to become a reality.

So, what do we think of all the American woodies? Well, if we commented on all 115, it would probably run over many issues of *First Drop*, so we'll talk about the highs and lows (pun intended) of our riding experiences. Firstly, there is no "best coaster" (you know you get asked that question all the time!) as they differ from visit to visit, although for this season at least, *Ravine Flyer II* probably holds the crown. But there is easily a worst woodie out there – *Son of Beast* at Kings Island. Putting a train with wheels at one gauge into a track of another gauge will always spell discomfort – add the height and you've got pain. A close second – and it would seem many others agree – is *Grizzly* at California's Great America. Just

plain boring from start to finish – one of the few videos we've had to speed up to make the ride look semi-enjoyable!

So what of the future? Well, until we get Waterville ticked off (and it is so far from anywhere), the United States will always beckon us back to keep up with new openings and old favourites. One day we will have ridden them all, and can then look at expanding the target area we guess!

## Photo Credits

**Richard Bannister:** 13, 22. **Ian Booth:** 4, 5, 25, 28, 32, 60, 66, 71, 73, 76, 77, 84, 100, 103. **Cedar Point:** 18. **Dan Comoss:** 36. **Harvey Duff:** 2. **Sean Flaharty:** 54. **Justin Garvanovic:** 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26, 27, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 64, 65, 67, 68, 74, 75, 81, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 95, 96, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 115. **Marin Garvanovic:** 51, 78, 79. **Mike Graham:** 72. **Steve Gzesh:** 114. **Michael Horwood:** 29, 30, 31, 38, 63, 69, 70, 80, 91, 93, 94, 97, 105, 106, 112. **Andy Huckle:** 1. **Yvonne Janik:** 12. **Florian Kragl:** 40. **Scott McGrath:** 14. **Scott Rutherford:** 50. **Ken Simmons:** 82. **Gary Slade:** 3. **Gordon Taylor:** 21.

## Adventureland<sup>02</sup>

(Altoona, Iowa)

### Tornado<sup>2</sup>, Underground<sup>3</sup>

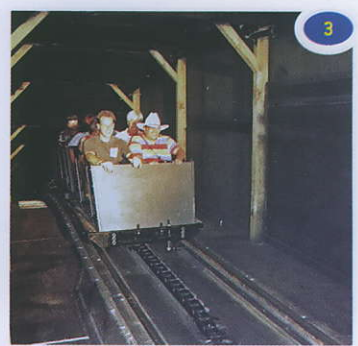
During a trip in 1999, the operator on **Outlaw<sup>1</sup>** decided to have some fun and give a couple of laps of the coaster for the price of one. So far, nothing too out of the ordinary except... he was adding the second lap by turning off all braking. As the train completed a normal circuit, it flew through the brake run, around a 160° left bend (with no banking), through the station into a 90° turn, over some bunny hops, around a 160° right bend (with no banking) and had enough momentum to fly half way up the lift hill under its own steam! Once the park got wind of what occurred, a supervisor came over, and the operator quit there and then, walking off the ride to rapturous applause.



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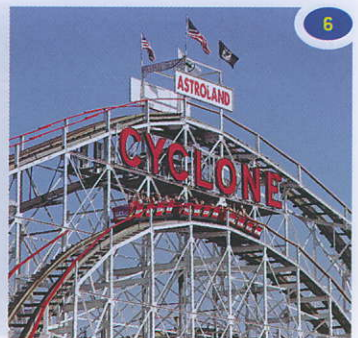
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**Alabama Adventure<sup>AL1</sup>**  
(Bessemer, Alabama)

We first rode **Rampage<sup>4</sup>** in 2004, and **Megafobia's** slightly bigger brother (or is it sister?) was a stunning ride in the dark and the perfect cure to time differential adjustment. We re-visited the park last year and, although not too bad, **Rampage** had become somewhat rougher. It's never wise to get your hopes up for an enjoyable ride based on previous experiences!



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**Arnolds Park<sup>01</sup>**  
(Arnolds Park, Iowa)

**Legend<sup>5</sup>** is a small traditional woodie with a couple of good pops of airtime in one of those out-of-the-way classic American amusement parks. We love discovering parks and rides like this.



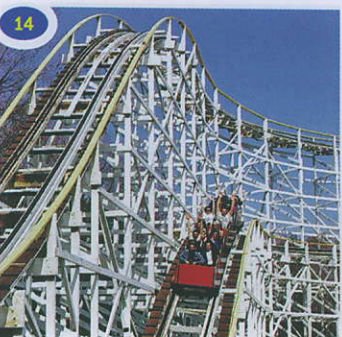
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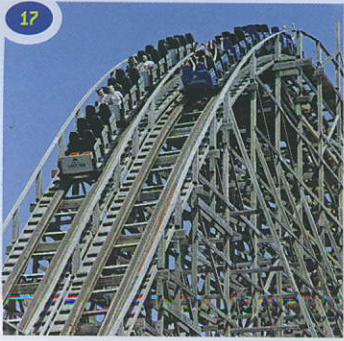
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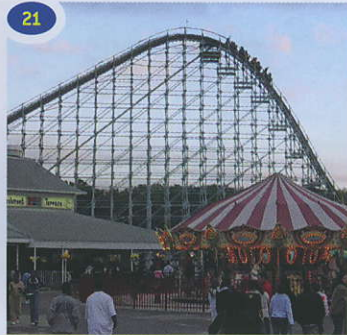
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**Astroland**<sup>NY4</sup>  
[Brooklyn, New York]

The **Cyclone**<sup>6</sup> is one of the most famous American coasters, but a surprise when you first see and ride it. The seating arrangement, although well padded, is a very tight squeeze. The drops are fantastic, but we were both surprised by the lack of speed on the turnarounds.

**Boomers**<sup>FL2</sup>  
[Dania, Florida]

When planning the Total Timber Tour, we received an email titled "All The Coasters?" from somebody in America who told us about the **Dania Beach Hurricane**<sup>9</sup> as if we had never heard of it. As enthusiasts, I'm sure we all take a day out to ride this coaster when in Orlando, and the nature of the park means repeat riding is never an issue when you visit.

**Beech Bend**<sup>KY2</sup>  
[Bowling Green, Kentucky]

**Kentucky Rumbler**<sup>7</sup>

**Busch Gardens Africa**<sup>FL1</sup>  
[Tampa, Florida]

**Belmont Park**<sup>CA3</sup>  
[San Diego, California]

The **Giant Dipper**<sup>9</sup> is just too "rattly" to repeat ride. Morgan trains are used to keep the weight down, but it is screaming out for GCII-type articulated rolling stock.

We rode **Gwazi**<sup>10</sup> the year it opened, and it was simply stunning. Since then, we've never seen it duel and have had some serious back-bashing from it. Holds the slowest load and dispatch record of any



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coaster we have been on. The first year, they had one ride operator checking each side (slowly!), but when you walked down the exit ramp, six staff were beckoning you over to buy a ride photo. You just couldn't help think if they had these people loading the trains more efficiently, they would sell more photos.

**California's Great America**<sup>CA1</sup>

(Santa Clara, California)

**Grizzly**<sup>11</sup> has to be America's most boring woodie, bar none.

**Camden Park**<sup>WV1</sup>

(Huntington, West Virginia)

**Lil' Dipper**<sup>13</sup>

The park looks a little rough around the edges, but inside you'll find staff that care deeply about their

rides and guests. We got talking to the **Big Dipper**<sup>12</sup> operator by asking about the headlights on the NAD train, and our genuine interest made us a new friend.

**Canobie Lake Park**<sup>NH1</sup>

(Salem, New Hampshire)

**Yankee Cannonball**<sup>14</sup>

**Carowinds**<sup>NC1</sup>

(Charlotte, North Carolina)

**Fairly Odd Coaster**<sup>15</sup>, **Hurler**<sup>16</sup>

**Thunder Road**<sup>17</sup> came as a big surprise for us four years ago. We knew nothing about the ride prior to visiting the park, and the front seat of the right track was glass-smooth – one of those coaster heaven moments.

**Cedar Point**<sup>OH1</sup>

(Sandusky, Ohio)

**Blue Streak**<sup>18</sup>

**Mean Streak**<sup>19</sup> was one big disappointment after the reports from the opening seasons – proof, if it were needed, that the best wooden coasters don't need to be big!

**Celebration City**<sup>MO3</sup>

(Branson, Missouri)

The **Ozark Wildcat**<sup>20</sup> was one of the most re-rideable coasters we found, and the park was a pleasant surprise.

**Clementon Amusement Park**<sup>NJ1</sup>

(Clementon, New Jersey)

**HellCat**<sup>21</sup> was the first woodie on the Total Timber Tour we had to tick off. First ride was in the second car and very bumpy. We could have easily written this off as a

dud, but we tried again in the front, and it transformed into a very thrilling, out of control experience. The addition of trim brakes on the first drop is noticeable but not as much as the likes of **Mean Streak**. Once we had had a few goes, we actually started to like it, and by the end found it very pleasing. Not a coaster to beckon you back in a rush, but, all the same, a great start to the trip.

**Cliff's Amusement Park**<sup>NM1</sup>

(Albuquerque, New Mexico)

Only had one go on the **New Mexico Rattler**<sup>22</sup> before the weather rained our day off. Would be nice to go back someday and put it through its paces.

**Cypress Gardens**<sup>FL1</sup>

(Cypress Gardens, Florida)

**Triple Hurricane**<sup>23</sup>

The park has done a good job in saving the **Starliner**<sup>24</sup> from the wrecker's ball and is obviously very proud of its achievement. It was also good to see it painted white.

**Darien Lake**<sup>NY1</sup>

(Darien Center, New York)

**Predator**<sup>25</sup> has a very odd plaque stating it was the seventh best coaster in the world in 1999, or something like that. Has had a lot of work over the years but doesn't beg you back for more after the first ride.

**Dollywood**<sup>TN1</sup>

(Pigeon Forge, Tennessee)

We rode **Thunderhead**<sup>26</sup> in its first season, and it is easy to see why it became an instant hit



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with enthusiasts at the time. On reflection, however, the coaster was, perhaps, a bit too good, if that's possible. Little in the way of laterals or airtime, but a power race from lift to brakes.

**Dorney Park**<sup>PA4</sup>

(Allentown, Pennsylvania)

**Thunderhawk**<sup>27</sup>

**Dutch Wonderland**<sup>PA3</sup>

(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

We stopped by at this kiddie park just to ride the **Kingdom Coaster**<sup>28</sup> and found it amusing that the park had a procedure for passing enthusiasts including prepared forms to fill out declaring that your visit wouldn't last more than 30 minutes in return for a free go on the coaster.

**Elitch Gardens**<sup>CO1</sup>

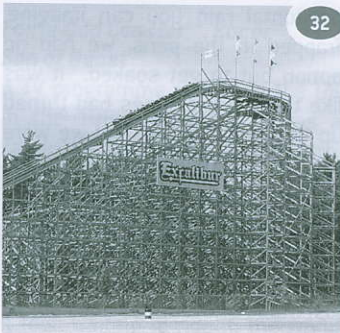
(Denver, Colorado)

**Twister II**<sup>29</sup>

**Family Kingdom**<sup>SC1</sup>

(Myrtle Beach, South Carolina)

The **Swamp Fox**<sup>30</sup> claimed at the time of our visit to have been voted number 7 in the world at some point.



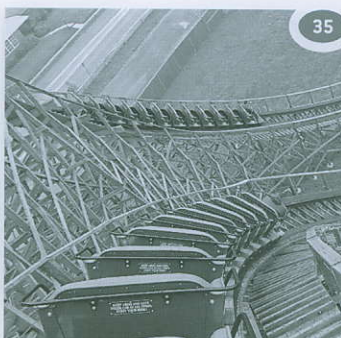
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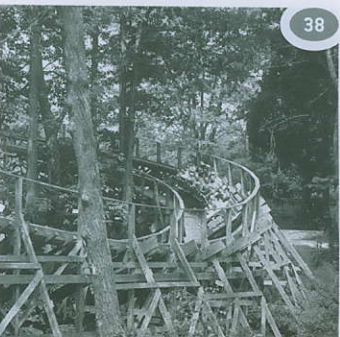
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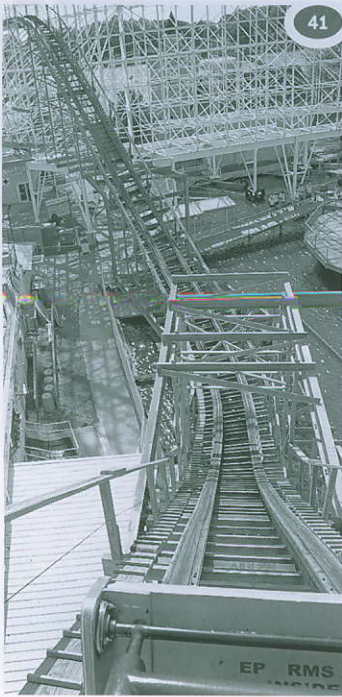
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### Frontier City<sup>OK1</sup>

[Oklahoma City, Oklahoma]

### Wildcat<sup>31</sup>

### Funtown Splashtown U.S.A.<sup>ME1</sup>

[Saco, Maine]

**Excalibur<sup>32</sup>** is a strange coaster that seems to lose all its energy halfway through the ride. The first half is very good but easily forgotten by the time you hit the brake run.

### Great Escape (The)<sup>NY3</sup>

[Lake George, New York]

It was great to ride the **Comet<sup>33</sup>** back in 2001 with its unique speeding-up chain to accelerate you off the top of the lift. A return visit four years later was still good, although the ride seems to have lost some of its speed for some reason.

### Hersheypark<sup>PA3</sup>

[Hershey, Pennsylvania]

**Comet<sup>34</sup>, Lightning Racer<sup>35</sup>, Wildcat<sup>36</sup>**

### Holiday World<sup>IN2</sup>

[Santa Claus, Indiana]

### Legend<sup>37</sup>

We first rode **Raven<sup>38</sup>** back in 1999 and have enjoyed many repeat



visits to the park since. Dark riding on it is a must-do in any enthusiast's book.

There has been so much written about **The Voyage<sup>39</sup>** so it's hard to think of anything more to add. But it proves what a small world it is when, two years ago on an independent trip, we were spending a very enjoyable last hour of the park on **The Voyage** and spotted fellow Club member Stuart Cosgrove. This year though, the park has lost its "family-run" feel, as it's gotten bigger. It's true to say, apart from the ticket office on arrival, we did not see one park employee or ride operator smile the whole day. The loading of each coaster train was very matter of fact, and little was done to fill empty seats – a complete contrast to Waldameer where every train went out full, and the staff were obviously excited about being posted to operate the main attraction. On leaving Holiday World, there were staff there, but nobody said "goodbye," "thanks for visiting" or anything. Last year, all the management of Six Flags Great Adventure were lined up at the close of the park and ensured everyone walked out of the gate with a personal thank you. Indeed, it was quite a party and left a lasting impression with us.

### Idlewild & SoakZone<sup>PA2</sup>

[Ligonier, Pennsylvania]

### Rollo Coaster<sup>40</sup>

### Indiana Beach<sup>IN1</sup>

[Monticello, Indiana]

**Cornball Express<sup>41</sup>, Hoosier Hurricane<sup>42</sup>, Lost Coaster of Superstition Mountain<sup>43</sup>**



### Kemah Boardwalk<sup>TX3</sup>

[Kemah, Texas]

The **Boardwalk Bullet<sup>44</sup>** was number 6 to do on the Total Timber Tour. End-of-season blues seemed to have set in amongst the staff at Kemah, with very little in the way of enthusiasm or friendliness – except that this park's season is all year round! As for the coaster, the **Boardwalk Bullet** is a unique compact design, and we can't liken it to anything else we have ridden. It was, coincidentally, the ride's first birthday. Unusually for a modern design, it has anti-rollback ratchets on some of the hills. This is more than likely a by-product of the tight footprint the coaster had to be built on. It's quite amazing that the ride is so long, given the parcel of land it occupies, and it was noticeably speeding up with each circuit of the day. By mid-afternoon, when we had to leave, it was flying round.

### Kennywood<sup>PA2</sup>

[West Mifflin, Pennsylvania]

### Thunderbolt<sup>47</sup>

Queuing at the start of the day for **Jack Rabbit<sup>45</sup>**, you witness a procedure you wish many other parks would adopt: a maintenance guy riding front seat, oil can in



hand, ensuring the tracks do not rust. This coaster has one of the best airtime moments on any coaster, wood or steel.

The **Racer<sup>46</sup>** is home to our most hysterical coaster moment. While queuing across the front of the ride, a storm started. Ian said, "It's like the storms in Florida, all electric and no rain." Fast forward five minutes, and we were being bashed with the most intense horizontal rain you can imagine. Trapped in the pens, we had no option but to get soaked. It was like three fire engines had turned up to put out a fire, and we were the flames. Begging the ride staff for evacuation onto the platform was against park policy, even when getting battered by what seemed like a mini tornado – they just stood and laughed at us all.

### Kiddieland<sup>IL1</sup>

[Melrose Park, Illinois]

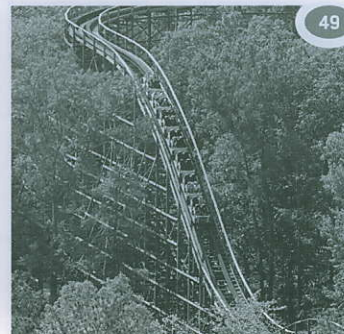
### Little Dipper<sup>48</sup>

### Kings Dominion<sup>VA1</sup>

[Doswell, Virginia]

**Hurler<sup>50</sup>, Rebel Yell<sup>51</sup>, Scooby-Doo's Ghoster Coaster<sup>52</sup>**

This **Grizzly<sup>49</sup>** is so much better than its Californian namesake. It





has one of the few tunnels where clearance is truly doubtful, and its addition adds to the ride experience. With an apparent park policy (seen on all visits to this park) of allowing re-rides if nobody is waiting for your seat, it's easy to get an ERS on the *Grizzly*, especially towards the end of the day.

**Kings Island**<sup>OH2</sup>  
[Kings Mills, Ohio]

*Fairly Odd Coaster*<sup>54</sup>, *Racer*<sup>55</sup>, *Son of Beast*<sup>56</sup>

A TV programme shown in the UK in the 1980s called QED was a catalyst for my coaster enthusiasm, and a ride on the *Beast*<sup>53</sup> from that point on was a life goal. Some 10 years later, the dream became a reality, and I got to ride it. What a disappointment! During the time it took waiting to ride it, the world

and ride designers had moved on. I'm sure it was a great ride back in its day, but 16 years after opening, I came off my first ride with a very empty feeling.

**Knoebel's Amusement Resort**<sup>PA3</sup>  
[Elysburg, Pennsylvania]

*Phoenix*<sup>57</sup>, *Twister*<sup>58</sup>

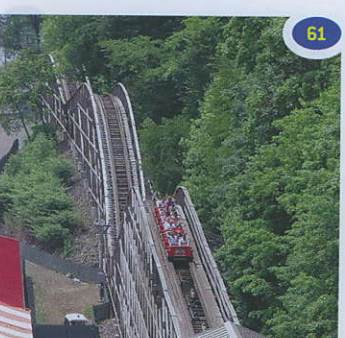
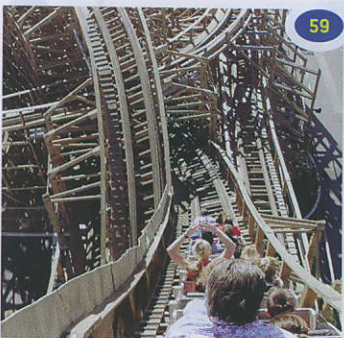
**Knott's Berry Farm**<sup>CA2</sup>  
[Buena Park, California]

*GhostRider*<sup>59</sup>

**Lagoon**<sup>UT1</sup>

[Farmington, Utah]

This *Roller Coaster*<sup>60</sup> looked to be in disrepair when we visited in 2005 but they were letting the paint weather away so it could be restored back to a more natural wood-treated finish.



### Lake Compounce<sup>CM1</sup>

(Bristol, Connecticut)

#### Wildcat<sup>62</sup>

Our first session on **Boulder Dash**<sup>61</sup> was one of our most memorable and one of our most stunning coaster experiences. Unfortunately, the turnaround took a beating, and it was closed for the remainder of the day. A return a few years later and, although not too rough, the ride wasn't as good as before. After the Coaster2Coaster tour we returned and found that GCII has done a remarkable job in bringing this ride back to its glory days, and it is giving *Ravine Flyer II* a run for its money!

### Lake Winnepesaukah<sup>GA1</sup>

(Rossville, Georgia)

Another classic park where the **Cannon Ball**<sup>63</sup> is kept looking as new with fresh paint.

### Lakemont Park<sup>PA2</sup>

(Altoona, Pennsylvania)

#### Leap The Dips<sup>64</sup>, Skyliner<sup>65</sup>

### Lakeside Amusement Park<sup>CO1</sup>

(Denver, Colorado)

The **Cyclone's**<sup>66</sup> Art-Deco station sets the mood before you even step into the train. The lack of banking at the bottom of the first drop is a great way of becoming friends with the person next to you. The ride operators obviously care passionately about their ride and guests.

### Little Americka<sup>WI2</sup>

(Marshall, Wisconsin)

The **Meteor**<sup>67</sup> was Number 4 on the Total Timber Tour. This park is



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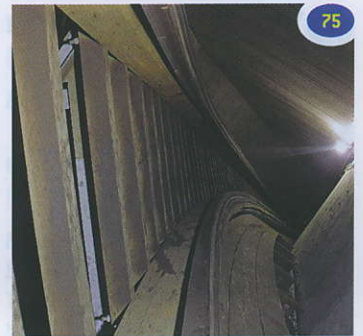
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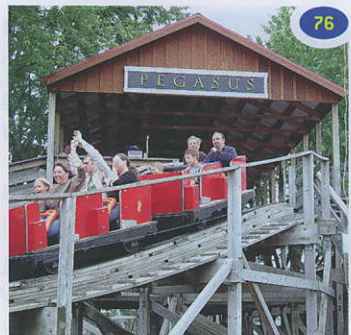
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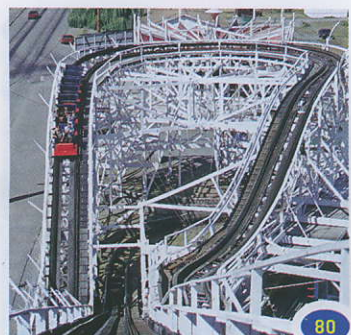
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fantastic – nothing fancy, just good old American amusement tradition, lovingly wrapped by staff who care about it and their guests. You get three circuits for your money and, on the third, the ride op slaps the hands of all the train's occupants, a great touch and brilliant for the park's young target audience.

**Magic Springs & Crystal Falls**<sup>AR1</sup>  
(Hot Springs, Arkansas)

**Arkansas Twister**<sup>68</sup>

**Martin's Fantasy Island**<sup>NY1</sup>  
(Grand Island, New York)

Some guides describe the **Silver Comet**<sup>69</sup> as a 'junior woodie,' which it is anything but.

**Michigan's Adventure**<sup>MI1</sup>  
(Muskegon, Michigan)

**Wolverine Wildcat**<sup>71</sup>, **Zach's Zoomer**<sup>72</sup>

**Shivering Timbers**<sup>70</sup> was first ridden in 1999 before the uphill kicks set in; we both still rate it within our top three coasters anywhere.

**Morey's Piers**<sup>NJ2</sup>  
(Wildwood, New Jersey)

**Great White**<sup>73</sup>

**Mt. Olympus Theme Park**<sup>WI1</sup>  
(Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin)

**Cyclops**<sup>74</sup>, **Pegasus**<sup>76</sup>

Our first ride on **Hades**<sup>75</sup> in the dark was a very special affair. For a while I rated it above *The Voyage* for pure enjoyment. A return visit this year, and it's still good until you get to the return journey. The latter part of the ride has some strange bouncing occurring. With the mechanics' disinterest in smoke from the chain lift, it would seem *Hades* has already had its day.

We first rode **Zeus**<sup>77</sup> nine years ago, and it was a very agreeable ride then. Unfortunately, it's now been relegated to a front-seat only ride, with the rest of the train bouncing along for the whole ride – headache tablets at the ready!

**Playland Park**<sup>NY4</sup>  
(Rye, New York)

**Dragon Coaster**<sup>78</sup>, **Kiddie Coaster**<sup>79</sup>

**Puyallup Fair**<sup>WA1</sup>  
(Puyallup, Washington)

Number 8 on the Total Timber Tour. We first read about **Coaster Thrill Ride**<sup>80</sup> a number of years ago. The review said something like, "A ride on the wooden coaster at Puyallup is well worth the careful planning required to ride it." And after the months of organisation for the Total Timber Tour, we have to agree. The whole trip was planned for this ride and not only did it not disappoint, it exceeded our expectations and proved to be the perfect ride on which to end the marathon journey across the States. With original fixed lap bars, no seat dividers and airtime-heaven in the back seat.

Because of its limited operation schedule, its "coaster age" is a lot younger than many modern machines. It's like stepping back in time and enjoying coastering the way it used to be.

**Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**<sup>CA1</sup>  
(Santa Cruz, California)

Probably our favourite park in terms of setting and tradition. The **Giant Dipper**<sup>81</sup>, like its namesake further south, runs lighter Morgan trains, but they seem less of an issue on this ride. Very enjoyable and very re-rideable.

**Seabreeze**<sup>NY2</sup>  
(Rochester, New York)

**Jack Rabbit**<sup>82</sup>

**Silverwood Theme Park**<sup>ID1</sup>  
(Athol, Idaho)

On our first visit **Timber Terror**<sup>83</sup> was playing second fiddle to its big brother, but this year equalled it for ride enjoyment and airtime. Fantastic.

**Tremors**<sup>84</sup> starts with a 30.5m (100ft) drop onto a small speed bump that is very amusing. The ride held my interest from start to finish. This was my number 1 for a season, prior to riding *Hades*. We were both apprehensive about riding it on the Total Timber Tour, given the deterioration of many other wooden coasters on the trip. It's great to report that the park has looked after their rides very well, and *Tremors* is as good as ever.

**Six Flags America**<sup>MD1</sup>  
(Upper Marlboro, Maryland)

**Roar**<sup>85</sup>, **Wild One**<sup>86</sup>



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**Six Flags Discovery Kingdom**<sup>CA1</sup>  
(Vallejo, California)

**Roar**<sup>87</sup>

**Six Flags Fiesta Texas**<sup>TX2</sup>  
(Upper Marlboro, Maryland)

**Rattler**<sup>88</sup> is an unbelievable ride for many reasons. It would have been great to have ridden it with the original first drop but, from what I read, the middle helix was slow even then. I must admit, this coaster brought tears of laughter around the helix section – it just seemed so slow and pointless.

**Six Flags Great Adventure**<sup>NJ1</sup>  
(Jackson, New Jersey)

I'm not a great fan of these pre-fabricated woodies. They ride like steel coasters, and I just can't get over that fact. Not that I have anything against steel coasters, but I just see *El Toro* as a sheep in wolf's clothing. I only managed one ride on *El Toro*<sup>89</sup> on my first visit, just able to get the lap bar somewhere in the folds of my stomach. The rest of the ride was so uncomfortable I was unable to pass judgment. So, for the return trip the next year, I lost nearly 3 stones (40lbs) specifically to enjoy the ride. Yes, it's a great coaster



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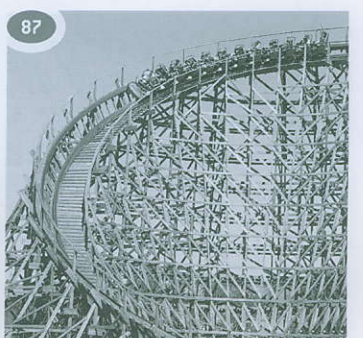
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and very enjoyable, but I still feel as though I'm cheating myself by rating it within my woodie list. If I could rate it along with steel, it would rank very high indeed.

If they demolished *Son of Beast* and *Grizzly*, California, **Rolling Thunder**<sup>90</sup> would be bottom of our coaster list. If they raced / duelled it, maybe the fun of the race would detract from the ride experience somewhat.

**Six Flags Great America**<sup>IL1</sup>

(Gurnee, Illinois)

**Viper**<sup>92</sup>

If you like big, slow helixes, then the **American Eagle**<sup>91</sup> is the coaster for you.

**Six Flags Kentucky Kingdom**<sup>KY1</sup>

(Louisville, Kentucky)

**Thunder Run**<sup>93</sup>, more than others, has its own good and bad seasons. It seems to be down to luck if it's running well the day you visit. When it is having a good day, though, it's brilliant.

**Twisted Twins**<sup>94</sup> is a contender for the worst wooden coaster in the States. It's utterly slow and pointless, and train restraints are not suitable for tight bends. Laterals = bruises.



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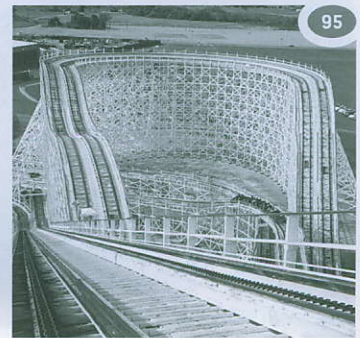
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**Six Flags Magic Mountain**<sup>CA2</sup>

(Valencia, California)

**Colossus**<sup>95</sup>

**Six Flags New England**<sup>CM1</sup>

(Agawam, Massachusetts)

**Cyclone**<sup>96</sup>, **Thunderbolt**<sup>97</sup>

**Six Flags Over Georgia**<sup>GA2</sup>

(Austell, Georgia)

**Great American Scream Machine**<sup>99</sup>

The **Georgia Cyclone**<sup>98</sup> is riddled with trim brakes, removing any possibility of enjoyment or airtime. I would love to have ridden it in its original incarnation.

**Six Flags Over Texas**<sup>TX1</sup>

(Arlington, Texas)

**Judge Roy Scream**<sup>100</sup>

We've both visited the park before, Ian twice and Adrian three times. On the first visit in 1995 the **Texas Giant**<sup>101</sup> was very re-rideable. In 2003, we rode the *Giant* at closing after a storm, and it was flying and very re-rideable. Well, in 2008 it was in very bad repair. A quick look at how dirty the trains were gave some clue to the lack of maintenance the ride is currently experiencing. This coaster has good and bad seasons, but the pain on the riders' faces and lack of smiles when returning to the station is quite sad for what was once the world's top coaster.

**Six Flags St. Louis**<sup>MO2</sup>

(Eureka, Missouri)

**Scream'n' Eagle**<sup>104</sup>

I can't stand the **Boss**<sup>102</sup> and seem to be quite a lone voice in saying so. Every circuit I seem to be getting a good kicking in the middle of my

lower back from start to finish. Holding myself away from the seat makes it possible to enjoy the first drop and continue the circuit.

**Evel Knievel**<sup>103</sup> was number 3 "to do" on the Total Timber Tour. The ride is a power run from start to finish with no straight bits apart from the final brake run. Very enjoyable, fun and re-rideable. Like all the woodies at this park, only one negative observation: more oil required. Repeat riding was offered on many occasions where there was no line – this is becoming more common amongst Six Flags parks, although it does vary for each ride. A special mention to ride-dispatcher Josh and his enthusiasm – all parks should have one!

**Stricker's Grove**<sup>OH2</sup>

(Ross, Ohio)

**Teddy Bear**<sup>105</sup>, **Tornado**<sup>106</sup>

**Timber Falls Adventure Park**<sup>WI1</sup>

(Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin)

This year, we had planned to stay here an hour or so and have a non-stop ride session, but the park had different ideas. They have limited their "unlimited ride pass" to five rides! **Avalanche**<sup>107</sup> is very underrated and does not get much coverage, which is a shame. It's a very thrilling, compact and – more importantly – fun coaster. A ride on the "all left turns" *Avalanche* winds you up so much that all you want to do is turn right when driving away from the Dells!

**Valleyfair**<sup>MN1</sup>

(Shakopee, Minnesota)

Excessive seat padding and trim brakes seem to have dampened

my first memories of riding **High Roller**<sup>108</sup> many years ago, which was a real shame.

Number 5 'to do' on the Total Timber Tour, **Renegade**<sup>109</sup> is typical of a GCII: a unique twisting first drop, speed throughout and the signature GCII turns and crossovers. This is the first GCII we tried riding "Rodeo" style, and throwing yourself into the corners transforms the experience, though not recommended if you have any apprehension about riding coasters.

**Waldameer**<sup>PA1</sup>

(Erie, Pennsylvania)

**Comet**<sup>110</sup>

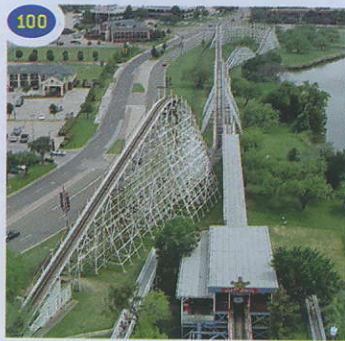
The number 2 on the "to do" list for the Total Timber Tour was the **Ravine Flyer II**<sup>111</sup>, which was just amazing – totally out of control



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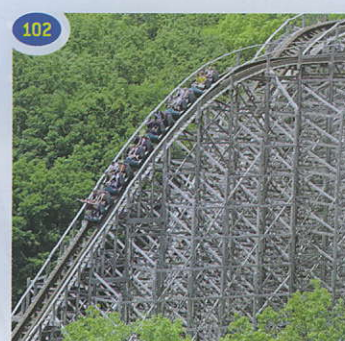
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raw power from start to finish. It's always very special riding a new wooden coaster in its first season, before the ravages of bedding in and maintenance take their toll, but we think this coaster is so close to the park's roots that they won't be able to help themselves in keeping it running in tip-top condition. This is going to re-write a lot of enthusiasts' Top 5 lists this year and, we're told, is having the desired impact on park visitor numbers. We would like to have stayed past 5pm to have ridden it in the dark, but now have the perfect excuse to return in the near future.

**Waterville USA<sup>AL2</sup>**  
(Gulf Shores, Alabama)

**Cannonball Run<sup>112</sup>** – the one that got away.



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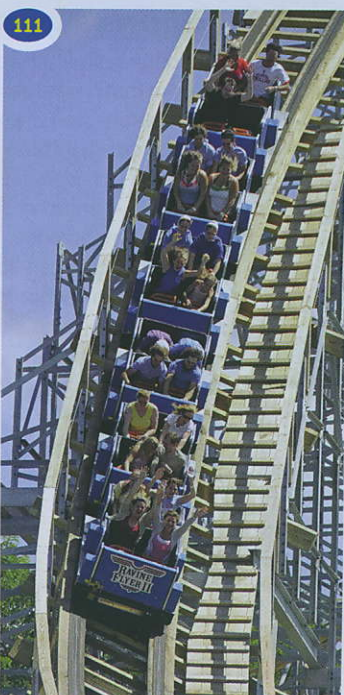
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**Wild Adventures<sup>GA3</sup>**  
(Valdosta, Georgia)

**Cheetah<sup>113</sup>**

**Wild Waves Theme Park<sup>WA1</sup>**  
(Federal Way, Washington)

**Timberhawk: Ride of Prey<sup>114</sup>** seems to have been designed with very few drops. Unique, yes. Thrilling, no.



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**Worlds of Fun<sup>MO1</sup>**  
(Kansas City, Missouri)

I first rode **Timber Wolf<sup>115</sup>** in 2005, with a single lap-bar and seat belt, and it quickly became my number 2 coaster anywhere, wood or steel. Returning after eight years, I sadly found that it had turned into a once-only ride. Such a shame for what was once such an incredible and fun coaster.



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