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RC! 130

# ROLLERCOASTER!





# ACE CENTRAL europe



PART TWO



BY DAVID DU MEZ

**BOOMERANG**  
Freizeit-Land Geiselwind



ollowing an incredible first week of the ACE Central Europe journey, tour participants converged at the Steinberger Airport Hotel Frankfurt to begin week two. We said “Auf Wiedersehen” to 28 people who had participated in the previous week’s fun who were now on their way to more European adventures or on their way back home. We also said “Guten Tag” to three people who had just joined us for the upcoming week. With a smaller group than the first week — 102 ACEers — the coaches were consolidated from three to two with Ray Topscher and Dave Altman serving as bus captains.



WILD MAUS



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY

After the typical lavish hotel breakfast buffet, the coaches were packed and attendees set out for the first destination of the new week. Urban traffic, sometimes bumper to bumper, had transitioned to a rolling landscape blanketed with vineyards, fields and small villages by the time of arrival at Freizeit-Land Geiselwind. Upon disembarking from the coaches, the heat was felt immediately. This was the hottest day yet of the tour — with more to come — as the summer of 2013 ended up being the hottest one in 20 years in Germany.

The group was greeted at the entrance by park management, who handed each person a lanyard connected to a small toucan figure in Tyrolean gear giving not a wing tip up, but a thumbs up — rather appropriate for a park that began as a bird park. Because of earlier traffic, about

Airborne on a Nautic Jet.



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY

PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC



PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC

DREHGONDELBAHN



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



one-and-a-half hours were available to explore this park before leaving to visit another park later in the day. This short amount of time was a challenge, but at least the park was not terribly large, and the heat had diminished the crowds.

Management graciously closed the line to *Boomerang* for a mini-ERT, which aided in our experiencing more of the park. This production model coaster was surprisingly comfortable, even with the over-the-shoulder harnesses. Many then headed to the *Drehgondelbahn*, the Zierer junior spinning coaster with six, two-passenger cars. The train ran through a tunnel and over a small pond during its three circuits.

Others went to the Maurer Söhne *Wilde Maus* and the Mack Blauer Enzian, a powered train.

Other highlights of this traditional park included a log flume, drop tower, observation tower, dual Nautic Jets — similar to what had been seen at Skyline Park the week before — and the new Geiserfahrt zur Holle triple-level dark ride. Maybe most popular of all was drinking beverages to ward off dehydration. Maybe there was not quite enough time to explore this park, but it was time to head to the next one.

The coaches continued through more rolling hills, passing by farmland, an occasional castle, windmill farms, solar farms with their acres of

panels in the fields, and through villages dominated by church steeples. The coaches crossed into Saxony, which marked the border of the former East Germany. On the left side of the highway stood an abandoned guard tower; the coaches freely passed through this once unfriendly border checkpoint.

The group arrived at Freizeitpark Plohn, where they had free rein of the park until after dark on this Saturday. This park was open late on Saturdays in July and August to celebrate summer. (Most parks in this part of the world close early, and before dark.) Freizeitpark Plohn, which began as a fairy tale park and quickly expanded, was large and sprawling, with forested space between areas and attractions connected by gravel walkways. This quirky park seemed to grow on attendees as the day turned into evening.

Before doing anything else, ACEers headed to the coasters. It looked as though most participants would not get to ride the SBF Visa Wacky Worm coaster named *Raupe*: after three trips with ACE members onboard, the lift chain broke. Many disappointed attendees thought the ride would not operate the rest of the day, as sometimes happens in other parks. However, thanks to competent mechanics, the chain was fixed and anyone who wanted to was able to get a ride on this small coaster.

The prized coaster here is the wooden *El Toro* that intertwined with the Wildwasserbahn flume. Built by Great Coasters International Inc. (GCI) in 2009, the coaster is structurally beautiful, with a fairly low profile of gorgeous curves and two tunnels that travel under the flume. The ride was pretty smooth, with some minor airtime moments. The remaining coasters, both built by Zierer, were a family coaster, *Plohseidon*, which travels mostly over water; and *Silver Mine*, a Flitzer that some may have ridden in the past when it was at Adventureland in Altoona, Iowa, or in two other European parks before landing here.

Freizeitpark Plohn contained several themed areas, with many appealing to the younger set. There was an enchanted forest filled with dioramas of fairy tales and kiddie rides, along with a dinosaur area around a forested waterway. More kiddie rides with old-fashioned and rural themes were located near a petting farm. The Action-Attraktionen area held more appeal for the older crowd as well as more attractions for the kids. It was here that many found an irresistible treehouse-themed area loaded with classic fun-house elements, along with the lengthy log flume and the two bigger coasters.

Adjacent to *El Toro* and this area is Westernstadt, or Western Town, that replicates the American West. Most of the park's entertainment took place in this central area throughout the day. A wacky, umbrella-carrying stilt walker interacted with the sparse afternoon crowds amid variety shows on an outdoor stage. Strangely, a large afternoon bonfire was set ablaze under the hot sun in the center of a courtyard lined with food and beverage outlets and tables. As the evening continued and the heat diminished somewhat, heavier crowds began to

**EL TORO**  
Freizeitpark Plohn

PHOTO BY A. TEIMER

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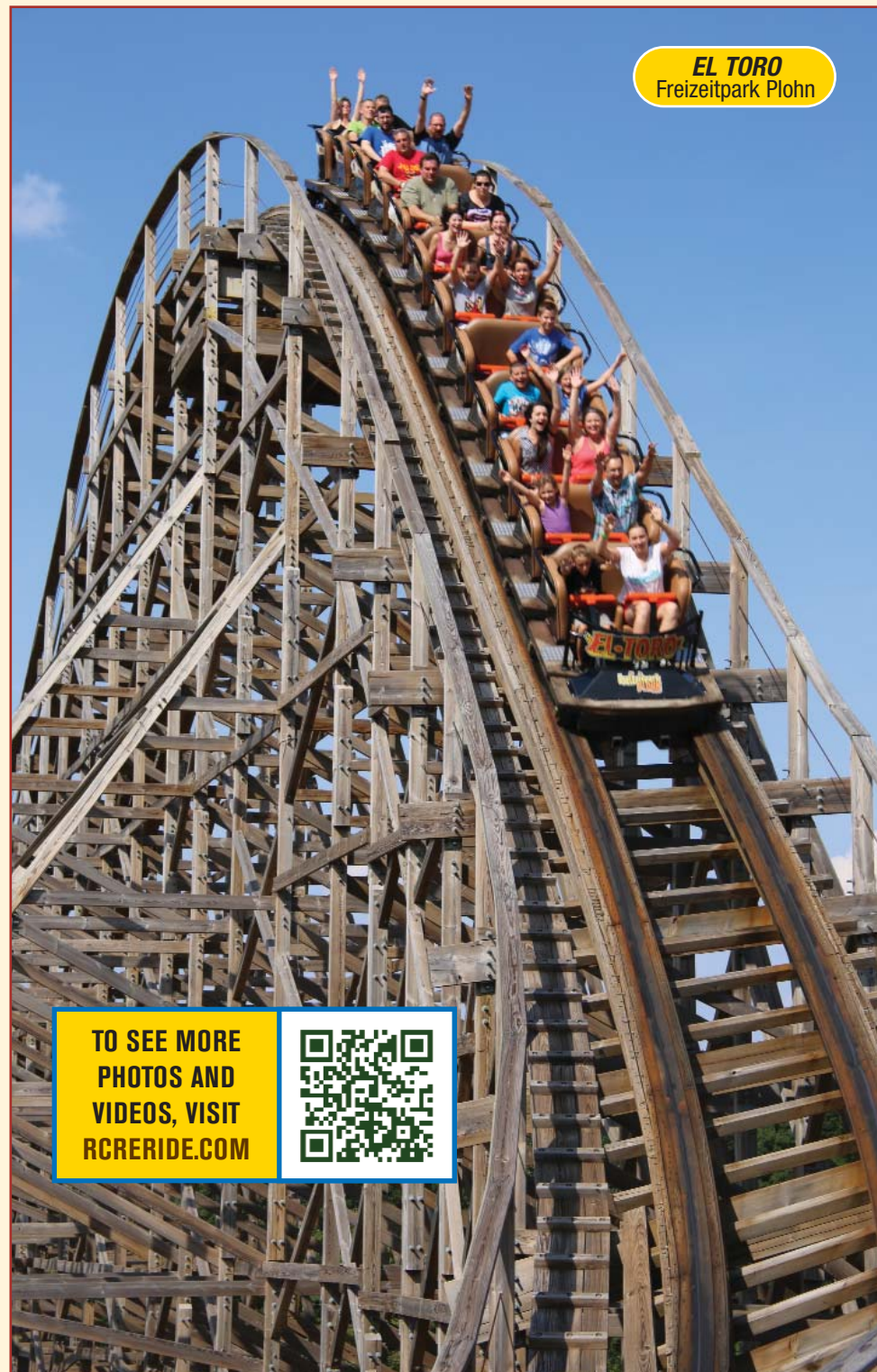




PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



PHOTO BY JOEL BREWTON



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PHOTO BY ETHAN SECTON

PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC



pour into the park and that bonfire became embers. Candles were lit and placed on the tables, and lights that festooned many of the park's walkways came on. The *El Toro* ride platform turned into a pseudo-disco with a mirrored ball, spinning lights, pulsating music and bigger crowds. Earlier the coaster was a walk-on, but now there were four- and five-train waits. Happy trainloads of riders were dispatched from, and welcomed back into, this festive atmosphere.

Then things became comically weird. A band that had played earlier in the afternoon started performing again on horns containing bells. These are called Schalmei horns and are nearly exclusive to the former East Germany. Schalmei bands continue to thrive in smaller towns in this region; this particular band was accompanied by drums and sounded like a full marching band. ACEers started to notice many parents with their smaller children congregating in this area, carrying odd items that looked like fat sparklers, which turned out to be torches. A couple were lit, then dozens were lit from those two. A procession formed behind the park's elf mascot, accompanied by the band. Parents and young children carried these torches as the procession wound its way from the Western Town plaza and along the walkways throughout the sprawling and forested park. It was explained that this was not any ritual or tradition — it was just done for fun. It was fun! It was quirky and odd, too. While the procession continued, ACEers needed to board the coaches for the hotel, missing out on a fireworks and laser display that was to take place.

After sleeping in a hotel with no air conditioning and opened windows with no screens, the refreshed — or maybe groggy — bunch boarded the coaches for a fairly short trip to Belantis. The coaches pulled into the parking lot, with the Castle Belantis ahead serving as the park's entrance. The group passed through the blue castle with beige accents to experience this rather new theme park, which opened in 2003. If one looks at the park map, it becomes clear that the layout resembles the world, featuring a large Mediterranean Sea in the middle. A visit here is like taking a mini trip around the world, although the themed areas are not named for continents or countries.

After passing through the castle, it appeared that we had entered northern Africa. Most of the group made a beeline for the headline coaster, *Huracan*, a custom Gerstlauer Euro-Fighter. Located in the Empire of the Sun Temple section, the route was across a bridge over a very narrow Atlantic Ocean to South America. The bright red coaster had a vertical lift and steeper-than-vertical first drop, followed by four inversions, which caused some head banging into the restraints. This coaster was the only attraction in this area. There was no way to get to North America by heading up through Central America. Instead, we had to go back to Africa and cross the Rock of Gibraltar into Spain, or the themed area known here as the Coast of the Discoverers, which contained attractions with pirate and ship themes accompanied by flamenco background music. To continue to North America, we headed through



continental Europe, across a bridge to the British Isles, and then across another bridge into the North American Prairies section. An Apache village with teepees, a petting zoo, canoes, a Huss Frisbee and adventure trails were located here.

Back in the United Kingdom, the Island of the Knights-themed section contained a haunted swing and the park's second coaster, *Drachenritt*. This Gerstlauer bobsled coaster ran its switchbacks through a castle, and its swooping curves and three successive airtime-filled hills outside the castle's walls. Heading back onto the European continent, or Land of the Count, there was a large castle-like restaurant complex, along with car rides and a slide. Heading down into Italy and Greece — the Beach of the Gods section — there was a serene boat ride following the journey of Odysseus; a volcano with a chair-based zip line and an unusual aerial ride called *Gotterflug*, or God's Flight, were also located here. Riders in this Gerstlauer Sky Flyer sat in airplane-like vehicles, with legs dangling and hands on controls to move the wings, allowing barrel rolls or upside-down flight. All this activity occurred as the ride rose and rotated around its central post. It was interactive and pretty wild. Moving down through the Middle East and into Egypt was Valley of the Pharaohs, with a children's play area and the landmark pyramid. A flume ride with a raft-themed vessel traveled inside the building to the elevator lift and then dropped out of the pyramid into a whirlpool below. From here it was a direct walk back to Castle Belantis and the park exit.

Belantis was a whirlwind tour of the world. As this park continues to grow, it is hoped that there will be exciting opportunities to expand the world, with a more thrilling tour that includes roller coasters.

Once back on the coaches, for the longest ride of the entire trip, the countryside flattened out and became mostly wheat fields and an occasional wind farm. It was on the coaches that tour participants fell asleep, caught up on reading, updated their track records and chatted with fellow ACEers. There was a lot of fun and laughter on those long coach rides. It is on trips like this that friendships are formed or cultivated — possibly becoming lifetime friendships.

At some point, the caravan slipped out of what had been the former East Germany, catching some misty rain and light showers, and approached Lubeck in northern Germany. Once checked in and settled, some hearty ACEers ventured out in the evening to see some sights in this medieval city. There were many beautiful buildings to see, including the Holsten Gate. That gate, an iconic symbol of Lubeck, would look familiar the following day.

A short drive from the hotel transported ACEers to a replica of the Holsten Gate and the entrance to Hansa Park. Upon arrival, each member was given a custom-made pin that said, "Extra-Ride-Time, Fluch von Novgorod, 29.07.2013" and a black hat with the coaster's name on the front and the park's name stitched on the back. ACE was given a warm welcome by Patrick Rundshagen, the assistant general manager, who gave us information about the park. He

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKIEY



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Hansa Park's new entrance is a replica of Lubeck's Holsten Gate

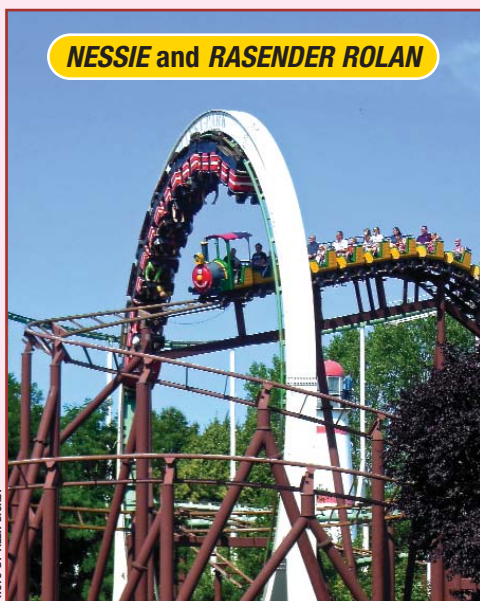


PHOTO BY JOEL BREWTON

FLUCH VON NOVGOROD



NESSIE and RASENDER ROLAN



CRAZY MINE



drew a hefty round of applause when speaking about the park's oldest coaster, the 1980 single-inversion Schwarzkopf *Nessie Superrollercoaster* that still entertains guests, still using only lap bar restraints.

The group then filed into the park and past a floral clock, reminding us what day it was; days and dates become a blur on an intense coaster tour such as this. The group walked a short distance to get on the Gerstlauer *Fluch von Novgorod*, translated as *Curse of Novgorod*, for ERT. Named for the Russian city, the combination dark ride and roller coaster began with a dark queue leading to the platform, where cars with two rows of four riders are dispatched into a couple of scenes, with stops at each one telling the ride's story. The car went over a small drop and was launched outside into a convoluted tangle of hills and inversions, returning inside to negotiate the Euro-Fighter-styled vertical lift and dropping into more twisted and inverted track. After exiting the vehicle, the story continued with an indoor maze, which was not experienced during ERT because a shortcut through the single-rider line was used for re-rides.

Now turned loose in the park, which was surrounded by wheat fields on one side and cottages and a few high-rise apartments along the shore of the Baltic Sea on the other side, ACEers discovered an assortment of rides, attractions and shows in themed areas nestled among beautiful landscaping and colorful flowers. Other coasters included *Rasender Roland*, a twisting family coaster that threaded the loop of *Nessie* in a train themed as a locomotive. *Crazy Mine*, a Maurer Söhne Wild Mouse, scurried around a mine in which riders are serenaded by an animatronic band of miners singing traditional western American songs in English. This piece of Americana was in the Adventureland section, with its trails, giant bouncing pillows and teepees surrounding a fire pit. Abutting this was *Bonanza City*, which contained American pioneer craft demonstrations and exhibits, along with panning for gold.

The Viking-themed area is home to the Gerstlauer family coaster *Die Schlange von Midgard*, or *Midgard Serpent*. The train, themed as a Viking ship, sailed mostly over water, encountering a dragon-like snake. A Mexico section, with mission-styled buildings, had a unique pendulum ride themed as a bell, as well as an interesting show that included acrobats and a remote-controlled stunt plane. There was also a colorful combination raft and flume ride called *Rio Dorado*.

The group met for lunch in a reserved section of a self-service restaurant. At each place setting was a specially printed and dated menu with the bill of fare: an elegantly plated presentation of medallions of pork with Bearnaise sauce, green bean bundles wrapped in bacon, potatoes Holstein and a choice of beverage. After this wonderfully tasty lunch, the group was free to roam the lovely and beautifully landscaped park, formerly a Legoland. As this park evolved, larger rides had been added. Most contained storylines, detailed, themed architecture and décor, which erased traces of this park's beginnings. Before

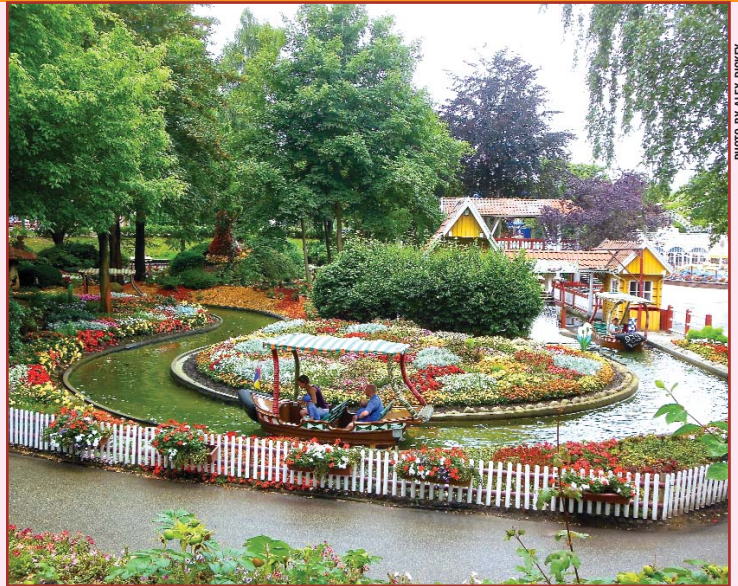
HANSA PARK

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



## DIE SCHLANGE VON MIDGARD



HANS A

PARK



This flat ride is extensively themed considering that it only carries six passengers.

the 4 p.m. deadline to board the coaches, ACEers may have seen the fun parade that navigated the park; enjoyed some shows; taken some of the more serene rides, including the miniature train and boat rides; or cooled off on the assorted water rides.

Back on the coaches, attendees set out for Hamburg, motoring along the city's harbor and past the town hall. This city of mostly modern buildings was filled with bicyclists, pedestrians and slow-going rush hour traffic. We passed by the grounds of the Hamburger Sommerdom on the way to our hotel, whose rooms had been reserved two years in advance to ensure we would be near the giant fair. In a short time after settling into rooms, many ACEers — if they still had the energy — set out for the fair by walking through the city streets, or combining walking and taking the U-Bahn subway.

Hamburger Dom is the largest fair in northern Germany and has been running for centuries. There are actually three fairs that run each year — in the winter, spring and summer. Under threat of dark and sinister clouds, but fortunately no rain, ACEers found a flashy midway packed with food, merchandise and game stands, along

with a spectacular assortment of rides. Flashing lights were used to outshine competitors for customers' euros, with most rides requiring three to five euros apiece.

The headline attraction was *Hollenblitz*, a large enclosed coaster with a mine-themed façade. A train of free-spinning cars made a brief appearance outdoors during a large swooping drop, returning inside to continue on this crazy journey that assaulted the senses. Indoors, the ride ran through the dark with loud music, lasers and some light-covered cones reminiscent of Christmas trees. It was very fun and very well done. *XXL Wilde Maus* is an overgrown mouse-style ride that was fast and fun. The unique queue leading up to the loading platform was a delight — funhouse stunts made this ride two attractions in one. The last coaster at the fair was *Kuddel der Hai*, a junior coaster with a shark-themed train. The operators of this ride seemed quite amused to see a bunch of adults packing this little ride. ACEers were amused, too, in sharing in this frivolity of riding small coasters to increase one's track record.

A large Ferris wheel dominated the skyline over a huge array of some classic, but mostly

new and strange — flat rides. The infamous Tagada was here as well, bouncing and spinning riders around. The fair was a funhouse and dark ride enthusiast's dream. The grounds were packed with large, multifloored offerings. Walk-up souvenir stands were interspersed with food vendors, ranging from snacks to more elaborate beer gardens. Hamburger Sommerdom was a festive end to a summer's day.

Morning arrived early for most; attendees grabbed some breakfast and checked out before boarding the coaches. The short drive took the group to Heide Park, where they entered the park through the Hotel Port Royal, heading to a half-hour ERT on the highly praised *Colossos Intamin* woodie. After more than a decade of service, the ride was still smooth, with an air-time-laden trip over the large out-and-back coaster. The group then proceeded to *Krake*, a floorless Bolliger & Mabillard (B&M) dive coaster, for another half hour of ERT. The train paused at the top before plunging into the stern of a ship that had been entangled with and destroyed by a krake (octopus). There was also a splashdown with giant rooster tails and an Immelmann element to contend with. During this ERT there



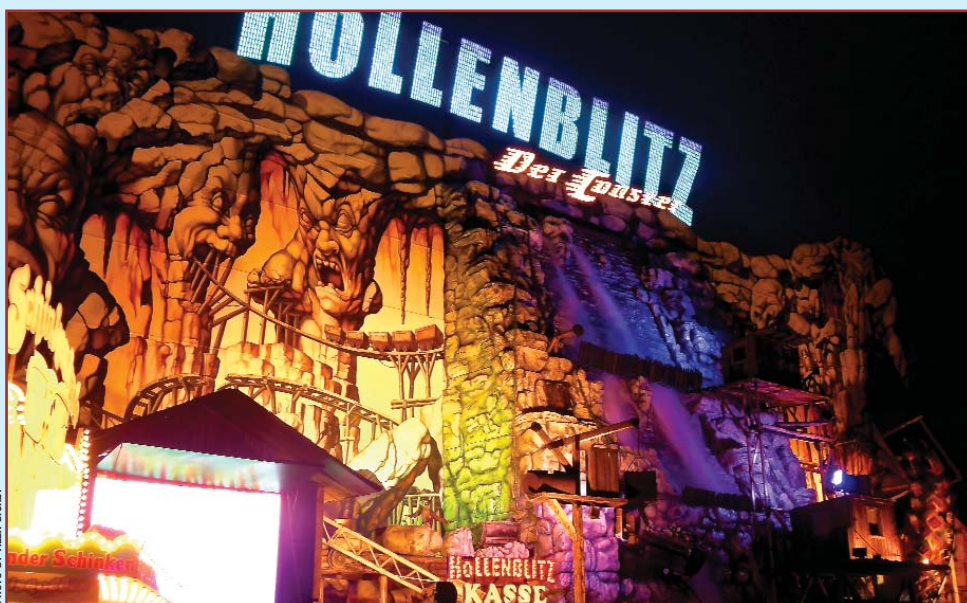
**WILD MAUS**  
Hamburger Sommerdom



ACEers found yet another Tagada ready to bounce riders into some new bruises.



**HOLLENBLITZ**  
Der Coaster



**COLOSSOS**  
Heide Park



was a short, light drizzle but then the rain held off for the day. The partly cloudy weather helped keep the day a bit cooler than what had been experienced over the course of the trip. *Krake* anchors the pirate- and nautical-themed area of the park, which contained several boat-themed flat rides, plus a couple of floating and serene boat tours.

ACEers were then let loose to enjoy the park. Close to *Krake* was the Transylvanian area, with spooky and fear-inducing themes and rides. Along with a drop tower for those brave enough to endure it — and a smaller version for children — there are three roller coasters. The *Schweizer Bobbahn*, a lengthy Mack bobsled, had four trains running out of a Swiss-themed building, with a lift at the beginning and the end of the ride. Two Vekoma coasters also made runs through this area. *Limit* is a standard SLC, and *Big Loop* a multi-element ride with two loops and two corkscrews. It is the oldest coaster in the park. From *Big Loop* ACEers could see a construction site with cranes hovering over footings and some coaster track. What was it going to be? [Editor's note: It is now known that tour attendees saw the beginnings of the park's new B&M wing coaster.]

The Land of the Forgotten section celebrated lost cultures and civilizations, including a Mayan-themed area containing a large group of flat rides. *Colossos* dominated the area with its size; inside its structure was a partially buried Statue of Liberty that used to stand guard in her entirety in the middle of the park's central lake. Seeing this, it became rather clear that, as the park evolved, some of the themes changed and new ones overlaid existing ones, making the theming less cohesive.

Also in this land is *Desert Race*, an Intamin Accelerator launched coaster that shot trains out over a desert environment and through a speedy noninverting course. The park had become quite busy and this coaster had one of the longer waits. Next to this area was the Wild Wild West, with a western American theme but also some of its former alpine-themed attractions and timbered buildings. In yet another town replicating the American frontier was the *Indy-Blitz* Zierer



# ACE CENTRAL europe

► Family Coaster. No teepees are located here, but strains of “Home on the Range” could be heard. In this section was the powered coaster Grottenblitz, along with a sprawling raft ride and a log flume.

Lunch, served inside the Capitol building, featured an all-you-can-eat pizza and pasta buffet. There was definitely a run on the drink dispensing machines. If it had been any hotter, there might have been a crisis in Heide Park because attendees would have drained the machines.

As the day wore on, the weather cleared up and became warmer. The crowds grew very large, making it difficult to see the park in its entirety and ride its roller coasters. Everyone did their best.



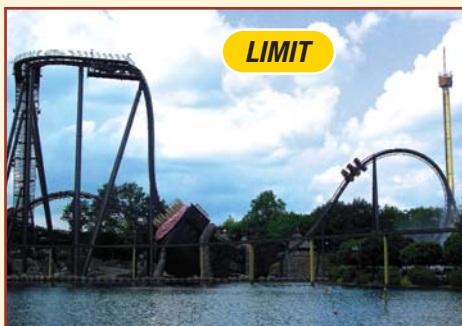
COLOSSOS

PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC



BIG LOOP

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



LIMIT

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



SCHWEIZER BOBBAHN

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



INDY-BLITZ



DESERT RACE

PHOTO BY ETHAN SEXTON



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PHOTO BY DANIEL TIEMEER



PHOTO BY JEL BREWTON



**BLACK MAMBA**  
Phantasialand


PHOTO BY JOEL BREWSTER

Back on the coaches for a fairly long ride, the group passed over the Rhine River and through Cologne (Köln), where the twin spires of the famed cathedral could be seen, standing guard over the low-profile city skyline. The coaches arrived at the Ling Bao Hotel next to Phantasialand. This highly Asian-themed hotel had a beautiful courtyard that actually became part of the park's China Town section during the day. A stage was set up in the center and was surrounded by lanterns hanging from trees and pagodas and above food stations serving Asian fare. Asia Nights, a show of song, rhythmic gymnastics and acrobats, was performed until a misty rain shortened the performance. Many went off for a good night's sleep in comfortable and nicely appointed rooms with effective air conditioning.

Refreshed, ACE members checked out of the hotel and stored bags next to the lobby's front desk. The luggage was packed wall to wall and stacked two or more pieces high, leaving no room to walk. After this exercise, the excited band of coaster junkies walked through a portion of the park to reach *Black Mamba*, site of ERT for the next hour. This B&M inverted coaster, which sends riders through jungle-themed canyons, delighted ACEers. Especially nice was staying on the train unless one wished to wait for the front seat. *Black Mamba* ran fairly close to the African-themed Hotel Matamba; a few of the hotel's guests peered out of their windows at us on this morning ride. One young boy, in particular, looked at us longingly with an expression that seemed to say, "I want to ride with all you cool people, too." The park had switched this coaster to ERT from the *Colorado Adventure* mine train — a brilliant decision.

Following this session, the group walked into the park, to the enclosed Wuz Town, which held several smaller attractions. Of most interest to attendees, and the only attraction open, were the dueling and spinning *Winjas Fear & Force* coasters. These Maurer Söhne spinning coasters are enclosed but made an appearance on helixes wrapping around and above the indoor walkway and the children's ride Tittle Tattle Tree. Each side (*Fear* and *Force*) contains unique track elements, some of which are extremely rare — and amazingly fun! After numerous rides during ERT on these three coasters, the tour participants had definitely put the E back into ACE.

The park was now fully open and there was much to see. Near Wuz Town was the enclosed *Temple of the Night Hawk*, built by Vekoma. It has three lifts and is very smooth. The train ran almost completely in the dark and, according to the park, is the world's longest enclosed roller coaster. Moving out of the Fantasy area of the park, which was whimsically themed and geared more toward children, the Berlin area came next, with an Old World charm to the architecture and rides. A highlight here was the *Maus au Choclat* interactive dark ride, during which riders shot globs of mousse from pastry bags at targets to rack up points.

The park became very crowded and the temperatures seemed to be rising, so lunch was a welcome break at the Unter den Linden buffet



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



PHOTO BY A. TEIMER

**TEMPLE OF THE NIGHTHAWK**


PHOTO BY A. TEIMER



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY

**WINJAS**


PHOTO BY A. TEIMER

PHOTO BY KETH KASTELIC


**Das Verrückte Hotel Tartuff**  
was a new funhouse attraction.

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



above the “main street” of Berlin. Negotiating the park was a challenge. The crowds had become large and filled some of the narrow walkways in this fairly compact park, where themed areas are close to each other. Staying out of the heat by watching some indoor shows was a good strategy. Phanstasialand had some very good shows that included performing ice skaters, acrobats, break dancers, stilt walkers, magicians, trampoline gymnasts and BMX riders.

The Mexico area is home to the *Colorado Adventure* mine train coaster, another Vekoma creation. It is also known as the Michael Jackson Thrill Ride, as he had officially opened the coaster back in 1996. The coaster has three lifts and ran a bit wild; while traveling through gorges in this highly themed ride, lateral forces pushed riders into their seatmates. Unfortunately, the new-for-2013 log flume was nowhere near completion, which was sad, because a water ride would have been much appreciated. There was, however, *River Quest*, the raft ride in the park’s Mystery section, which was well done and helped cool off riders. Another highlight in this area was the *Mystery Castle*, an enclosed drop ride with the vehicles plummeting along the walls of the very tall castle tower, as opposed to dropping down a central tower.

The time had come to free up space in the luggage room using a brigade to move pieces down a line and onto the coaches and once again head to another destination.

Amber fields gave way to green fields of corn and other crops as the land became flatter. The language on the traffic signs had also changed — ACE was now in the Netherlands. The NH Conference Center Koningshof, was a bizarre hotel of postage-stamp-sized rooms with no air conditioning, in an immense building with many long corridors and many wings. Interestingly, this hotel had once been a convent; some remnants of its former use, such as a chapel, were in evidence. The night was warm and there were no screens over the windows, so this night was a bit of a challenge.

After a short coach trip to Efteling, ERT was shared with the hotel guests. A little mix-up about which gate ACE was supposed to wait by caused everyone to retrace their steps to another gate. Upon arrival at the two coasters, *Joris en de Draak* and *Vliegende Hollander*, the rides had just started. Most were drawn to the GCI wooden racing coaster, which translates to *George and the Dragon*. Riders had a choice of riding on the water or vurr (fire) trains. Once boarded, the two trains took off to the cheers of knights. The trains raced along the water and included a splash and an encounter with a dragon’s head. On return, the winning train came back to the sound of cheers while the losing train came back to boos. One ride attendant, on the return of the losing train, declared, “Very good, second place!” Nothing like staying positive. That’s what this day would require, as it was becoming hot and sticky and crowds were filling up the park.

The *Vliegende Hollander*, or *Flying Dutchman*, built by Kumbak, is a water coaster with an elaborate and dark Middle Ages castle-like queue

that leads to the loading platform, where riders board boat-shaped cars. This wonderful attraction begins as an effectively mysterious dark ride. The boat/cars are sent over enclosed coaster track and then drop outside down a curved hill. Following more track and a final speed bump, the vehicles splash into the lake. Leaving the track, the vehicles now operate as boats as it heads back to the station.

ACEers went about exploring this huge park that is divided into four realms. Long walkways connect many attractions, with stunning landscaping and plantings throughout. The ERT coasters were in the “rough” realm, including the double-looping, double-corkscrew, Vekoma-built *Python*. This area definitely had the most rides for daredevils. The “travel” realm had attractions offering various transportation modes



PHOTO BY KETH KASTELIC

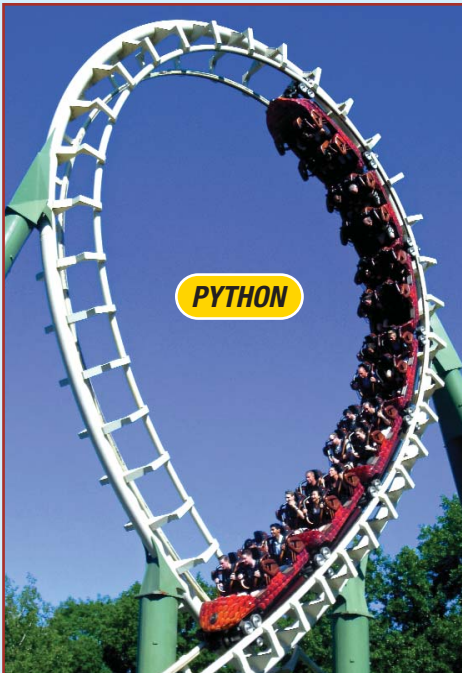


PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY





to various lands. The boat trip, surrounded by lush green landscape, serenely plied one of the park's many waterways. The flying Thai Temple observation tower — one of only three Intamin Flying Islands ever built — looked over the park's beauty, and the Carnival Festival dark ride celebrated different countries. Also located here was *Vogel Rok*, another Vekoma-built ride. The trains, featuring onboard audio, traveled indoors, where riders encounter several rocs (mythical Persian birds of prey). Lunch also took place in this realm, above the Globetrotter Restaurant. A buffet of traditional Dutch foods was set up for this dehydrated bunch of coaster enthusiasts who taxed the energy of the servers trying to keep up with the pitchers of juice and water.

In the sizzling heat of the day, the group continued to explore the park. The "fairy" realm, the largest in the park, held the oldest and most whimsical attractions. Fairy tales came to life in a multitude of displays, and a monorail glides past the funny folk and through their village. This area held the park's museum and several historic carousels, including a rare French salon carousel enclosed in its own pavilion with a most beautiful façade. Another gem of a dark ride located here was *Droomvlucht* (Dreamflight), which took riders in a suspended vehicle into a dream world of fairy-like creatures, trolls and elves. A fast helix curved down through a forest, where troll-like creatures swam and frolicked in swimming holes. It was child-like and wonderful.

The fourth realm of the park is the "other" realm where another coaster is located — the Intamin-built bobsled *Bob*, also referred to as *Bobbahn*. There was a dark ride themed to 1001 Nights, and a very popular — on this day — raft ride called *Pirana*, featuring a pre-Columbian theme.

Another spectacular park visit was completed. The weary-from-the-heat group returned to the coaches and back to the former convent and non-air-conditioned hotel.





What day was this now? Wow, it was already Friday; the tour was nearing its official end in just a couple of days. This day, which reportedly set an all-time high temperature in the Netherlands, was already starting out hot and would be brutal. Brutal perhaps, but fun too. The coaches pulled up to Toverland where the group was met by a member of the board, who walked the group right to the *Troy* outdoor area for one hour of ERT. *Troy*, which looked marvelous, is packed with graceful GCII-style curves and provided a ride that never let up in speed or action, with many directional changes and a few moments of air. During ERT, the park treated the group to coffee, tea and gigantic chocolate and cranberry muffins. In front of the well-received *Troy* was a Trojan horse with a loose rope just waiting for someone to pick it up and pose for a great photo. Once ERT ended, the park was open for ACEers to enjoy.

The other outdoor area, and brand new in 2013, was Magische Vallei or Magical Valley. To get there visitors had to walk under the Vekoma *Booster Bike*. This green-tracked coaster with a train of motorcycle-type vehicles is a lot of fun, with some airtime-producing hills along its out-and-back layout. Magical Valley features a popular raft ride, *Djengu River*, and quite a few water features for kids to play in and keep cool. Tucked away in the back corner is another coaster, *Dwervelwind*, a Mack spinning model with onboard audio. This four-car train with back-to-back seating for four provided a fun ride.

Magic Forest is located mostly inside a large, square building, where ACEers found the loading area for the Backstroke log flume, which quickly sent riders outside and into a highly desired splashdown. Another ride that begins inside and swiftly sends riders outside is the *Woudracer*, a powered Bob-kart ride. Another fun indoor attraction is *Villa Fiasco*, a walk-through funhouse with many classic stunts. The Magic Forest building was also the location for a lunch of rather large personal pizzas and much-needed drinks. If time allowed, there were all kinds of intriguing playground equipment that ACEers were welcome to try. Such equipment would not be found in American parks, making it even more intriguing.

The last building, Land van Toos, where Toverland began, had one more coaster to enjoy — *Boomerang*. No, this is not the Vekoma model as its name suggests; it is a Vekoma-built full-circuit junior coaster with a train theme and a constantly ringing bell on the front engine-themed car. There are no inversions. This building also houses several kiddie rides, a Wave Swinger, another restaurant and a souvenir shop. The visit at Toverland was over, but there was more ahead for the group.

The coaches were boarded again and the band of intrepid travelers crossed back into Germany, heading into a more industrial area with a concentration of cities, resulting in heavy traffic. The buses pulled into the city of Herne to visit Cranger Kirmes, the second largest fair in Germany. It was late afternoon, so the flashing lights were not as noticeable — or as alluring — as a nighttime visit. But the sights, sounds and



PHOTO BY W. TEMMER



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



PHOTO BY JOEL BRENTON

**TROY**  
Toverland



PHOTO BY TIM BALDWIN



PHOTO BY JEFFREY SEIFERT



PHOTO BY JOEL BRENTON

**BOOSTER BIKE**



PHOTO BY W. TEMMER



**DWERVELWIND**

PHOTO BY TIM BALDWIN





PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY

OLYMPIA LOOPING  
Granger Kirmes

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY

smells of the midway drew patrons in to separate them from their euros. The big draw here for a group of coaster fanatics was the legendary *Olympia Looping*, the world's largest portable coaster and a Schwarzkopf masterpiece that has been thrilling fairgoers throughout Germany since 1989. It is hard to believe that it is a traveling coaster, with its five loops arranged and painted the colors of the Olympics symbol. A ride on this coaster set fairgoers back seven euros. One train was running but during busy times it can run up to five. Once seated in the car, an attendant for each seat pushes down the lap bar and the restraint over each rider's shoulders. The ride following a curved tire-driven lift was intense, with heavy G-forces through the loops — and throughout the ride.

Among all the flashy rides, game booths and food stands stood one more roller coaster, *Spinning Racer*. This one had single cars, with riders facing outside back-to-back. After the coasters, the biggest draw for many were the stands serving slush drinks. The incredible heat sapped energy and depleted fluids; because drinks were usually served without ice, these cold drinks really hit the spot. As with the other fair visit earlier in the week, a large array of funhouses and dark rides and another wacky Tagada were present. A huge beer tent was located on the grounds but was fairly empty this early in the day. Ride lines were also short and crowds were non-existent. So much could be accomplished within the fairly short two-hour visit! ACEers walked back to the coaches along city streets lined with merchandise vendors, appreciating the air-conditioned ride to the night's hotel.

The final day of the tour had arrived and participants were asked to wear their black trip T-shirts again. After a short drive, the group arrived at Movie Park Germany. The group was escorted into the park for a one-hour ERT on *Van Helsing's Factory*, an enclosed Gerstlauer bobsled coaster. Guests watched a pre-show in the dark queue. Once on the platform, boarding enthusiasts were told to hold on to handle grips on the lap restraints, which really was necessary. The ride, venturing out on a vampire hunt, had two lifts, intense switchbacks and a fog screen of vampire hunter Van Helsing that riders traveled through. For about the last 15 minutes of ERT, the lights were turned on so riders could anticipate the curves and switchbacks and see just what the ride actually did.



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



The park, which has gone through several incarnations and name changes over the years, was now open and ready for exploration. *Van Helsing's Factory*, located in the Streets of New York area, with an industrial and warehouse district look, did not quite feel like the Big Apple. Nearby was the Santa Monica Pier area, inspired by the real California pier's frequent use as a movie set. Except for a giant wheel and a replica of the famous Santa Monica Pier sign, it did not have the same vibe. This area is anchored by a standard Vekoma SLC named *MP-Express*. The Old West area contained the closed wooden *Bandit* and had some games, empty storefronts and a drop tower. The Hollywood Street Set was the park's "main street" entrance, containing mostly shops. In this section was a nice Shoot the Chute ride called Bermuda Triangle Alien Encounter; it ran indoors through a mountain range of three volcanic peaks, followed by an outdoor splashdown that was cool and refreshing on yet another hot day.

The part of the park that probably appealed most to this group of coaster enthusiasts was NickLand, along with the adjacent Ice Age and Mystery River attractions. Three coasters situated nearly abreast in NickLand are the Mack Wild Mouse, *Ghost Chasers*; the Vekoma junior coaster with rocket-shaped cars, *Backyardigans: Mission to Mars*; and the Vekoma suspended family coaster, *Jimmy Neutron's Atomic Flyer*. They are all painted in bright, kid-pleasing colors themed around Nickelodeon properties. The area also included a small flume and several kiddie and flat rides. Adjacent to this kid-friendly area is Ice Age Adventure, an indoor boat ride themed to the Ice Age films; and Mystery River, a rapids ride whose rafts sloshed through caves and gorges.

By the time lunch was served, the day had heated up, and the crowds had gotten larger. The last hurrah of the trip was the all-you-could-eat (for ACEers) buffet in Van Helsing's Club. The feast was the group's last activity, providing one last opportunity to spend time with fellow coaster enthusiasts and friends. There was a short amount of time after lunch to explore this movie-themed park, and then it was time to get back on the coaches for the last ride of the trip.

Back on board for a somewhat melancholy ride, ACEers analyzed what they had just experienced over the last week or two weeks, knowing that this amazing tour was coming to an end. Some spoke with friends while others fell asleep, zapped from the day's heat and the trip's early mornings and late nights.

But wait! There was one last surprise. About 40 minutes into the trip back to Frankfurt, a few observant ACE members noticed what looked like coaster track above the skyline ahead. In the industrial city of Duisburg there was what appeared to be coaster track with graceful turns and a loop on top of a hill. The coaches parked along the street near the bottom of the hill that held the Tiger and the Turtle Magic Mountain sculpture that opened in 2011. This is not just a piece of art to be admired; it could be walked on, too. Not too many of this bunch could pass up the chance, so ACEers scaled the hill using a few



**JIMMY NEUTRON'S ATOMIC FLYER**  
Moviepark Germany

PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



**VAN HELSING'S FACTORY**

PHOTO BY JOEL BREWTON



PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC



**MP EXPRESS**

PHOTO BY JOEL BREWTON



**GHOST CHASERS**

PHOTO BY TIM BALDWIN



**BACKYARDIGANS: MISSION TO MARS**

PHOTO BY TIM BALDWIN



## TIGER AND THE TURTLE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

PHOTO BY JOEL BREWTON



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC



PHOTO BY KEITH KASTELIC

different trails, most of them fairly homemade and a bit treacherous. Once on top of the hill, nearly 100 members of the group, along with a few other brave souls, walked along this amazing sculpture that swayed with the pedestrian traffic. Walkers could approach the loop from both sides at the bottom, but a fence on each side prevented anyone from walking beyond to dangle from the loop. The views of the surrounding area were impressive, too. After lots of deep breaths, laughs and photos, the group descended the hill. This was an unexpected surprise and a wonderful end to the tour.

After a little over one hour at this stop, the coaches were bound for the Steinberger Airport Hotel where the past week had begun. On this final night, as difficult as it may have been, many ACEers said Auf Wiedersehen to friends who shared this adventure. The next day many departed on planes to head back home, while some embarked on more European exploration.

This incredible journey was intense and sizzling hot, providing a chance to learn about, and adapt to, different cultures, while riding a vast array of coasters in some really wonderful parks. Friendships were developed and lives made richer with the shared experience of this trip. The experience may have allowed participants to appreciate the amenities of home a little bit more. This trip, unforgettable and a lot of fun, was the journey that was ACE Central Europe!

To the parks that we visited with their management and staff who displayed gracious hospitality and extended many courtesies, and especially to Europa-Park for all the surprise extras they threw in: Danke schon! To the ACE Executive Committee that approved this ambitious trip and the assistance given: Koszonom! To the bus captains, Ray Topscher, Dave Altman and Bill Linkenheimer, who kept everyone on schedule and updated on the changes and activities of each day; and to ACE member Lace Patton from Michigan, who kept everyone supplied with park maps — usually in the English language: Dank u! To Kevin Schreiner and Ray Topscher, who diligently planned and capably executed this amazing once-in-a-lifetime kind of trip: Thank you! 🌞

**David Du Mez** was thrilled to ride *Olympia Looping* again after having ridden it in 1989 at Munich's Oktoberfest during an ACE tour that included another German fair and parks in France and England. He is also a veteran of the last three ACE international tours and, while such trips are loaded with many early mornings, he is still not a morning person.



ACE Europe  
event  
organizers:  
Kevin  
Schreiner  
and  
Ray  
Topscher



## WHAT IS AMERICA NOT GETTING?

BY TIM BALDWIN

Observant readers of this issue's coverage of the ACE Central Europe tour, as well as Part I featured last issue, might be intrigued by a particular style of coaster. The Gerstlauer bobsled coasters — as anyone who has taken a recent ACE international tour can tell you — are marvelous. If one has never left the United States for coaster expeditions, then it would be impossible to know what tremendous fun these coasters are. There is not a single one in North America.

To clarify, the term bobsled often conjures up images of trough-style coasters such as those sold by Intamin (which operate with individual cars) or those developed by Mack (which feature longer trains). *La Vibora* at Six Flags Over Texas is an example of the Intamin version, while *Avalanche* at Kings Dominion is the latter. In any case, the bobsled coaster by Gerstlauer bears no similarity to these trackless coasters whatsoever. Those not completely in the know might mistakenly assume they are wild mouse coasters. Due to their single four-seater cars, this is an understandable misinterpretation, particularly since the bobsled coasters do indeed include some hairpin turns.

However, Gerstlauer's bobsled coasters are typically more customized. A wild mouse coaster is rather compact, and because of that, is often just duplicated in repeated production models. To get the full grasp of a bobsled coaster, imagine picking up a wild mouse design and just pulling and stretching it all over the place. You can see there is more to it than just a rectangular block of tight turns.

Because of these differences, theming has often been incorporated to wonderful effect. As featured in *ROLLERCOASTER!* issue 128, Gerstlauer's very first coaster was a bobsled coaster at Erlebnispark Tripsdrill in Germany (1998). The park actually opened the ride as soon as it was built, then added theming later. Eventually, the attraction contained a delightful castle, featuring towers and windows, allowing the cars to drop and zip through it. *G'sengte Sau* was an immediate hit, and today still is very much loved by the public and coaster enthusiasts alike — a true sign of a great ride.

Although Gerstlauer built a family coaster a year later, its second bobsled would not surface until 2002, when Djurs Sommerland unleashed *Thor's Hammer*. Again, the public fell in love with the fun, zippy layout that roamed around that area of the park with some creative thematic touches. While the contrasting theming might lead one to believe otherwise, this layout is nearly identical to *G'sengte Sau*. These two installations are classified as Model 480/4. It would appear that this style of ride was now being noticed, and parks were finding it a great fit.

The year 2003 brought two new installations. Belantis became the newest park in Germany that year, and its coaster on offer was *Drachenritt*. Castle walls and turrets made for an



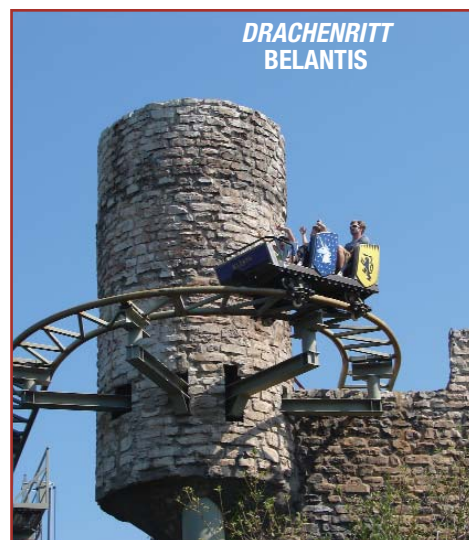
THOR'S HAMMER  
DJURS SOMMERLAND

PHOTO BY STEVE GZESH



THOR'S HAMMER  
DJURS SOMMERLAND

PHOTO BY KIP HAMMOND



DRACHENRITT  
BELANTIS

PHOTO BY TIM BALDWIN



DRACHENRITT  
BELANTIS

PHOTO BY ALEX RUGBY



**VILDA MUSEN  
GRÖNA LUND**

PHOTO BY TIM BALDWIN



**VILDA MUSEN  
GRÖNA LUND**

PHOTO BY MIKE HORWOOD



outstanding theme job. For the park's only coaster at the time, it was a nice choice. Even with just four-passenger cars, the reliability of continuous dispatch made for respectable capacity considering its size. Elsewhere in Europe, *Vilda Musen* at Gröna Lund cleverly found a way to thread the track layout through the towering structure of the *Schwarzkopf Jetline*. Cars even dart and dash through cutouts in building walls. It's a brilliant use of space, all within a customized design.

Two more bobsled coasters arrived on the

scene in 2004. Within a monumental package of six new installations that year, Gerstlauer's coasters broke through European boundaries for the first time. Japan's *Lagunasia* opened *Aqua Wind*. Once again, theming with fountains and pools of water accent the ride experience. Although this is the only example of this particular layout, it is listed as Model 380/4. A custom version was also introduced that year at Wild-und Freizeitpark Klotten. This German park is situated atop a small mountain. The views from the lift of the coaster — *Heiße Fahrt* — are unde-

nably spectacular on a clear day. Another interesting fact about the ride is that it was built with the foresight for a flume to eventually be intertwined within the structure. Over time, the planned ride evolved into more of a dramatic boat plunge. It took several years to materialize, but the water ride — and a unique one at that — did open in 2012, all within the tangled structure of the bobsled coaster with riders whizzing about.

Paulton's Park in England opened another variation in 2006. Gerstlauer classifies it as a



PHOTO BY JOHN FIDYK

**HEIßE FAHRT  
FREIZEITPARK KLOTTEN**



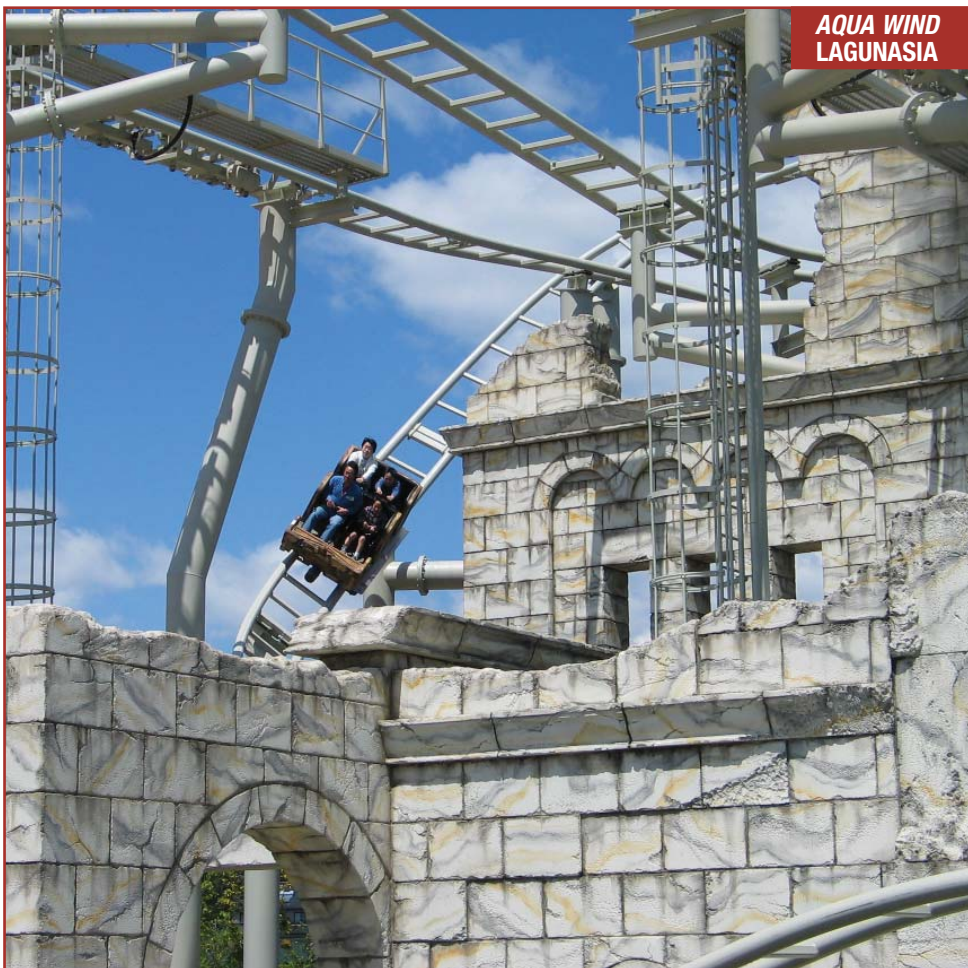
PHOTO BY CHERI ARMSTRONG

**HEIßE FAHRT  
FREIZEITPARK KLOTTEN**



**AQUA WIND  
LAGUNASIA**

PHOTO BY LISA SCHEININ



**AQUA WIND  
LAGUNASIA**

PHOTO COURTESY OF GERSTLAWER



PHOTO BY STEVE CZESNI



**VAN HELSING'S FACTORY  
MOVIEPARK GERMANY**



PHOTO BY A. TIEMEIER

**G'SENGTE SAU  
ERLEBNISPARK  
TRIPSDRILL**



PHOTO BY ALEX DICKEY



**G'SENGTE SAU  
ERLEBNISPARK  
TRIPSDRILL**

PHOTO BY JEFFREY SEIFERT

Model 450/4, which is similar to the 480/4 but without one helix before the station.

It would be five years before Gerstlauer installed another bobsled coaster. Their catalog of spinning coasters, Euro-Fighters and family coasters seemed to be dominating their sales. Movie Park Germany took the ride in a new direction. *Van Helsing's Factory* is the bobsled coaster concept moved indoors. Themed around the movie storyline of the vampire slayer, this heavily themed coaster has quite a few dark areas in addition to close scenery. Surprises are abundant, and *Van Helsing* could easily be considered the wildest of the bunch.

Familypark Neusiedlersee in Austria let loose *Rattenmühle* (German for Rat Mill) in 2013. The station is nicely themed with cartoonish rat figures, as are the cars. While there is some them-

ing, much of the ride is enshrouded in trees with cars darting and diving through them.

With nine spectacularly successful crowd pleasers, it is baffling that no bobsled coasters have made it to North America. Not that the United States has ignored Gerstlauer installations. On the contrary, Mall of America debuted the first Gerstlauer spinner in March 2004, followed just weeks later by one at Worlds of Fun. Today, there are 11 of these spinners in operation worldwide, with eight in North America. Most of them are variants on one of the bobsled layouts, although a few custom versions exist. In addition, Dollywood debuted the company's first Euro-Fighter in the United States in 2007; now there are five across the nation.

So what is America not getting? Some could argue a spinning coaster is just a bobsled coaster

with cars that spin, and that is an easy argument to make. But the ride experience is vastly different. As this author can attest, some people just don't like to spin, so re-rides are not on the docket. A good bobsled coaster, however, can keep riders coming back for more. Not to mention that the coaster can also be themed easily to fit any section or storyline. It would seem the market is ripe for someone in the States to introduce this new style of coaster. Now if some park could only be nudged to step up and be the first.

**Tim Baldwin, this magazine's editor, has ridden six of the nine Gerstlauer bobsled coasters. He wants one.**

## WHAT IF?

With so many spinning coasters in the United States, many of which have dual loading positions on the platform, wouldn't it be fun to see parks purchase a few bobsled cars and load every other car with forward-facing riders? The ride would then offer two experiences.

Six Flags holds the largest collection of spinners. The company has been known to try new marketing strategies by taking one of their rides and turning the cars backward. Kings Island introduced this idea with *The Racer* in 1982 and continued to do so for more than 25 seasons. Switching directions of cars is a marketable strategy with a very minimal cost. It is difficult to argue with the business savvy there. The current *Backwards Batman On Tour* is testament to that. Perhaps Six Flags could then see the brilliance of the relatively small cost of a few new vehicles to reintroduce and remarket an existing ride as a new experience.

Who is up for it? What if, indeed. 🍌



PHOTO BY S. MADONNA HORCHER