

## Adventure Awaits at Missouri Theme Parks

Written by Stephen Foutes  
Friday, 26 April 2013 09:40

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### [Enjoy the Ride at Missouri's Theme Parks](#)

**Jefferson City, Mo.** — Missouri's collection of theme and amusement parks supplies countless thrills and chills. Without exception, these parks are anchored by the most exciting rides of all — roller coasters. In Missouri, our world-class roller coasters literally reach new heights.

Kathleen Olsen's first memory of a roller coaster is from a family trip to *Six Flags Over Mid-America* (now Six Flags St. Louis) in 1976. Back then, passengers were loosely secured on the car's bench seat by a belt across their laps. At the time, the brand new *Screamin' Eagle* was billed as the world's tallest, longest, and fastest roller coaster. The train of cars traveled on rails utilizing steel strips mounted onto a wood superstructure.

"There were no loops or corkscrews, but the drops from high in the sky were exhilarating," Kathleen recalls.

As she tells it: "Mom wore her hair in what we now call an updo, with a wiglet attached to enhance her elaborate hairstyle. Quite the high fashion in those days." Yes, you guessed it — the wiglet came loose during the ride.

"Not all the way off," Kathleen chuckles. "It was still attached in the front, so it flapped wildly in the wind as we zoomed along. Imagine Mom's embarrassment."

It's been some 37 years since the 'updo incident,' and Kathleen Olsen has evolved into Katie Steele Danner, director of the Missouri Division of Tourism, and her perspective of and respect for theme parks and roller coasters has evolved as well.



"The *Screamin' Eagle* is still operating," she pointed out, "but coasters as a whole have come

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a long way, to put it mildly.”

Most modern roller coasters run on a tubular-steel framework, easily bent to allow the cars to rocket through loops, corkscrews, and huge drops; however, wooden coasters are still being built. Missouri’s three, world-class parks boast both types of construction.

In 2013, two new roller coasters begin thrilling, even challenging, brave riders in Missouri. One sets two new world records.

“I am eager, and admittedly a bit anxious, to give both a try,” said Danner. “Six Flags, the hair-raising location of my youth (no pun intended; well, maybe a little), has added its ninth coaster.”

[Boomerang](#) is a nerve-racking, steel roller coaster that flings you through a combination of intense and ferocious sensations. First, you and 37 other riders are slowly pulled backward, 125 feet into the sky; after a short pause, you are released to rocket along 1,650 feet of twisting steel track, at speeds reaching 50 mph, through loops and cork-screws, before climbing a second hill where the track ends. At that point, you pause in mid-air before running the full route again — backwards.

But wait! That’s not the end of the story at Six Flags. The eight themed areas of the park expose visitors to a collection of 49 rides and attractions, 18 food options, and numerous gift and souvenir shops. Plus, six theaters present a constant variety of top-name entertainers, concerts and special events throughout the season. And – as if that’s not enough to keep you exhausted – Hurricane Harbor waterpark (included with Six Flags admission) is home to water slides, a wave pool, a lazy river, and nearly a dozen waterborne activities.

The [Six Flags St. Louis](#) complex is located in Eureka, 30 miles south of downtown St. Louis. Six Flags welcomes adventurers April thru September; Hurricane Harbor is open late May thru early September. Check the website for specific days and times.

World records are not broken very often. That said, a new ride at [Silver Dollar City](#) in Branson has broken three, this year.

### [Outlaw Run](#)

– billed as the world’s most daring wood roller coaster includes the steepest drop for a wood coaster anywhere on earth – 162 feet, almost straight down

at 81 degrees (world record No. 1); a double barrel-roll, making it the only wood coaster in the world to get you upside-down (world record No. 2); the first outside-banked turn on a wood coaster (world record No. 3). And reaching a top speed of 68 mph, it is the second-fastest wood roller coaster on the planet.

After you catch your breath, this 1880s-themed park includes 30 fun-filled, family friendly rides and attractions (some dry; some wet) to keep you entertained. Among them is Marvel Cave, a Registered Natural Landmark, with one of the largest subterranean entry-rooms in the United

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States. Also, Silver Dollar City is home to 60 shops, with 100 resident craftsmen and artisans, demonstrating their talents. And don't miss the dozen delightful restaurants showcasing a unique style of country cooking, rated among the best theme park food in the nation by Amusement Today Magazine.

Tired yet? They put on more than 40 live shows spaced throughout the season, including six world-class festivals which are among the most attended themed-festivals in the country. As a Golden Ticket Awards winner, Silver Dollar City shows have been rated among the best in the entire theme park industry.

Silver Dollar City is open select days in April and May, daily June and July, and select days August thru December. Check the website for specific days and times.

Need more thrills? Travel to Kansas City to experience Missouri's third major theme park, [Worlds of Fun](#), themed around the Jules Verne book, "Around the World in Eighty Days." For a single entry ticket, enjoy both Worlds of Fun and [Oceans of Fun](#) waterpark.



At Worlds of Fun, you can scream your head off on [Mamba](#), one of the tallest, longest and fastest roller coasters in the world. Mamba is a state-of-the-art coaster, where riders climb 200 feet before plummeting toward the earth at 75 mph, through nine drops, racing along 5,600 feet of steel track. Add to that nearly 100 rides and adventures; 33 food and snack options; Charlie Brown and the whole Peanuts gang roaming the park; and plenty of amazing performers from across the country. The newest attraction is Dinosaurs Alive! The multi-sensory, interactive dinosaur park features more than 35 life-sized dinosaurs (no, they don't bite), including the world's largest animatronics dinosaur, standing nearly 40 feet tall and 72 feet long (hey, that's another world record).

Oceans of Fun features 60 acres of drenching water attractions, including a twisting raft adventure; the wave pool; water playhouse; 33 water slides; a lazy river; and a monsoon.

Worlds of Fun thrills visitors April through October; Oceans of Fun will cool you off mid-May through mid-September. Check the website for specific days and times.

So get out there and be thrilled; but mind your hair .... and your hat, and anything else that might drop off. Ride on the wind this year, in Missouri. Enjoy the show.

For listings of other things to see and do in Missouri, go to [VisitMO.com](#). Order your free copy of the *Official Missouri Travel Guide*

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at

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### ***About the Missouri Division of Tourism***

*The Missouri Division of Tourism (MDT) is the official tourism office for the state of Missouri dedicated to marketing Missouri as a premier travel destination. Established in 1967, the Missouri Division of Tourism has worked hard to develop the tourism industry in Missouri to what it is today, an \$11 billion industry supporting more than 281,000 jobs. For more information on Missouri tourism, go to <http://www.visitmo.com> .*

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