NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA Invites Travelers to Discover the Magic, Thrills, and Joy of the USA's Theme Parks

April 22, 2025

Featured image: *Galveston Island Pleasure Pier on the Gulf Coast of Texas*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 22, 2025) — With thrilling, one-of-a-kind roller coasters and cutting-edge attractions that transport visitors to faraway, magical places, theme parks throughout the United States offer travelers exhilarating fun and opportunities to create memories that will last a lifetime. Some parks and rides are brand new and feature the latest whiz-bang technology and creative innovation, while others have been delighting guests for decades and have a charming, nostalgic appeal.

??"Theme parks have a special way of producing pure joy, no matter your age," said Fred Dixon, President & CEO of Brand USA. "From the thrill of a brand-new roller coaster to the charm of a park that's been around for generations, these experiences are part of what makes visiting the United States so memorable. Right now, parks across the country are buzzing with energy, new attractions, and major anniversaries—and we're excited to welcome travelers from around the world to be part of it."

Universal opens something Epic in Orlando

The biggest news in theme parks in the U.S.–and really across the globe–is the debut of Universal Epic Universe, which is scheduled to open May 22. The fourth gate at Universal Orlando in Florida, the highly anticipated new park will invite visitors to explore lands filled with wondrous rides, such as Dark Universe, which will pay homage to Dracula and other classic Universal monsters. Also, guests will travel through time to go on an unforgettable adventure in The Wizarding World of Harry Potter™ – Ministry of Magic™; mythical creatures will fly overhead in How to Train Your Dragon–Isle of Berk; and beloved video games will come to life in SUPER NINTENDO WORLD™.

At nearby Walt Disney World, the new after-dark parade, Disney Starlight: Dream the Night Away, will fill the Magic Kingdom's Main Street U.S.A. with dazzling, light-filled floats starting in the summer. Disney's Hollywood Studios debuts two new shows including Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After featuring Cruella de Vil, Maleficent, and other despicable rogues, and The Little Mermaid–A Musical Adventure.

Elsewhere in the theme park capital of the world, guests can soar above the Arctic in a new flying theater attraction and then see actual beluga whales, walruses, and other animals when Expedition Odyssey opens this spring at SeaWorld Orlando. Visitors will also be able to encounter marine life at the new SEA LIFE Florida aquarium opening May 23 at LEGOLAND® Florida. Beyond the parks, there's plenty to explore in and around Orlando, including airboat tours and other outdoor activities and a vibrant arts and entertainment scene. In nearby Tampa Bay, beaches with sugar-white sand abound along with the cosmopolitan lure of downtown St. Petersburg and Tampa.

Disneyland Resort turns 70 (and other parks that have stood the test of time)

When Walt Disney created the original Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California seven decades ago, he established the template for the modern theme park and ushered in a new era of experiential entertainment. The legendary park will present a 70th anniversary extravaganza and "celebrate happy" starting May 16. The Tapestry of Happiness show will recount Disneyland's storied history; a cavalcade of characters will make their way along the park's promenades; and the Paint the Night Parade and Wondrous Journeys show will bedazzle after the sun goes down with glowing lights, animated projections, and fireworks exploding above Sleeping Beauty Castle.

At the adjacent Disney California Adventure, World of Color Happiness!, the latest version of the nighttime spectacular that artfully blends colorful fountains, lasers, and an enormous water screen, will mark the anniversary milestone. On July 17, Walt Disney–A Magical Life will debut at Disneyland's Main Street Opera House. The show will feature an animatronic version of the company founder who pioneered the robotic technology.

"Known as the 'Happiest Place on Earth,' we have served guests from around the world," says Sybil Crum, vice president, marketing and commercial strategy, Disneyland Resort. "This once-in-a-lifetime event will celebrate seven decades of happiness that we've made together, bursting with joy, featuring new experiences, dazzling entertainment, joyful décor, and so much more."

Dollywood, the Pigeon Forge, Tennessee park established by iconic performer and Smoky Mountains native, Dolly Parton, is also celebrating an important birthday. Its 40th anniversary season will include a series of festivals, loads of live music (which is to be expected at the renowned singer and songwriter's park), fabulous coasters and other rides, and Dolly-centric attractions such as the new Dolly Parton Experience, which immerses visitors in her celebrated career and life. The region is filled with things to see and do, including the majestic Great Smoky Mountains, the country's most popular national park; the mountaintop adventure park, Anakeesta, which offers activities such as alpine coasters and the enchanted multimedia night walk, Astra Lumina; and the dining, shopping, and entertainment district, The Island in Pigeon Forge.

Located in Branson, Missouri, Dollywood's sister park, Silver Dollar City, takes visitors back to the 1880s with incredible rides such as the newly refurbished Fire in the Hole indoor roller coaster, demonstrations by period craftsmen, and tours of Marvel Cave. The Ozark Mountain city has much to offer, including an abundance of live shows, such as the paddlewheel riverboat dinner cruise Showboat Branson Belle, and attractions such as the Titanic Museum.

You can experience historic rides such as the recently refurbished, circa-1927 roller coaster, Wildcat, at the country's oldest still-operating amusement park, Lake Compounce in Connecticut. Classic rides such as Jack Rabbit wooden coaster and the Old Mill boat ride, which date back to 1920 and 1901 respectively, are still rolling at Kennywood in Pennsylvania. Elsewhere in the state, the free admission Knoebels, which opened in 1926, features acclaimed rides such as the wooden coasters, Phoenix and Twister. There are old rides, including the 19th-century Merry-Go-Round and Roller Coaster from 1921, at Lagoon as well, but the Utah park also features modern-day attractions such as the themed indoor/outdoor coaster, Primordial.

Parks with a water view

New York's famed Coney Island is one of the birthplaces of the amusement industry. Visitors can still experience some of its landmark, venerable rides, such as the Coney Island Cyclone roller coaster and the Wonder Wheel, as well as stroll along its lovely oceanside boardwalk. Heading south, a number of amusement parks dot New Jersey's shoreline, including Morey's Piers and Playland's Castaway Cove.

The 200-foot-tall Centennial Wheel at Chicago's Navy Pier is an ode to the original Ferris wheel that debuted at the city's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. There are other attractions as well as restaurants, shops, sightseeing cruises, and more to explore at the Great Lakes pier. Rides fill the Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier on the Texas coastline. Similarly, you can board a carousel, roller coaster, and other rides at Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier in Southern California. Located near Hollywood, the popular park has made cameo appearances in dozens of movies and TV shows. Elsewhere in The Golden State, classic coasters and more fun await at San Diego's Belmont Park, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025, and the beautiful Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, which has been thrilling and delighting visitors since 1907.

Could you handle these new coasters?

As far as thrills go, it doesn't get much more exhilarating than Cedar Point, the historic Ohio amusement park that juts into Lake Erie. Among its incredible collection of 17 roller coasters are two new ones that are among the most extreme anywhere. When it opens this summer, Siren's Curse will be the first tilt coaster in the Western hemisphere. It is so named because its trains will climb a 160-foot-tall lift hill and come to a halt on a dead-end section of track that will then tilt straight down to connect with the rest of the course. Not to be outdone, the 420-foot-high Top Thrill 2–the world's tallest coaster–hits a staggering 120 mph.

Other new coasters include Wrath of Rakshasa at Six Flags Great America near Chicago. Known as a dive coaster, it will climb 180 feet and hang over a precipice for an agonizing few moments before finally releasing into a beyond-vertical drop that will be followed by five upside-down inversions. Kings Dominion in Virginia recently welcomed Rapterra, a launched wing coaster on which passengers' legs dangle in the air as they soar up 145 feet in cantilevered seats to either side (or the "wings") of the track. Magnetic launches will blast riders forwards and backwards on North America's first Super Boomerang coaster, The Flash: Vertical Velocity at Six Flags Great Adventure in New Jersey. For its fourth season, Lost Island Theme Park in Iowa will be debuting Fire Runner, a zippy single-rail coaster that will discombobulate passengers with its acrobatic maneuvers. And revving into Universal Studios Hollywood in 2026, Fast & Furious: Hollywood Drift will put riders behind the wheel for a high-speed, drift-heavy chase through the streets of L.A. in a coaster experience as bold and relentless as the film franchise itself.

Weatherproof water park fun

You won't have to worry about rain or otherwise inclement weather stopping you from hooting and hollering aboard water slides when you book a stay at an indoor water park resort. It's always balmy in the climate-controlled parks that are loaded with lazy rivers, wave pools, and other attractions you'd expect to find at outdoor parks. Among the fun ways to get wet at the recently opened Okana Resort & Indoor Waterpark in Oklahoma are an uphill water coaster and a family raft ride. Two new Great Wolf Lodge Resorts debuted last year, one near Houston in Texas and the other in Naples, Florida. A third location will start welcoming guests later this spring in Connecticut as part of the Foxwoods Resort Casino. In addition to water parks, the Great Wolf Resorts include bowling, virtual reality experiences, and other activities for families to enjoy together. An enormous 175,000-square-foot water park will be the star of the Kalahari Resort that is headed to Virginia in 2026.

Not all indoor water parks include a hotel. It can get mighty cold in Anchorage, Alaska, but the standalone H2Oasis offers a welcome oasis where bathing suits are de rigueur. DreamWorks Water Park, the country's largest indoor water park, is located at the massive American Dream shopping, dining, and entertainment complex (which also includes an indoor theme park, an indoor ski hill, and many other attractions) in East Rutherford, New Jersey, just beyond New York City. It boasts the world's largest indoor wave pool, the tallest speed slides with trapdoor launch chambers, and other watery fun all themed to DreamWorks movies such as "Shrek" and "Kung Fu Panda."

Stay where you play

Many theme parks also offer on-property hotels where guests can retreat after long days riding the rails. For example, the luxe Universal Helios Grand Hotel will open when Universal's Epic Universe debuts. Overlooking and integrated with the new park, the Mediterranean-influenced property will offer guests a dedicated gate to easily access the fun. Earlier this year, the theme park resort added two nearby additional hotels, the Stella Nova and Terra Luna, bringing the total number of places to stay to 11 on its expanded campus. The 300-room HeartSong Lodge and Resort, which opened in 2023 and is Dollywood's second hotel, features a national park lodge vibe that complements its lovely Smoky Mountains' setting. When it debuts next year, the Silver Dollar City Resort will offer visitors commanding views of the Ozarks as well as Table Rock Lake.

Mouth-watering, one-of-a-kind treats

Food is a big part of the fun at parks. At the Universal parks, you could raise a toast to Harry Potter and the gang with a frothy butterbeer or indulge in a unique and sinfully delicious Toothsome Chocolate Emporium milkshake. No visit to the Disney parks is complete without the frozen, twisted, tropical treat, Dole Whip. For more refined dining, consider booking a reservation at Disneyland's Carthay Circle Restaurant or Napa Rose. Upscale Walt Disney World eateries include the California Grill and the Michelin star-awarded Victoria & Albert's.

The aroma of gooey, freshly baked cinnamon bread lures visitors at Silver Dollar City and Dollywood as do the Potato Patch fries at Kennywood and Lake Compounce. Nathan's Famous has been serving its, well, famous hot dogs at Coney Island since 1916. Hungry patrons first began lining up for fried chicken, boysenberry pies, and other delectable dishes in 1934 at Mrs. Knott's Chicken Dinner Restaurant, the precursor to the adjacent Southern California theme park, Knott's Berry Farm. You can smell the chocolate being manufactured at the nearby plant in Hershey, Pennsylvania and enjoy a Hershey Candy Bar and other chocolate goodies at Hersheypark.

Start planning your next trip to the USA at visittheusa.com.

Note to the Editor
Accompanying high-resolution images can be found here.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing

current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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