



# TRENDS

with

# BENEFITS

By Judy Colbert

Win summer with new attractions and discounts at area theme parks and waterparks.

“Theme park trends include virtual reality, immersive, and interactive dark rides, and new water slides and water parks,” says Colleen Mangone of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.

“Virtual reality headsets are changing the roller coaster experience where you can feel you are flying next to a superhero or like your flightpath is in sync with the hills, twists and turns of the coaster.”

Here’s a sampling of what’s new this year:

## FLORIDA

A new waterpark with three slides and a 1,095-foot heated lazy river opened in November of 2016 at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa, Bonita Springs. The three, three-story waterslides feature two speed slides and one inner-tube slide for a total of 900 feet of winding, watery fun. Dining and more than 5,000 native Floridian plants and trees provide a gentler side to the existing Waterfall Pool and 5,000-square-foot heated Adventure Pool with its 140-foot corkscrew slide and free-form lagoon-style pool. The adults-only heated pool remains. Admission to the water attractions is limited to resort guests only.

LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Winter Haven, geared toward those who are 2-12 years of age, just opened LEGO NINJAGO World, a ninja-themed magical, immersive martial arts kingdom to sharpen your ninja skills. Embark on a ride that has 3D computer animation, 4D special effects (heat, fog and strobe lighting, etc.) and groundbreaking interactive technology. NINJAGO joins more than 50 rides, shows and attractions inspired by the LEGO and DUPLO brands. The LEGOLAND Beach Retreat, a kid-centric hotel with whimsical LEGO décor, more than doubles their on-site accommodations and opened April 7.

Volcano Bay is a new waterpark at Universal Orlando Resort that opens May 25. The 28-acre park offers a range of water activities from peaceful relaxation to innovative and scream-inducing thrills. Inspired by picture-postcard renditions of tropical islands, the new park includes a multi-directional wave pool with sandy beaches and speeding body slides that drop from the top of a volcano into the waters below. Krakatau Aqua Coaster takes you through

LEGOLAND FLORIDA





Krakatau Aqua Coaster at Volcano Bay

the 200-foot Krakatau volcano where you board canoes and propel downwards and upwards through the volcano's interior peaks and valleys. Also new is TapuTapu wearable technology that lets you explore the rest of the park and only head to a ride when you're alerted that it's your time.

Race Through New York Starring Jimmy Fallon opened at Universal on April 6. Taking you on a journey from the Big Apple's subway tunnels to soaring skyscrapers, you board the flying theater with cameos by Sara from "Ew," Jimmy in "Tight Pants," Tonight Show's announcer Steve Higgins and Grammy-award winning band The Roots.

As the SeaWorld parks reinvent themselves, this year's focus is on popular music and food events presented through mid-May as part of the Seven Seas Festival. Inspired by the street food of Asia, the Caribbean, South America and the Mediterranean, the festival features interesting food offerings and local, international and seasonal craft beers. In the ride department, the legendary Kraken rollercoaster has been transformed into a virtual reality coaster so you can explore a deep sea mission along with mysterious extinct and legendary creatures of the deep.

Disney World presents us with a world of floating mountains, bioluminescent rainforests and soaring Banshees in Pandora — the World of Avatar. James Cameron's 2009 movie comes to life this summer in Disney's Animal Kingdom. A seven-hour guided



Pandora — The World of Avatar

Star Wars tour with character greetings, themed dining, ride experiences, an insider's tour and a VIP viewing of Star Wars: A Galactic Spectacular, is available on Monday and Saturday. More water adventures will be available at Disney's Typhoon Lagoon as Miss Adventure Falls lets you board a treasure raft, rise to the top of the attraction and then plunge into a white-water adventure. Refuel at Planet Hollywood Observatory, overlooking the heart of Disney Springs. The restaurant provides a four-story stargazing observatory, 4,500-square-foot immersive video wall so you may "Dine Amongst the Stars" as you munch on burgers and other sandwiches from Guy Fieri and over the top desserts.

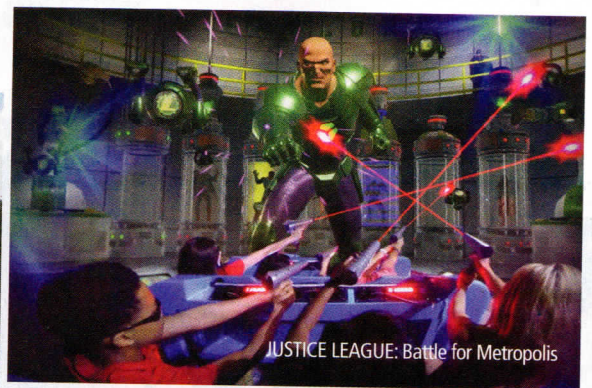
## GEORGIA

Georgia's Wild Adventures Theme Park in Valdosta has added seven waterslides to their Splash Island waterpark, five of which are for all ages. The other two slides stand more than 26 feet tall. The waterpark also adds more than 100 beach seats and a splash area.

The DC Comics crime fighting team of super heroes brings Justice League: Battle for Metropolis to Six Flags Over Georgia in Austell, near Atlanta. The 4D interactive thrill ride has motion-platform vehicles, animatronic figures and laser-gun action play. Help Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, the Flash and Green Lantern stave off the attack of the Joker and Lex Luthor.

## CAROLINAS

More than 30 waterslides, pools, and attractions come to Powells Point, Outer Banks, N.C., in H2OBX, a new \$46 million waterpark. You can enjoy the Flowrider, Twin Tides wave pool and Adventure Lagoon. First-class amenities and luxury guest service in a private oasis setting are available at more than four dozen private cabanas.



JUSTICE LEAGUE: Battle for Metropolis

SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA, UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT, WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT