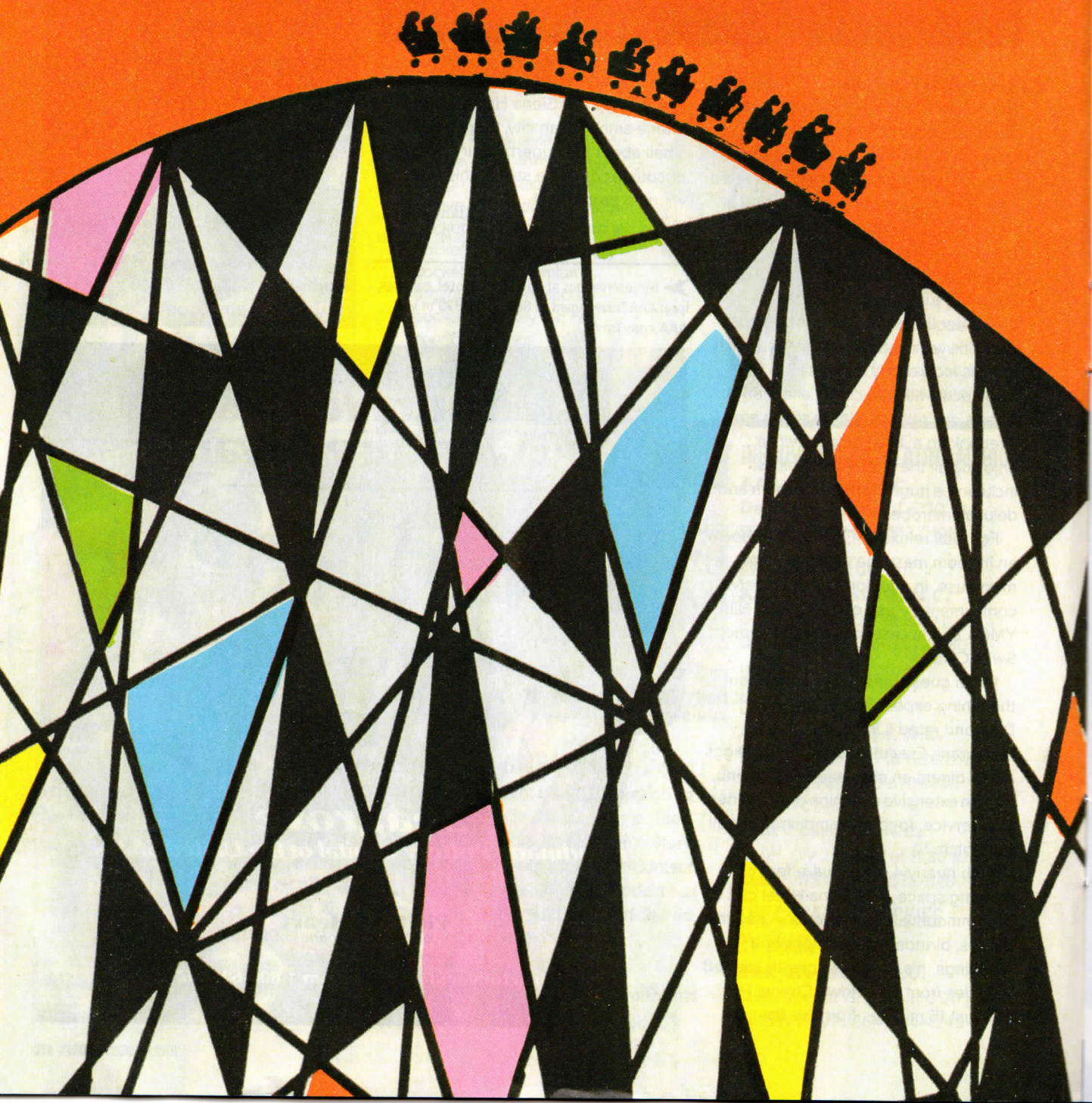


A VIEW TO A

THPill

BY JUDY COLBERT

CHECK OUT WHAT'S NEW IN THE WORLD OF ROLLER COASTERS THIS SUMMER





Just as roller coasters have lulls of wonderful quiet between the times they make you yell and think you're heart's going to pound itself out of your chest, theme parks add new attractions at various speeds. Although 2017 is a fairly quiet year in the world of new coasters, there are still some fresh things to capture your attention.

VIKINGS AND VIRTUAL FUN

In Virginia's Busch Gardens Williamsburg, the InvadR, a Viking-themed wood-steel hybrid ride, opened this spring. It follows one of two popular trends — the return of the wooden roller coaster. This is the park's eighth coaster and it includes a 74-foot drop at up to 48 miles per hour and nine, yes, nine, airtime hills that promise to thrill adults and children alike. For more than 2,100 feet of the ride, the coaster takes you through wooded terrain and underground, through a tunnel. The hybrid coaster has a wooden track supported by a steel structure, giving you the stability of steel with the classic feel of wood. It's in the New France section of the park.

As SeaWorld moves from dolphin and orca shows to other forms of entertainment (think popular music and food events over 14 weekends), the Orlando park has put a twist to their popular Kraken coaster, with a second trend in rides, virtual reality. They've added VR to the ride to expand your experience. It's the company's first digitally enhanced ride so you scream your lungs out AND have a mission with sea creatures that were inspired by extinct and legendary animals of yore.

CHASING THRILLS

The Fury 325, the world's tallest and fastest giga coaster, resides at Carowinds, on the border of North and South Carolina. Located in the Thrill Zone, the ride lasts for a never-ending (it seems) 3:25 minutes as it travels over 1.25 miles (North America's longest steel coaster) and reaches a speed of 95 miles per hour! You start, innocently enough, in one of three 32-passenger, open-air trains and climb to 325 feet followed by a stomach-dropping 81-degree drop. Then — and they describe it as “an angry

hornet chasing its target — you race into a 190-foot tall barrel turn and a high-speed S-curve as you hit the above-mentioned 95 mph speed. After that, a 91-degree overbanked horseshoe turn leads into a “Hive Dive” under a pedestrian bridge, and attacks the back half of the ride as you go through a high-speed banked curve, a camelback hill, and an intense double maneuver. You must be 54 inches or taller to ride the Fury 325 and you might not want to eat just before you ride.

Even Tennessee's Dollywood has a new offering. This one is for the young, but not necessarily the young-at-heart. Whistle Punk Chaser is a junior coaster that features exciting twists and turns for Dollywood's younger loggers, preparing them for the day they can join their parents aboard the award-winning Thunderhead wooden coaster.

Regardless of when you visit a theme park, it's most likely going to be crowded, particularly if you're lining up for the new ride or adventure. Here's a helpful hint: If you think of the park as a circle, go to your left as you enter the park. Most Americans head to the right, so you should meet about the middle in the back of the park. As you head back to the front of the park along the right-hand side, they're doing the left hand side. Ride lines, food lines and bathroom lines tend to be shorter following this plan.

TIPS AND TICKETS

Two tips for popular rides are to aim for them as soon as you arrive or wait until noon or 1 p.m., when families stop for lunch or return to their hotel room to put the little ones down for a nap. Another tip: Some parks offer a twilight admission that's good for late afternoon and evening (starting around 4 p.m. or 5 p.m.). This can save you a little money, and the late afternoon hours are good because families have hungry children who have to be fed or put to bed — or both.

Additionally, put your AAA Membership to good use by taking advantage of member discounts on tickets for Carowinds, Dollywood and SeaWorld Orlando. ♥

Left: Fury 325,
Carowinds

Right: InvadR,
Busch Gardens
Williamsburg