

# Spooky sellers

With a host of haunting attractions opening in time for Halloween, it's never too early to start planning a fang-tastic trip, writes Katie McGonagle

**T**heme parks are the place to be for adrenaline-pumping thrills and heart-stopping spills at any time of year – but come Halloween, you can add spine-tingling chills, as these adventure playgrounds transform into festivals of fright-filled fun.

Whether you like to turn up the terror with late-night frights and old-school ghouls or stick to the safety of the pumpkin patch, there's a spooky spectacle to suit, with plenty for younger ones to enjoy that won't give them nightmares.

We take a look at what to expect this spooky season, going behind the scenes of a new Gothic-style attraction close to home and checking out the return of some fearsome favourites across the pond, to give you a headstart on selling Halloween.

## DANCE OF DEATH

Dutch theme park Efteling will open its scariest-ever attraction on October 31. *Danse Macabre* will be set in a new themed area of the park, the eerie Huyverwoud forest, replacing the former Spookslot

haunted house, and is suitable for those aged eight and over.

It takes its name from a musical piece by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns – perhaps more familiar as the haunting theme tune used in everything from Disney movie *Mickey's House of Villains* to TV series *Jonathan Creek* – and takes its design cues from the ruins of medieval Belgian abbeys including Villers, Aulne and Orval. Expect cloisters, catacombs and torch-lit corridors, leading up to a Gothic-style chapel where riders will sit on choir pews atop a turntable that rises, falls and spins in time with the ominous score.

Ride designer Jeroen Verheij says: "It has been seven years since Efteling opened its last major ride, so *Danse Macabre* will be the park's prime focus this autumn – and we thought it would be fitting to launch our 'creepy' ride on the creepiest day of the year.

"It will be the first ride of its kind, featuring technology that has never been seen. It is like no other attraction in the world – unique to Efteling at this point in time. ➤

## DESTINATIONS

### HALLOWEEN | THEME PARKS & ATTRACTIONS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Howl-O-Scream at SeaWorld Orlando; *Peur Sur Le Parc* at Parc Asterix; *Danse Macabre*, Efteling; Disney characters in Halloween costumes

PICTURES: Sylvain Cambon; Disney/Matt Strashane; SeaWorld



"*Danse Macabre* will combine a thrilling ride with immersive show technology to create a haunted spectacle full of dark twists. It is the same as with a horror film or a suspense thriller – people love to be immersed in an exciting environment and enjoy the fun of being scared."

Entrance to Efteling starts from £38 in November.

#### AMERICAN HORROR STORIES

No one goes all out for Halloween like our friends across the pond, so visitors should expect to be immersed in all things orange as soon as they cross the threshold. The fun starts early at Universal Orlando Resort with the return of its annual Halloween Horror Nights from August 30 (with a preview Premium Scream Night on August 29), and from September 5 at California park Universal Studios Hollywood – and it's from big Hollywood blockbusters that the event's flagship attractions take their inspiration.

There are 10 haunted houses to discover this year, including a scarily

silent spot modelled on horror hit film *A Quiet Place*, deploying sound design, special effects and the parks' first use of American Sign Language to create an all-encompassing experience. Expect more ghostly goings-on in the *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* haunted house, prompted by this year's reboot of the classic franchise, plus one that draws on supernatural film series *Insidious*. Halloween Horror Nights is a separately ticketed event, starting at £85 for one-night admission at Universal Orlando via Do Something Different.

There are late-night thrills to be found elsewhere in Florida, with the Howl-O-Scream events returning to SeaWorld Orlando and sister park Busch Gardens Tampa. This year promises four new haunted houses, three 'scare zones' and two themed bars, plus all the top draws from last year. The event, suitable for those aged 13-plus, runs on certain nights from September 6–November 2, with prices from £49 with Attraction World (separate from park entry).

#### HAPPIER HALLOWEEN

While grown-up thrill-seekers revel in vampires, zombies and ghouls roaming the streets in full theatrical make-up, there are plenty of tamer attractions targeted at younger guests. Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando will hold its regular Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party at its Magic Kingdom Park, where this year Mickey and Minnie Mouse will be decked out in neon-green spiderweb-inspired costumes. Spot them rubbing shoulders with classic Disney villains and much-loved characters – including Bruno from animated movie *Encanto* – around the park. The party starts from £120 per person when booked via Attraction World.

Those with early bedtimes will also get the chance to enjoy Mickey's Boo-To-You Halloween parade, filled with recognisable faces from across the Disney universe, as the start time has been moved up to 8.15pm, so little ones can join in all the Halloween fun. **tw**

#### BEST OF THE REST



**Parc Asterix:** *Peur Sur Le Parc* (pictured) takes over this French park from October 5–November 11, with a monster parade, a new haunted house themed on the Roman ruins of Pompeii – think blood-soaked gladiators and a scent of volcanic sulphur in the air – plus a speakeasy-style bar that you can find only by solving a daily riddle.

**Disneyland Paris:** The month-long Halloween Festival, which runs from October 1–November 3, features Disney villains such as Captain Hook and Maleficent, plus a bewitching light show projected on to Sleeping Beauty Castle.

**Legoland Dubai Resort:** Go monster mad in the Middle East with a Monster Party at Legoland Dubai Resort from October 12–November 3, featuring a contest for the best-dressed monster, character meet-and-greets and a kids' dance party (tickets from £62).

**Loro Parque:** Get a taste of Halloween without a pumpkin in sight at a real-life bat cave in this Tenerife wildlife park, where fruit bats native to South and Central America can be seen as part of a collaboration with Karlsruhe Zoo in Germany (from €30 for children and €42 for adults).

**IMG World of Adventure:** 'Zombie apocalypse' is the theme for the Dubai park's Festival of Fright on October 28. Visitors can expect jack-o'-lanterns shining dimly through the fog and circus performers putting on aerial displays, along with Marvel characters, pumpkin hunts and trick-or-treat events for youngsters (from £77).