



POSTCARD

Busch Gardens

The Tampa theme park offers an adrenaline rush for families exploring Florida's Gulf Coast, writes **India-Jayne Trainor**

My eyes are closed tight and I feel the wind picking up as we climb, little by little, along the metal tracks of Iron Gwazi – the tallest, fastest and steepest hybrid rollercoaster in North America. As we reach the top of its 63m tower, I catch a brief glimpse of panoramic views over the city of Tampa, before the coaster (and my stomach) suddenly drops.

I'd started at the park, along with a group of 13 UK travel agents, with some of the tamer rides, though there were still a few hair-raising moments. Kumba is a visitor favourite, featuring a 41m drop and multiple loops that leave you suspended, weightless, over the park. We also tackle the Serengeti Flyer, a ride comprising two arms that swing round at speeds of up to 68mph, creating upside down G-force momentum that gets our pulses racing.

With Florida's signature sunshine, the weather is a toasty 35C – but thankfully, our next port of call is one of Busch Gardens' water rides, the Congo River Rapids. Though how wet you get turns out to be down to the luck of the draw: sitting in an inflatable ring, we spin and bump our way along a raging river, white-water rapids foaming around us. Some escape unscathed while others are hit with jets of water, and I narrowly miss a dunking under a thundering waterfall.

By the time we get off, we've all cooled down and worked up an appetite, which we satisfy using our handy All Day Dining passes. The pass (\$60 for adults, \$30 for kids) lets us dine at one of six participating cafes and restaurants, covering a main, side or dessert and a drink, which can be redeemed up to once every 90 minutes. I opt for an impressively sized hot dog from the Dragon Fire Grill, watching from the shade as our agent group takes on Falcon's Fury, an almost 100m drop tower that plummets them face down towards the ground at lightning speed.

That pace is matched only by the speedy journey to Tampa International Airport, less than half-an-hour away – making this exhilarating theme park a great first stop or a last hurrah for any family adventure in Florida. **TW**



BOOK IT

Attraction World has a 2-Visit ticket for SeaWorld and Busch Gardens from £177 for adults and £172 for children aged three to nine, including two All Day Dining passes. login.attractionworldportal.com



TOP: Busch Gardens' Kumba rollercoaster
ABOVE: The park's Serengeti Flyer

PICTURE: Shutterstock/Mikhail Grachikov