

Thrills without spills

Theme parks can suit scaredy cats as much as adrenaline junkies, reports Aby Dunsby

@AbraDunsby

Fancy plunging headfirst towards the ground at 60mph, being flipped upside down, spun backwards, hurtled back into the air - then doing it all over again?

For thrill-seeking clients, nothing beats a day spent speeding through a theme park's white-knuckle rides.

But for others, including little ones, the biggest rides, with their height restrictions, long queues and daredevil credentials, are just plain scary.

Fortunately, the world's biggest theme parks still have plenty to offer both the young and the young at heart. They brim with gentler rides, shows and attractions catering to all manner of visitors, from one-toothed tots to teens and grandparents, opening up plenty

of opportunities for you to make more theme park bookings.

► RIDES: GO SLOW

For masses of mini-muggles and wizards in training, the long wait for the arrival of the latest Harry Potter ride is almost over. The Wizarding World of Harry Potter will open at Universal Studios Hollywood on April 7 and, much like the original in Orlando, it's an immersive land that'll make Potterphiles feel as though they've been transported straight to Hogsmeade.

Within the attraction lies kid-friendly coaster Flight of the Hippogriff, which takes passengers on a gentle 'training flight' aboard the eponymous eagle-headed animal.

Plenty more magic abounds at Walt Disney World Resort

“Tots will love flying elephant ride Dumbo, while parents will like the stress-free virtual queuing system”

Orlando, where the kingdom of Arendelle from ever-popular Disney flick *Frozen* will come to life at Epcot's Norway Pavilion. The new *Frozen Ever After* water ride will feature the film's best-loved characters and songs so that kids both big and small can sing along as they drift towards Elsa's palace on boats shaped like Viking logs. Nearby in the resort's Magic

Kingdom, tots will love flying elephant ride Dumbo, while parents will appreciate its stress-free virtual queuing system. "The ride uses a pager to avoid waiting in line, allowing kids to play in a circus-themed big-top tent complete with slides, a climbing net and a toddler area while they wait," says Annabel Cove, head of trade sales and marketing at Do Something Different.

Climbing on board an elephant might be scary enough, but climbing on board a killer whale would be entirely out of the question for most younger visitors. That's why the Shamu Express at nearby SeaWorld Orlando - themed around the park's famous killer whale - offers the next best thing, travelling at speeds of up to 26mph, and providing



➔ kid-sized entertainment plus a good introduction for those looking to build up to more nerve-jangling options.

There's more fishy fun in Dubai with popular water park Aquaventure at Atlantis the Palm, where those who are feeling brave can hop into a dinghy and plunge through a shark-filled lagoon. Luckily, it's less terrifying than it sounds: visitors are safely enclosed inside a glass tunnel as they slip down slides and meander past five species of shark including whitetip and blacktip.

Back in Britain, Legoland Windsor is a popular choice for families with smaller children, according to short-break specialist SuperBreak, offering plenty of rides that focus more on fun than on hardcore thrills. While adults and big kids enjoy lurching around on its exhilarating rollercoaster The Dragon, for example, little ones can feel just as grown up as they board The Dragon's Apprentice, a scaled-down version of the original.

▶ SHOWS: STAGE STARS

Clients who prefer to keep their feet



Visitors are safely enclosed inside a glass tunnel as they slip down slides and meander past five species of shark

firmly on the ground need not miss out on all the action: for them there is a host of entertaining shows. Plenty of options are targeted at animal lovers, including the 'pandas' at new Chessington World of Adventures show Pandamonium. They might not be real, but these life-sized animatronic characters are incredibly life-like, giving visitors the chance to see what it would be like to get up close and personal with the exotic endangered animals. The informative show is also wildly entertaining, with characters creating plenty of mischief on stage for the kids to enjoy.

Across the pond, new family-friendly show Clyde & Seamore's Sea Lion High at SeaWorld Orlando features a cast of sea lions, walruses, otters and their trainers, plus plenty of giggle-worthy animal tricks. Sister park Busch Gardens Tampa Bay also has real animals performing alongside world-class skaters and puppets in Iceploration, a musical ice show which tells the story of tween Austin, whose adventurer grandfather encourages him to explore the world.

Dutch theme park Efteling's Aquanura show is a less chilly affair, replacing ice with waterfalls, fire and more than 900 lights in Europe's biggest water spectacle, which lights up the fantasy-themed park's many rides and attractions to music.

Water is also the theme of Universal Studios Hollywood's ever-popular WaterWorld show and it's used to heart-in-the-mouth effect, alongside an array of stunts including a troupe of jumping jet-skiers, daredevil somersaulting divers, explosions and even a plane crash.



Funway Holidays offers seven nights' room-only at the three-star Rosen Inn International in Orlando, including United Airlines flights and two-park bonus tickets to Universal Orlando Resort, from £989 per person based on two adults and two under-12s travelling on July 26. funwayagents.co.uk

Travel 2 offers 14 nights in a two-queen room at the new Universal Loews Sapphire Falls Orlando, opening in July, plus flights, 14 days' unlimited entry to SeaWorld, Busch Gardens and Aquatica, and fully-inclusive Alamo car hire, from £4,746 for a family of four travelling July-September. travel2.com



LEFT: The Dragon's Apprentice, Legoland Windsor Resort
BELOW: Flight of the Hippogriff, Universal Studios Hollywood



PICTURES: FABRIX; DAVID SPRAGUE



➔ ATTRACTIONS: MEET YOUR HEROES
Among the parks' less-frantic offerings are the many attractions, which offer some respite from the queues and typically cater for families with small children.

For young Disney buffs, nothing beats meeting their favourite character and taking some snaps. Walt Disney World Resort Orlando's Move It! Shake It! Dance & Play It! Street Party gives kids the chance to take plenty of selfies with the stars as they watch them parade in a music-filled celebration that takes place several times a day.

Also in Magic Kingdom, boisterous youngsters will enjoy meeting Captain Jack Sparrow to test their swashbuckling skills in their very own Pirate Tutorial. Four kids are picked out to have a go at sword-fighting, while the rest pick up handy tips as they watch from the sidelines.

“ SeaWorld Orlando's Antarctica combines a family ride with the chance to explore a colony of penguins

Adults needn't miss out on all the playfulness either; in fact, Chessington World of Adventures' new Go Ape attraction actively encourages it. The forest adventure park is open to adults and kids taller than one metre, and incorporates everything from swinging ropes to zip lines.

Clients can continue monkeying around at Drayton Manor, which this year sees the arrival of the new Tamarind Trail, where visitors can walk through beautiful gardens and spot

RIGHT: Meet and Greet, Walt Disney World Orlando

LEFT: The Iceploration show at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay



cute, inquisitive tamarind and marmoset monkeys along the way. There's more animal interaction at SeaWorld Orlando. Its Antarctica attraction combines an interactive family ride with the chance to explore a colony

of more than 250 penguins. Clients can get an extra dose of penguin fun by embarking on the Penguins Up-Close Tour, which allows them to go behind the scenes to meet a penguin. For more backstage

adventures, Universal Studios Hollywood runs regular studio tours, with highlights such as encountering the plane crash from *War of the Worlds* and walking through the sets of *Desperate Housewives*. The

WIN A MINI KING KONG

To mark the launch of Skull Island – Reign of Kong, Attraction World has 100 mini King Kongs to give away to agents booking a Universal three-park bonus ticket in March. For your chance to win, email booking references to universal@attractionworld.com



tour concludes with a dramatic new show, *Fast & Furious Supercharged*, which allows guests to ride with the all-star cast on a simulated high-speed chase complete with gasp-inducing special effects. **tw**

US? A VIRGIN?
No chance!

From the people that brought you DoSomethingDifferent.com, comes **ThemeParkBeds.com**, a first-of-its-kind platform that makes booking Disney hotels, park tickets and Dining Plans easy.

Our amazing team of Kerry, Val and Hayley have been to Walt Disney World over 40 times between them, so really know what they're doing when it comes to Disney, so go on, jump into bed with us and forget all about those virgin days.

Plus, book with us before March 31st, and get £25 Love2Shop vouchers for every Disney hotel booking!

Call **0203 195 1195** or visit themeparkbeds.com



WOW!
30% OFF YOUR USA CAR HIRE

Agent Offer



Why Alamo's the No.1 for USA car hire:

- Up to 30% off fully inclusive packages for Travel Industry professionals
- On-airport locations & award-winning customer service
- No hidden extras or credit card fees
- Free 24 hour roadside assistance
- No cancellation charge

www.alamo.co.uk/travelweekly



Terms & Conditions: Travel Industry Staff ID will be required at time of rental to qualify for the discount and the rental does not qualify for frequent flyer programmes or cashback schemes. Examples of Travel Industry ID include Company ID card, business card, letter of employment or payroll. Standard rental terms and conditions apply. Full T&Cs found at www.alamo.co.uk/travelweekly ©2016 Alamo Rent-A-Car. All rights reserved 16-UR015