



Q&A: THE SWAMP FOX ALL WOODEN ROLLER COASTER

Why is a ride on a wooden roller coaster unique?

The history, visual beauty and architectural design of wooden roller coasters add to their mystique. But what really sets wooden roller coasters apart is that they deliver a very different ride experience from steel roller coasters.

Wooden coasters seem to have personalities all their own. From their rumbling, shuddering sounds to their thrilling vibrations, wooden coasters heighten the rider's sense of danger. A wooden coaster's train seems to fight to stay on the track. Functioning as a shock absorber, the coaster structure is designed to sway with the force of the moving train.

The wooden roller coaster experience can be different throughout the day as the temperature or the weather changes. Rain brings out the rich smell of the wood, and expansions and contractions in the wood can translate into more movement.

Some people even claim that wooden coasters run better at night when the grease on the track and the wheel bearings loosen up. In one experiment performed on the Swamp Fox, operators found that the train ran its track anywhere from 8 to 10 seconds faster at 9 p.m. than it did around 2 p.m. in the afternoon.

How many wooden roller coasters are in operation in the United States?

According to the Roller Coaster Database (www.rcdb.com) there are approximately 115 operating wooden roller coasters in America.

What specific type of roller coaster design is the Swamp Fox?

Wooden roller coaster designs range from the simple “out and back” to the intricate “twister” style where the track is interwoven within itself several times. The Swamp Fox is a classic “figure-eight” design. One of the first roller coaster designs to be developed, this design takes the train through a figure eight-shaped course before returning to the boarding station.

What kind of wood is the Swamp Fox made of?

The Swamp Fox wooden roller coaster is made of Carolina Longleaf Pine, a type of pine found along the U.S. coastal plain from Virginia southward.

Who designed and built the Swamp Fox?

It was designed by John Allen (1907-1979) and manufactured by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company (PTC). According to Ultimaterollercoaster.com, Allen was “largely responsible for the revival of wooden roller coasters. . . the classic rides he created were both architecturally striking and gave patrons stunning coaster rides.” Allen designed 25 roller coasters and is credited with making a number of significant contributions to roller coaster technology. He began working for PTC in 1934 as a coaster operator and became the company president in 1954.

How long has the Swamp Fox been operating?

The Swamp Fox was built in 1966 for W.M. Parker, who owned and operated the park from 1966 to 1989 under its former name “Grand Strand Amusement Park.” As a result of damage suffered from Hurricane Hugo, the park and the coaster did not operate during the 1990 and 1991 seasons. The park was reopened by new owners in 1992 as “Family Kingdom Amusement Park,” and the Swamp Fox resumed operation, having been completely rebuilt in its original design by John Hinde.

How did the Swamp Fox get its name?

The Swamp Fox All Wooden Roller Coaster is named for Francis Marion (1732-1795), an American Revolutionary War hero. Marion earned the nickname “Swamp Fox” for his ability to outwit and outrun British troops by leading his men into the swamps of South Carolina after each battle. A lieutenant colonel in the Continental Army and later brigadier general in the [South Carolina](#) militia, Marion used guerrilla tactics to sabotage communication and supply lines and rescue American prisoners.

His practice of withdrawing into swamps unfamiliar to his enemies prompted one British colonel to complain that “it is impossible to catch the ‘swamp fox’” and Marion’s nickname was born.

How long is a typical ride on the Swamp Fox?

The coaster track is 2400 feet long. One complete lap constitutes a ride. It takes approximately 2 minutes, 10 seconds from the time the train leaves the station until it returns to the station. However, Swamp Fox operators have found that the ride can get up to 10 seconds faster as the grease on the track and the wheel bearings loosen up throughout the day.

How tall is the coaster at its highest point?

The highest point on the Swamp Fox is 75 feet with a 65-foot drop.

How fast does it go?

The top speed is around 50 miles per hour.

How many people can ride in one train at one time?

Twenty-four people can ride the coaster at one time. The coaster has one train with four cars per train. Riders are arranged two across in three rows for a total of 24 riders.

How many people ride the Swamp Fox every year?

Approximately 250,000 people per year ride the Swamp Fox. Over the last three years, the Swamp Fox has averaged 15,170 laps per year.

Does a rider feel more of the ride experience in the front car or back car?

A rider definitely feels more of the ride experience the farther back in the train he or she sits.