

TRAVEL

Family amusements

Ohio parks offer thrilling ways to spend a day

BY MARY QUINLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

When the kids start to moan and groan about how "bored" they are with summertime, consider some family-friendly options south of the border — the Ohio border.

Here's a peek at our neighbor's four theme parks:

Paramount's Kings Island
Journey into the Buckeye State's southwestern corner. Here you'll discover Paramount's Kings Island — a combo of 12 coasters, a 30-acre water park, hundreds of rides, attractions and live shows.

"I remember Kings Island as a very clean place," said Maggie Cytacki, who has visited the park with her husband and two sons. "It's a great family getaway. We made it a weekend trip."

The Livonia family especially enjoyed the water park. "It was a refreshing break in the middle of a very hot day," said Cytacki.

Of course, coasters are an integral part of the adventure. This season, Kings Island introduces Son of Beast, the only looping wooden roller coaster.

The ride is an offspring of The Beast, the longest wooden roller coaster in the world.

If golf is more your bag, bring your clubs. The Golf Center is one of the park's alternatives to scream machines and water rides.

Sea World

"If you sit in the first eight to 10 rows, you'll get wet," blared the voice coming from the loud speaker. "In fact — you will be soaked!"

Wiggles and squeals of delight erupted from the front rows in the outdoor theater. No one moved. It was show time at SeaWorld's Shamu Stadium — featuring killer whales Shamu and Namu.

If you go:

■ **Paramount's Kings Island** is north of Cincinnati, off Interstate 71 at exit 25. Call (800) 288-0808 or visit www.pki.com. Open weekends; daily beginning Friday, May 26.

Admission: For persons over 48-inches tall \$38.99; ages 3-6 and seniors over 60, \$19.50; children under 3 free.

Estimated drive time from metro Detroit: Approximately four hours. ■ **SeaWorld** is in Aurora, between Cleveland and Akron. For information, call (800) 63-SHAMU or click and go to www.seaworld.com. Opening Saturday, May 20, for weekends; Saturday, May 27, daily.

Admission: \$35.88 ages 12 and older; \$27.68 ages 3-11; younger than age 3, free.

Estimated drive time: Approximately 3½ hours.

■ **Cedar Point** is situated in Sandusky on a Lake Erie peninsula. It's midway between Cleveland and Toledo. Call (419) 626-0830 or visit online at www.cedarpoint.com. Open daily through Labor Day.

Admission: One-day and two-day passes available. One-day pass, \$38 ages 4-59, ages 3 and younger free; \$10 for those age 4 and older, who are less than 48-inches tall; \$22, age 60 and older.

Estimated drive time: Approximately two hours.

■ **Six Flags** is in Aurora between Cleveland and Akron. It's adjacent to Sea World. Call (330) 562-8303 or check the Web site www.sixflags.com. Open weekends, daily beginning Friday, May 26.

Admission: Persons over 48-inches tall, \$30.99; persons under 48-inches tall, \$15.50; kids age 2 and younger, free.

Estimated drive time: Approximately 3½ hours.

Be sure to check for discount tickets before you leave for the parks. AAA, credit unions, grocery stores and other places of business offer discounted rates.

turing killer whales Shamu and Namu.

The gates opened slowly as Shamu emerged to perform center stage. He whizzed through the pool creating whale-size ripples.

Cameras flashed. The crowd, hysterical with joy, clapped and waved. And, as the performance drew to a close, everyone in the Splash Zone was drenched — and loved it.

By far, the killer whales are a favorite with SeaWorld visitors. Be forewarned: Crowds wander into the stadium 30 minutes or more before scheduled performances.

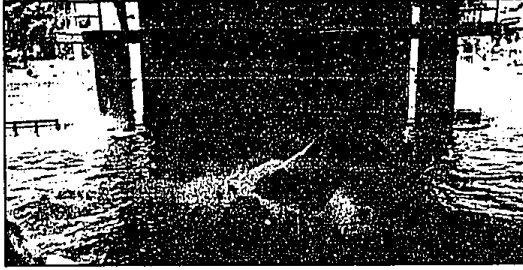
After the whale show, options are plentiful.

Slip into the Penguin Encounter to gaze at the more-than-100 polar penguins.

Or, visit the Shark Encounter. The moving walkway inside this exhibit provides fabulous underwater views (be sure to look up) of the sleek, gray-skinned sharks, as they circle their tank.

New this year at SeaWorld is a virtual adventure in a yellow submarine to the bottom of the ocean to explore the Bermuda Triangle. It's called — *Mission: Bermuda Triangle*.

Guests can take advantage of special evening shows and savings during SeaWorld's *New Orleans Nights* evening entertainment package June 10 through Aug. 27.



Cedar Point

Once again, Cedar Point has made coaster headlines. And Margaret Day of Livonia plans to see what all the fuss is about.

"I love roller coasters!" said the sophomore at the University of Detroit Mercy. "Several weeks ago, I drove past Cedar Point and saw it!"

"It" is Millennium Force — a "griga-coaster" with a top speed of 92 mph and a nearly vertical 300-foot drop at an 80-degree angle. Fasten your seat belt and hold on tight.

Millennium Force, the park's 14th coaster, is touted as the tallest and fastest roller coaster in the world.

The Raptor, one of Day's favorite coaster rides, turns its victims upside down as their feet dangle. "Riders get a rush when they go on it," she said.

Modern-day scream machines are a far cry from Cedar Point's first coaster. In 1892, the Switchback Railway towered 25 feet high and traveled about 10 mph.

Not too keen on wind-in-your-face, tummy-churning rides?

No problem. Watch a stage show or marine-life presentation, cool off at the water park or the beach, play miniature golf or ride a go-cart.

Six Flags

After an absence of almost 20 years, I returned to a place once called Gauguia Lake. I was impressed. The park glowed, obviously the result of an extensive overhaul by new ownership — Six Flags.

For starters, an entrance with a majestic clock tower and a spouting water fountain greeted us.

The thrill-seekers in the group immediately headed for the coaster with the twisted-steel track that rolls over, dives, and spins — and then reverses itself. It's called the Mind Eraser. Reliable sources informed me that it promises an adrenaline rush.

Four new coasters will be ready for riding on May 19 including Batman Knight Flight, the billed as the world's longest "floorless" coaster.

If a twisty, curvy, river-raft ride piques your interest, check out the Grizzly Run. This white-

water adventure in the water park will be up and running on May 27.

Six Flags, a mix of more than 100 rides and attractions, manages nicely to blend some classic entertainment with high-tech thrills.

Mary Quinley is a Livonia resident and author of "52 Ohio Weekends." She writes about travel and dining for The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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From the Web: The following are some of the most common questions asked by employers in the National Career Development Association's 1999 Survey of Career Development Practitioners.
Subject: Career Development Practitioners

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