

Cincinnati Kids

When I wrote about our trip to King's Island (an amusement park near Cincinnati Ohio) a few blog posts ago, I mentioned how I have the behind-the-scenes Brady Bunch book written by the actor who played Greg Brady on the show, Barry Williams. A few nights ago, I looked up the episode in the book where the Bradys visit King's Island, and I read the synopsis (including the part about how the Bradys almost didn't make it off The Racer roller coaster alive! If you watch the episode, look for their terrified faces as they pulled into the station – that was not acting!) and dug up clips of the episode on [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

If you've been to King's Island recently or in the past 10 or 20 years, then you will see how much the park has changed since this episode was filmed – enjoy!

Superman Where Are You Now

It has been years since I have been to [Kings Island](#) (I was in junior high the last time I went). It has changed so much in the many seasons that I remembered only a handful of the attractions and the overall feel has changed A LOT which is a GREAT THING! I loved every minute of it! Maybe because the four of us were V.I.P.s for the day which allowed us to not wait in lines, unlimited drinks throughout the park, a lunch buffet, a photo taken while on a coaster, and \$25 in Beagle Bucks.

I'm not certain that a large number of people know about the V.I.P tour because it seems as if most of the employees were even stymied. Thank goodness for Chase, our 9 hour tour guide who was a blast to have lead us around. One of our group soon became ill and had to sit out a bit from the big thrill rides so Chase so kindly stepped in and rode with me for a while. Who says work can't be fun?

With the exception of one, all of the rides were amazing! So amazing that it was a toss up between the 31 year old wooden [BEAST](#) (which we rode at least 4 times IN THE FRONT and once in the middle... YUCK!) and the newer metal, smooth flying [Diamondback](#) that were my favorites. Also high up there were the [Firehawk](#) and [Invertigo](#). I must say that I was pleased that I only caused one ride to stop. Unfortunately, it was Firehawk and C, L, Chase, and I were in our car, flat on our backs, staring up at the sky, inches from the station at the end of the ride. The [Drop Tower](#), while confining and almost caused C and I to feel the need to bail out, was great, too.

The last time I was at the park, the Kiddie Land was devoted to the characters of Hanna-Barbera: The Smurfs, the

Flintstones, Scooby-Doo, and the like. Scoobs is still there in the form of an interactive 3D ride in which you shoot monsters and compete with your ride partner. Just beat me by 30 points. Most of the fun for the little ones (like its sister park, Cedar Point) is now devoted to Peanuts characters.

What's a good amusement park on a hot, humid day without a good, soaking water ride? Hand down the best one Kings Island has to offer is White Water Canyon. Funny, but I do not remember the cannons that onlookers can fire at the rafts along the way. One of the female operators along the way got me on purpose and yelled that she liked my Superman tshirt.

THANKS! Another curious thing... Chase informed us that we were one of the few V.I.P. groups to even want to ride water attractions. We rode White Water Canyon 4 times. Two times in a row each time.

Another old favorite was the Racer. It used to have one blue train and one red train that raced each other along the track.

One train used to go backward but eventually went forward. Must not be as popular as it once was because only one train was running. While on the Racer, I forgot to take my Superman hat off my head... Bye, Bye Man of Steel.

Another highlight was the behind the scenes tour of the Beast given by Don... who holds the record for most rides on the Racer and also named the Diamondback coaster.

After releasing our exCELLENT guide... THANK YOU CHASE! we wanted to stay until the park closed to ride the Beast at dark but Mother Nature had other ideas. Shortly after Chase left us at 7, it began to rain so it was off to use our Snoopy Bucks. I replaced my Superman cap with a Kings Island one and bought a Snoopy tshirt "I Can Do That."

We also took in a great show "Way Too Much TV" which showcased the themes from favorite tv shows of the 50s-90s. Even the

lyrics to the themes of Bewitched and I Love Lucy were sung. I got to play theme song trivia before the show began and got a Way Too Much TV button as a prize!

On the way home, I was given the opportunity to eat at a White Castle for the first time ever. It was really not as bad as I have heard some people say (I don't know where those family members would know from because there are none in our immediate area). And I didn't notice any of the lingering effects of the Sliders as I made my way home at 12.30AM.

Thank you Chase! Had A GREAT DAY! And thanks to C & [L](#) for another great time! I am way too spoiled with all this no line theme park fun!

VIPs For A Day (part three of... well, I'll try to make this the last part)

If you've read my first two blog posts about our trip to King's Island, then you know that I've rambled and chronicled, and now I'm blue in the face and ready to move on. I would like to rate most of their rides though for those who are curious and/or contemplating a visit to the theme park. Somewhere there is a Discovery Channel show about the 10 Most Extreme Roller Coasters I'd like to see – I hear King's Island has 3 or more on the list! Going to hope that it's on youtube... If you haven't read my previous post, here is my ride experience scale: 1♦ = not so good, while 5 ♦ = awesome!

The Racer – 3♦. A wooden racing roller coaster that doesn't really race. According to our guide, people on the different

racing trains would trash-talk each other so much that they built a wall to separate the two train colors. When we rode, the first time the blue train was not operating, and the second time, the trains did not go at the same time. Still a fun wooden coaster though!

Flight Deck – 1♦. Formerly called Top Gun, but whatever you call it, we did not like it. It's a roller coaster whose car is suspended from the track above the car, which basically amounted to a lot of swinging. Ok for me, not my favorite, but it made my husband sick.

Vortex – $\frac{1}{4}$ ♦ – This one only gets a quarter star to put it on the map – my map key didn't exactly contain a zero, so let's give it a quarter star just because it's a coaster. But otherwise, yuck. Jerky, but without any real thrills. Reminds me of the Shockwave they used to have at Six Flags Great America in Gurnee Illinois. Funny how I used to ride that over and over, especially near park closing when it would empty out. We would just stay on Shockwave until they kicked us off! But as an adult, the ride type doesn't work for me.

Invertigo – 3♦. I need to go back on this one when it isn't lunch time! I think the Flight Deck/Invertigo/haven't had lunch yet combo did me in as I felt a bit queasy after this one. Basically, you go up and through a loop, and do the same thing backwards. The cool thing about this one is that you face other riders, which I actually don't know if that's a cool thing or not – our guide recommended we try sitting on either the front or back of this one so we didn't have to face strangers on the coaster. I did enjoy how this one whizzed through the station though, and like I said, I will have to try it again on a full stomach.

Sponge Bob 3D Ride – $4\frac{1}{2}$ ♦. I really liked this one! A lot of fun, and much more movement than its counterpart at Universal Studios, the Jimmy Neutron ride. It's a 3D Sponge Bob movie where the seats move as you move about Sponge Bob's world.

The scenery is great, and not only is it 3D, but the rider actually gets to move along with the movie. As a bonus, the movie is very funny, and I loved the story!

Whitewater Canyon – $4\frac{1}{2}\diamond$. You know the type – a large round boat makes it way down a “river”, complete with rapids, drops, and waterfalls. I always love this type of ride and much of the fun is riding it with your friends or even strangers trying to see who is going to get the most wet! The day we went, it was an unseasonal 70°, and getting wet wasn’t quite as enjoyable as usual. This is actually one of the smaller versions of this type of ride that I’ve been on, and the boat seated 6 people instead of the usual 8, 10, or 12 as I’ve seen before. But this version has an added element of fun – friends, family, and people who have ridden the ride can take revenge on riders by putting in a quarter for a chance to launch a water cannon at passing boats. This part is lots of fun, although they need to get the change machine working so more people can squirt! We went on with some kids who didn’t get wet enough in their opinion, so they rode again while we kept watch at the water cannons and succeeded in getting them SOAKED!

Backlot Stunt Coaster – $2\diamond$. Lameness. But remember, I’m used to Universal Studios since we try to trek to Orlando yearly. This has nothing on Universal. But I suppose for younger kids, it could instill a feeling of bravery as they race past exploding police cars. It goes kind of fast up a winding track, which is kind of different, but other than that, the excitement kind of fizzled, and the ride isn’t all that long. The brightly colored cars you ride in are super-cute, but does that really matter?

Adventure Express – $1\frac{3}{4}\diamond$. This is also kind of lame, which is alright, not every coaster has to be top thrill. But this one is like Big Thunder Mountain Railroad at Disney, but that is bigger and faster. Adventure Express was going alright until the rider finds himself in a climatic tunnel, climbing a lift

past moving robots and everything. Then when you reach the top – nothing. Nada. Literally – the ride ends here. What the ?

Scooby Doo and the Haunted Castle – 4½♦. You ride through scenes of Scooby Doo trying to shoot the bad guys with a laser gun attached to your car – cool! Even better, I actually beat my husband on this one! This ride is a lot like Buzz Lightyear at Disney, and I can never even get close to Hubby's score on that one. He must have had an off-ride though, cuz the second time we rode he beat me silly again. Oh well, this ride is awesomely themed. They remembered quite a few of the bad guys from the old Scooby Doo tv show, and there were sound bites galore. The castle looks awesome from the outside, and we even drove a Mystery Machine:



Other fun rides at this park that deserve at least an honorable mention are the railroad (just a standard train ride, but oh-so-relaxing after a huge day of coaster riding!), the Wild Thornberry's River Adventure (kind of a lame log-flume type ride, but still lots of fun), the Eiffel tower (we didn't ride it, but it was gorgeous to look at), and Dodgem (plain ole bumper cars, but when is the last time hubby and I got to ride 'n bump kid-free? I don't even remember!). Because we splurged and got the guided tour, we even had time to catch some shows – an ice show and an 80's review. The ice skaters were pretty good; especially one guy who even did a triple axle! The 80's show was fun, even though many of the

performers were incapable of both singing and dancing at the same time. There was a special Michael Jackson tribute, even though he had passed away only a week before our visit. But there were afros, mullets, big bangs, leg warmers, bright colors, even giant Rubik's cubes, and it was fun to sing along to the rockin' 80's tunes. One did get the feeling however, that not one member of the show had any idea of what the '80's was actually like...

So there you have it. I've reviewed and rated the rides I rode and found worth a mention. If you are thinking of visiting, you should know that King's Island also has a huge kids area, and many more rides I didn't mention. We tried to stay away from any rides with a lot of spinning or anything that looked too crazy (especially this one called Delirium):



It looked a little too crazy/dizzy for me; maybe if you go to King's Island, you can try it and let me know what it's like in the comments!

VIPs For A Day (part two of

even more parts)

So, where did I leave off when I blogged about our kid-less [day trip to King's Island](#) amusement park? I don't remember; I got kind of side-tracked and have made a few unrelated blog posts since then... But no matter, I'll just begin by rating the rides at King's Island; my scale is 1-5 ♦'s, 1 being not so good and 5 being a perfect ride experience.

The Beast – 4½♦. I have an in-depth description of this one in my previous post, but I will recap again – very cool wooden roller coaster; built into the existing terrain of the Miami River valley in southern Ohio which means you can be speeding along not more than 3 feet above the ground, thinking you must travel a lift before you can drop, but that's not the case! This is the longest wooden roller coaster in the **world** with a 4 minute and 50 second ride time. Like any wooden coaster, it can be rough and rickety (I was sure I threw out my bad back on one of the speeding curves, but thankfully, I did not. Shhh, don't tell anyone I ride coasters with a bad back, but it must not be that bad since my back was one of my least sore parts the day after King's Island), but these sensations improve if you ride the front row – I HIGHLY recommend the front seats on this one!

Diamondback – 4½♦ – I also talked about the park's newest addition in my previous post, so here is another recap. Exceptionally smooth ride, with no upside-down air time. Rather, the only air time is achieved when your butt *lifts* from your seat on the multiple drops. The sensation of free-falling is achieved by the restraint system – one smallish plastic piece that sits between your legs – that's it! The picture I posted in my previous blog doesn't do justice to the coaster, so here is another:



I know certain readers of mine will notice that this is indeed a computer-generated picture, so I might as well just say that outright. The first time we went on Diamondback, I **loved** it, and it would have gotten an even higher rating from me if it were not for the time we rode it in the front row. Unlike The Beast, the front row of the Diamondback adds an entire new dimension to the ride – one I was happy enough without! I respect our tour guide's opinion that riding front on Diamondback is a must-do experience, and even though it wasn't for me, I'm glad I got to do it once. But it was S0000 scary!

Firehawk – Holy (excuse my language) crap. This is one doozy of a coaster!!! Wow, I forgot to rate it, hmmm let me think... $3\frac{3}{4}\diamond$. First let me explain what this coaster is, and then I can explain what would have made it better. The riders load into Firehawk, and then the seats recline until the rider is *lying down*. Not for the faint of heart – you are strapped into flexible (not hard plastic like most) shoulder harnesses, and then you are tilted backward until you are lying on your back – and it even feels like your head might just be lower than your feet. So anyway, lying down, the rider leaves the station, and proceeds to go up a hill, head first, facing the sky. So of course you can't see when you're going to reach the top. And when you finally do reach the top of the lift, you flip until you're flying Superman-style through the trek of the coaster. Overall, it was awesome, and I have to say that I truly misjudged how ultimately different the horizontal sensation would be – it was VERY different. What kept me from giving this coaster a higher rating, however, was this (and a

discussion on the long ride home found my husband thinking the same thing): For a unique roller coaster where you were supposed to feel like you were flying, especially for one of the first and only of this type (this is the only one in Ohio, I believe), they really could and should have simplified the design. Instead of all the inversions, corkscrews and loops, they should have actually slowed down the coaster and left the rider suspended belly-down for the majority of the ride. After people experienced that, THEN they could have added the speed and all the inversion stuff in an update version of the ride, and it would have been like a 2-fer – 2 rides, one idea. The way it was, the ride was so fast that you really didn't have the time to pretend to be Superman, and that was a shame. The woman in our row the second time we rode Firehawk was, and I quote, "terrified". My husband told her it wasn't that bad, and when he told her that, I was thinking, "What are you thinking? It IS terrifying!". I just did not think that being on our backs face up on our way up the lift was the right time to tell a stranger that my opinion differed from my husband's – it's not like she could check my face for my true feelings. The woman found out for herself. I think she liked it though, as did I in the end, despite the changes I would make. Another fun thing about this coaster is that while waiting in line (or by-passing the line on your VIP tour, highly recommended please see my first King's Island post), you get to pass next to the part of the ride where it first slows down as the riders come back into the station. You can hear the riders' very first reactions to the crazy configuration of this coaster, and that is a really cool time-filler!

Flight of Fear – 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ♦. It does feel strange to rate this and the previous coaster the same since they are two very different ride experiences, so I feel the need to disclaim that I'm rating my overall ride experience. Keep in mind that I am no longer in my 20's, so I've lost my reckless abandonment. I really like roller coasters, but I do draw the

line and find some things too scary – so my rating system might vary from that of a true coaster enthusiast. But anyway, I liked Flight of Fear, largely because it is like a much better version of Disney's Space Mountain. My husband likened it to the Aerosmith Rock N Roller Coaster at Disney's ~~MGM~~ Hollywood Studios – which I loved, but I found it more like a much improved Space Mountain. All 3 are dark indoor coasters. Flight of Fear and Aerosmith have what they call linear induction launches, which is how smart people say "0-54mph in 4 seconds!". On the way home, I was browsing through (ahh, life without kids in the car!) the super-cool stat sheets our guide gave us as parting gifts, and I noted that Flight of Fear was the first ride in the world with the linear induction launch! It was SO much cooler than Space Mountain; much more smooth and with inversions. Space Mountain is herky-jerky, and there are no drops nor inversions – it's almost kind of like, what's the point? THIS is Magic Kingdom's thrill ride? But then again, Magic Kingdom really isn't like that – you visit with small children and/or for the small child inside yourself. But my point is, Flight of Fear is SO much better than Space Mountain, but not quite as good as the Aerosmith coaster – perhaps something to do with Aerosmith's black light fluorescent graphics versus the plain darkness of Flight of Fear; I preferred the graphics. For a tangent, here is an interesting story about Flight of Fear: as I mentioned, we had a guide for our trip to this park. Other park visitors would see he was an employee and ask him questions throughout the day. One of the questions was "Is Flight of Fear still open?". Our guide said yes, not really knowing what the guest was talking about until later during the behind-the-scenes tour of The Beast when the park's PR Manager, Don Helbig (who has ridden The Racer, another wooden coaster, almost 12,000 times! How does one even count that high, especially when being tossed around on a wooden coaster?) told us that one of his job's challenges was to dispel the rumors about the park given life by the internet. One of those rumors he talked about happened to be that Flight

of Fear met its demise. Not true – Flight of Fear is alive and well and also well worth riding, especially if you are a person who is used to Space Mountain. I think I can pretty much guarantee you will like Flight of Fear better.

Well... I have once again ~~talked~~ blogged your ear (?) off with my boring detailed account of an event. I wanted to rate most of the enjoyable rides at King's Island, but I must cut the post short for now – maybe I will be able to get the other cool rides in the next post if I cool it a little and shorten the detail... Until then...