

Backyard Thrill Rides (Don't Try These At Home – Watch Youtube Instead!)

In the newspaper the other day, there was an article that caught my interest about a couple of college engineering students who built a homemade roller coaster in their backyard (with mom's reluctant approval). I figured there would be video of their creation on youtube.com, but I was unable to find the exact coaster from the article. I did, however, find many videos featuring brave and creative souls fashioning their own various types of thrill rides and testing them out – some so amusing I had to put them together. You can probably tell by the picture on the video if it's going to be one you'll want to watch in action. And by the way, more than a few of these trials reminded me of that article I read and [wrote about](#) a while back about reasons for common ER visits called: Don't Laugh, It Could Happen To You...

This guy rides his backyard roller coaster in a little chair, and it even has an inversion:

This guy uses a little mining type cart, and he seems to achieve some pretty good speed:

This one looks more like it's on train tracks, but it's a long ride, and he also looks like he hits some pretty decent speeds:

This one's not a roller coaster, but sort of homemade gravitron:

Are you going to be as surprised as I was about the speeds this ATV uses to wind up this poor lady's sling shot? This is one heck of a human sling shot!!

And finally, this video begins with saying this kid's parents were out of town... uh, oh. This guy builds a slip n' slide off the 2nd story of his house. Does anyone else find it funnily ironic that the test subject gets congratulated after his run by a guy with his arm in a sling? The first tester, perhaps?

Disney Vs. Universal – Round 1,642

As a frequent visitor to Orlando Florida, the United States theme park capital, the following news stories caught my eye. Disney World and Universal Studios have been competing in an epic battle for tourists for a few decades now, and as a result, us tourists are the real winners! Check out the two new additions to each park!

[Universal Studios is adding a Harry Potter-themed world!](#) I'm not even a fan of the series and the pictures and descriptions of this place excited me! I might have to read a Harry Potter book or see some of the movies before I check it out! This answers the question I posed in a previous blog post – What will happen to Marvel Superhero Island when Disney buys Marvel? Answer: who cares? Universal will have the Wizarding World of Harry Potter!

Not to be outdone, Disney has released that they are doubling the size of their current Fantasyland area, adding a Little Mermaid attraction, among other things. If the rumors on [this blog](#) are true, it seems to me like Universal is going to win this time. More meet-and-greet space at Disney? Yawn! Bring on the thrill rides! But if I know the folks at Disney, they have more than doubling Dumbo and adding more Disney princess meet-and-greet up their sleeves and just haven't leaked that part of the expansion to the public yet... So stay tuned!

Vacation Diary – Chapter One

Because Disney World and the Orlando area in Florida are our favorite places to vacation, we make it a point to go as often as we possibly can. The last few trips we've made, I've been careful to keep a trip diary – a notebook log of things we do as well as hints that might help us make the next journey. Each trip to FL sees me taking a notebook for our trip diary, and I write about various things in it, depending how much downtime I have to write while the kids are sleeping. Here is an excerpt from the diary for this trip:

FRIDAY OCT 17, 2008 – Left town about 5:30pm. Unfortunately, our local Burger King we decided to get for dinner took about 30 minutes! Kids were rambunctious, so we stopped at a McDonald's Playland in downstate Ohio, wondering how we were ever going to make it the remaining 1,000 miles and back again (at least I was!). The good news is, the Playland seemed to tire out the kids and they fell asleep. They woke around midnight, but a trip into the gas station seemed to comfort Disney (almost 2 year old) and the kids slept until about 8 am Sat morning.

SAT OCT 18, 2008 – We stopped at another McD's Playland to blow off some steam, but it was raining, so their outdoor playplace was closed. The kids handled it well. This was north of coastal Brunswick, GA, so we made pretty good time the night before – thanks to sleepless driver Chris! Since the weather was nice, when we saw a sign around Jacksonville, FL that the beach was only 4 miles away, we decided to stop. We had a great time, and the kids had lots of fun wading in the ocean and collecting seashells. After that, it was on to Orlando, and we stopped and picked up the key for our condo rental when we got there. We then made it to the condo – which was over 10 miles away, much to our surprise – where our faithful driver promptly crashed leaving me to facilitate the activities of 4 well-rested kids. But no problem, I was glad

to do it. After all, I had been afforded a nice nap in the car on the way down, a luxury my husband didn't get. Of course, I'm a person who does best with 8-10 hours of sleep, not that I ever get close to that, but still... So I'm doing my best to summon all the patience I have so I can watch the kids who would not let me nap, and I ended up taking the younger two to Walgreens with me to get some supplies. The place we stayed in was very nice, but it didn't come with anything – no soap, shampoo, paper towels, beverages... for a family of 6 staying for a week, these were necessities I would need at the local Walgreens. I killed some time there, got lost on the way back, and by the time I had unloaded kids and groceries, my husband was rested and ready for some fun. We went to Golden Corral for dinner... delicious. Reminder for those of you who live in urban areas – we're not used to a variety when it comes to eating out. So, when we eat out, even at major chain restaurants, we appreciate them in a way we never did when they were available constantly.

SUN OCT 19 – slept in, had lunch at Golden Corral. Read my post about the previous night's activities if you don't understand why we had two meals in a row with Golden Corral. I would say the lunch is even better than the dinner. So then we went to Old Town, which is a row of shops fashioned like an old fashioned Main Street – there's even a general store where they sell little glass bottles of Pepsi for 50¢. When we first started going to Old Town 10 years ago, those little bottles were a quarter, but I'm not complaining – there's something about the glass bottle that makes that Pepsi taste extra good. Maybe it's the thirst quenching relief it provides after walking around in the Florida heat, or maybe it's the always much needed caffeine boost – whatever the reason, that little bottle always hits the spot. The Main St. part of Old Town is about 4-5 blocks long, and at each end, there are carnival rides. The roller coaster is jerky but fun, and I went on the swinging boat ride which was scarier than it looked! My fearless daughter, who always wants to try

the big rides but isn't tall enough yet, was shaken enough on the swinging boat ride that she cried. We sat on the end, which I knew would be more thrilling than the middle, but I didn't realize how much more mild the middle would be until I rode there with our friend Jamiahsh. We had lots of fun at Old Town and kinda lost track of time. We wouldn't have been late for the dinner show Arabian Nights if we hadn't left the tickets back at the condo... oops. We had to walk around in the dark and missed the first few minutes of the show. At least they let my husband in, who let us out at the door and had to park the car. The worker in the parking lot told him to give all the tickets to me, but when my husband tried to get in, they gave him a hard time without a ticket! Thank goodness he was able to get in and also find us in the dark. [Arabian Nights](#) is a great show. Think Medieval Times (if you've been there) without the chivalrous games. Well, there is a chariot race, but there are more acrobatics and horse dancing – the horses are gorgeous. My husband calls it Medieval Times for girls, and all us girls in the family love it. My husband was able to get a good deal on tickets online, so the show cost less than a regular dinner! And their food is really good. It's served with all-you-can-drink pop, which backfired a little bit because in the dark with the show going on, it was difficult to notice that our 2-year-old Disney was drinking A LOT of pop. So next thing I know, she's walking around, and she starts going up the stairs and tells me she'll be right back. I said, no, Disney let's stay in our seats, and then she YELLED at me – "I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!". It wasn't a really angry outburst, but if you know sweet little Disney, it was so out of character for her that it was hilarious. She was all hepped up on sugar and pop. So there's our first 2 days in Florida. We started Monday off with a time share presentation – ugh – so I'll take that as my cue to stop posting for now. This post is long enough, wouldn't you say?