

VIPs For A Day (part one of more parts)

On Thursday, my husband's brilliant ability to find awesome entertainment deals on the internet paid off once again. He booked us a VIP tour at [King's Island \(click for a view of the rides and attractions!\)](#) near Cincinnati Ohio, and we spent the entire day at this awesome amusement park! The VIP tour included our own personal guide; a park employee who followed us around all day leading us up the exits of every ride so that we got to bypass the line and ride without waiting – *in the seat of our own choosing*. We also got to wear lanyards with VIP passes on them (think of the movie Wayne's World when Wayne and Garth get backstage passes to see Alice Cooper. They wear them around their necks and proudly display their lanyards, flashing them into the faces of nearly everyone they encounter, hilarious!) – and tempting to reenact, but there were some people in line who were upset that we got to board without waiting in line; I wouldn't want to rub it in. But I would recommend the VIP tour to anyone who wants to go to King's Island – it includes a guide (you can even make him do things, like hold your stuff and go on rides, haha!), no lines (sometimes a minimal 5 minute wait at the gate while the ride operators find a place to stick you in, not really an issue at all – there is plenty to watch for those 5 minutes), an all-you-can-eat buffet for lunch, unlimited fountain drinks throughout the day, ice cream, a backstage tour of The Beast (the longest wooden roller coaster in the world!), and 2 ride pictures. A great deal, especially if you want to sit through my following narrative to see if it's a place you'd want to visit:

The lady on the phone told us to get to the park at 8:30 am, so we were actually early and had to wait in a car line to get in. When we got to the park, we got shuffled around and had

to wait a bit more – it seems that this part of the tour could be tweaked a little bit. We didn't get our guide and get on rides until about 9:45. Still early (park opens to the general public at 10), but we had about an extra hour of doing nothing at the park (could have slept an hour longer!), so perhaps they should tweak this part of the tour to make it run more smoothly for the guest – everything else about the tour is really great though! So anyway, our guide comes to meet us, and we gave him our list of rides and follow him around the park. Actually, since it was before 10, only the park's brand new showcase ride and The Beast were open. So we began with the Diamondback – which I had named as the ride that scared me the most on the way over. But I loved it! It was so smooth and all those fast drops were so fun in the cool open air. The Beast was another story. I liked it, but it was very rattly and jerky. Going back on The Beast later in the day and sitting in the front row changed the experience for me, however, and we ended up riding it a lot! Once we discovered the front car of The Beast and I switched sides of the train with hubby, I enjoyed the ride immensely. It's a **4 minute, 50 second** ride through the forest on a wooden roller coaster at speeds of over 60 mph. The subtle sound of chirping birds accompanied by the naturalistic scents of the surrounding forest and the wooden tunnels where the coaster whizzes is indescribable. A comment on themeparkinsider.com says about The Beast, *"Running through the thick forest at 65 mph on an intense wooden coaster...about as close to riding a real beast as you can get. Classic ride that always delivers."* – I have to agree. They built another wooden coaster at King's Island called Son of the Beast, but it closed in June when people complained it was too rough. From the printed King's Island info, I learned that Son of the Beast was a *looping* wooden coaster – interesting. Oh well, maybe it'll open some day for me to try. But back to the backstage tour of The Beast – very cool. We watched some trains descend the first large drop which actually leads directly underground into a tunnel. We walked further into the forest (noticed

some long-gone riders' possessions along the way: broken sunglasses, coins, hats, etc. Didn't see any cell phones, but then again, we saw the lost cell phone display they have in the Diamondback area – a big clear box FULL of cell phones, ipods, Blackberries, PDAs, etc.), and we learned some interesting facts while watching riders fly past us – and boy, were they surprised to see us walking around back there in the forest!! As for the facts – the entire coaster was built from scratch on site; unlike many of today's coasters which are shipped into the parks in segments. The Beast was built around and including the existing rolling terrain of the Miami River valley in lower Ohio, and as I mentioned, it goes underground. It has speed monitors built into parts of the track, so if a train is going too fast, it will automatically break to slow itself down. I gratefully noticed this while riding, and it helped calm my concerns of flying off the track. This coaster goes so fast into those tunnels – WOW! For all these reasons and more, it's a coaster like NO other! Here's a pic – looks like something I'll have to try in the fall; the forest looks beautiful during peak season for color-changing leaves:



Ironically, the exact opposite thing happened with the Diamondback – I loved it the first time, and then I tried the front row which was absolutely terrifying! I won't be riding the front of the Diamondback again. Careening down that first 74° drop (!) practically face-down at over 80 mph with only a red thing between my legs to keep me from plummeting to the earth made me feel like I was going to die for sure.



And not in a good way, which is ironically enough sometimes the reason why lots of crazy people like to ride coasters. Being in the front seat on Diamondback makes it look like the track disappears beneath you, then before you know it, you're flying in the air getting lift out of your seat and you have nothing on either side nor in front of you – yikes! I've grown too old to feel invincible, so I put a cap on my thrill-seeking. I enjoy a good coaster, but I also have my limits. If you are a thrill-seeker roller coaster enthusiast who just can't get enough, try the front car on Diamondback! And a side note, the guy who gave us the behind the scenes tour of The Beast is the guy who thought of the name for Diamondback; it was an interesting experience to have something like that come up during a conversation.

I think I'll stop there for now... it was a big day, and I'd like to write up more and get more pictures up – and yes, I do have those free ride pictures we got of Chris and I on The Beast and Diamondback. Am I willing to post them on the internet? Maybe you'll have to read my other King's Island posts to find out!

Busiest Weekend EVER! Part Two

(continued from a previous blog post)

So here's a recap of Sunday – church, brunch, Hannah Montana movie – and that is where I left off.

So we get to the Hannah Montana movie, and of course our 9-month-old son wakes up from his nap just in time for the movie (couldn't be awake to play at church, couldn't be awake to indulge in brunch, alas – that's always the way when you have kids – they sleep thru everything good, and I swear it's a rule – they always wake when the irony is thick!) But, because the Hannah Montana movie is a musical, our 3 youngest were kept too busy to perform their usual awful antics at the movie theater. It was a girly movie, especially with a double love story plot, but our little boy is only 9-months-old, so he didn't notice the girlishness. Instead he loved the musical interludes, and he clapped to each one enthusiastically. For some reason, and I've written about this before, the movie theater turns our normally sweet 2-year-old into a little stripper. Luckily, by the time the idea to take her clothes off occurred to her today, it was near the end of the movie, so she only got as far as taking off her socks and shoes – although she did make sure to note (yell) while doing so, “Don't look at me – I take clothes off!” Ok, Disney, if you don't want people looking, why are you taking your clothes off? Such is the logic of a 2-year-old, I guess.

We had no major spills this time (I'm referring to our last experience when we saw Monsters Vs. Aliens and we somehow dumped an entire soft drink into the lady's purse who was sitting behind us – major oops!), and today our baby was on his best behavior as well because of all the music in the movie – something that I think saved us as far as our 3

youngest kids' behavior at the movies today. As for the movie itself, I enjoyed it more than I did Monsters Vs. Aliens, probably because I actually got to watch this one. But an extra nice surprise for me was the country music add-ins – surprise performances from Taylor Swift and my favorite group, Rascal Flatts. They sang one of their best songs acoustically as if they were relatives just sitting around jamming at a family get-together (can this be MY family get-together?), and it was thoroughly enjoyable. Miley Cyrus even showed her country roots in a song which attempts to revive line-dancing; I guess kids these days (now I sound like I'm 80 – GREAT, when did THAT happen?!?) have a dance they do to this song, but whatever, I kind of liked the song. Overall, I truly enjoyed the country theme that was abundant in this movie – groovin' country music, gorgeous farm fields, cowboys ropin' horses... what's not to like? There was also a surprise (for me) appearance by Jan Levinson Gould from the tv show, The Office. Of course in this movie, she wasn't Jan – she was some southern belle who played Miley's dad's love interest – almost as far away from Jan as one could be, but I still enjoyed the Office reference. Also, keep in mind that this is a Disney film, so there are LOTS of prat-fallish types of humor, as well as recurring movie themes. For example, 'lobster trouble' (ala Splash, circa 1984), 'switching identities for different dinner dates' (ala Mrs. Doubtfire, circa 1993), 'major celebrity comes in to save a town' (ala Wayne's World 2, circa 1993 or ala Mystery, Alaska circa 1999), it's always best to be yourself' (ala... wow, WAY TOO MANY TO MENTION – take your pick...)

So anyway, I have to (reluctantly) admit that I was pleasantly surprised with the Hannah Montana movie – plenty of stuff in this one for the parents as well as the tweens and even the stripping two-year-olds. But the movie wasn't as plot-less as I had hoped – in other words, we didn't get home until 2:55 – just 20 short minutes before we had to leave for a class we had signed up for through church. So for the next 20 minutes

we scrambled around – letting dogs out, repacking diaper bags, changing diapers, etc. We arrived at our class pretty much on time, though a bit exhausted, thank you very much!

The class was great! We learned a lot about our church – their beliefs, their history, as well as their foundations for building a relationship with Christ – a very well-spent 3 hours. And we got to meet other couples at our table too – which is memorable for me because they were surprised to learn we had 4 kids – and I quote, “You don’t look old enough to have 4 kids!” NICE!

Following the class was a great dinner of homemade pasta provided by a local chef. Following the delicious dinner was a tour of the north campus of our church – we worship in the south campus, so it was nice to learn the ins and outs of the north campus – so awesome! Our oldest daughter was so excited to show us where her Sunday school was held, and their rooms for youth were VERY impressive! There was a room with a stage for youth productions, and it even had backstage areas, which is almost more than I can say for one of our community theater’s stages, haha! Also, there was a game room with multiple foosball tables and ‘carpet ball’ – something new to me, but a game I’d definitely like to try! One of the youth rooms had state-of-the-art stage lights and restaurant-style booths for kids to ‘hang out’ in... Overall, it was a fun evening, and I learned a lot. But, as became common for today, we had to rush from the church class in order to be home in time for the community theater’s play reading committee meeting and my much anticipated Cubs game. I was looking forward to this game for days. It was a long series (most are 3 game, some are 2 game, this one was 4 game) against the Cubs rival – the St. Louis Cardinals, with whom the Cubs are vying for first place. The game was at night, which is rare for a Sunday, so I was VERY excited about rounding out my weekend with such a game. But alas, the darn rain had its way, and the game was postponed. So only play

reading meeting to look forward to for me – at least I didn't have to rush the meeting and kick people too hard to leave my house since there was no Cub's game! And for once, I think we actually achieved a lot at the play reading committee meeting. Probably because of the fact that there were only 4 of us in attendance – but hey, maybe that 's what needs to be done in order to achieve something... too many people get in each others way, I guess. It will be interesting to see what the absent members think of the decisions the four of us made while they were absent – I hope the decisions stick!

In summary, a great, if extremely exhausting weekend. Come on now, would I have it any other way?