

Amusement and theme parks

Amusement park and theme park are terms which refer to a group of rides and other similar attractions assembled for the purpose of entertaining a large group of people. An amusement park is more elaborate than a simple city park as it provides attractions meant to cater to children, teenagers, and adults. Amusement parks with water resources generally feature a few water rides, such as the log flume¹, bumper boats², and rowing boats. Such rides are usually gentler and shorter than roller coasters and many are suitable for all ages.

Starting with *Disneyland* in the 1950s, the park experience became part of a larger package, reflected in a television show, movies, lunch boxes, action figures, and finally park rides and costumed characters that make up the 'theme'. In addition to this experience, the theme park is either based on a central theme or, divided into several distinctly themed areas, lands or 'spaces'. Nowadays, the term 'theme park' is often used as a synonym for 'amusement park'. A 'theme park' is actually a particular type of amusement park, with landscaping, buildings, and attractions that are based on one or more specific or central themes. Large resorts, such as *Walt Disney World* in Florida, house several different theme parks within their confines. Since the 1980s, the amusement park industry has become larger than ever before, with everything from large, world-wide type theme parks such as *Disneyworld* and *Universal Studios Hollywood* to smaller and medium-sized theme parks and countless smaller ventures in many countries around the world.

Even simpler theme parks directly aimed at smaller children have emerged, including *Legoland* which opened in 1999 in Carlsbad, California.

GLOSSARY

- 1 a narrow gorge, usually with a stream flowing through it
- 2 an amusement park ride that uses inner tube shaped watercraft with steerable electric motors. Most are equipped with water guns for duels with other riders



ACTIVITIES

1 Answer the following questions.

- 1 What are amusement parks?
- 2 When and where was the first amusement park opened?

- 3 What are the main attractions of an amusement park?
- 4 What is the main difference between an amusement and a theme park?

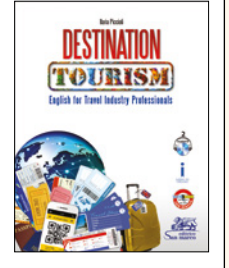
2 Have you ever been to a theme park? If so, write a brief description of it. If not, gather information about a theme park in Italy and write a brief description. Get ready for an oral presentation to the class.

3 Find in the text the English equivalents of the following Italian terms.

- 1 Parco di divertimenti
- 2 Parco a tema
- 3 Montagne russe
- 4 Personaggi in maschera
- 5 Barche a remi
- 6 Spettacolo televisivo
- 7 Innumerevole

4 Match a word in the first column with a word in the second one, then provide the Italian equivalents.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1 City | A Boxes |
| 2 Water | B Figures |
| 3 Lunch | C Park |
| 4 Themed | D Rides |
| 5 Action | E Areas |



5 Summarise the text below.

Alton Towers

Alton Towers is a theme park located in Staffordshire, England.

It attracts around 2.8 million visitors every year. The park is located in the grounds of a semi-ruined 18th-century country house of the same name.

The resort also includes two hotels – The Alton Towers Hotel and Splash Landings Hotel – The Alton Towers Waterpark, Extraordinary Golf, Conference Centre, and The Alton Towers Spa (located in the Alton Towers Hotel). The major attractions at Alton Towers include:

- *Nemesis*, Europe's first inverted roller coaster;
- *Oblivion*, the world's first vertical drop roller coaster;
- *Air*, the world's first flying roller coaster.
- *Rita*, a launched roller coaster which accelerates to 96 km/h in about 2.2 seconds.
- *Th13teen*, the world's first vertical free fall drop roller coaster.

The park is split into many themed areas, which are located in a horse-shoe shape around the Towers ruins and the 19th-century gardens. Guests have the option of using the Skyride, a cable car system, to navigate around the park; there are stations in proximity to Towers Street, Forbidden Valley and Cloud Cuckoo Land.

Opening times

The theme park is open from March to November. It also opens briefly for February half-term. Opening time is 9 a.m. each day with rides beginning at 10 a.m. Closing times vary – check the Alton Towers website for more details. The water park is open all year round excluding certain dates in December and January. It opens at 10 am each day – again closing times vary. The hotels are open all year round excluding 24-25 December.

