

# Hersheypark, Pennsylvania: A Delicious Park for the Whole Family

by Mary Kraemer, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Milton Hershey established a chocolate factory in the rolling green hills of Derry Church, Pennsylvania. In 1907, Hersheypark opened as a leisure park for Hershey employees.

The park eventually opened to the public and has expanded considerably. Today the park spreads over 110 acres and features more than 60 rides and attractions. It consistently provides a wholesome atmosphere for families and offers attractions geared toward pleasing every member of the family. It is clean, well maintained, and without exception, every employee I met on a recent visit was extraordinarily pleasant. To reinforce wholesome standards, even the park brochure politely details what kinds of clothing are not considered appropriate, which even includes "some language, gestures, and suggestive art" and the park "reserves the right to address these issues with all guests."

After parking in one of the large lots and riding a tram to the entrance, visitors have the choice of going directly to the park or visiting Hershey's Chocolate World, which is located just outside the main gate. Hershey's Chocolate World features a ride that gives visitors a glimpse into the chocolate-making process that has made Hershey so famous in America. The ride is entertaining, featuring a trio of singing cows, and at the end, visitors are rewarded with a free chocolate! Of course, Hershey's Chocolate World is also very possibly the largest emporium of all things Hershey in the universe.

One especially nice feature of Hersheypark is its system of measuring kids and issuing height-related wristbands. Their ride-height requirements use a "candy system" of different Hershey products and are set up in 6-inch increments. The gentlest rides are reserved for the Assorted Miniatures (up to 36 inches), then come Kisses (36-42 inches), Reese's Peanut Butter Cups (42-48 inches), Hershey's Milk Chocolate Bars (48-54 inches), Twizzlers (54-60 inches), and Jolly Rancher (over 60 inches). As a reward for being measured, kids also receive a free candy that corresponds to their height. The candy logos and images are found at ride entrances, and it's an easy system for kids to understand. Measuring kids once in the day is efficient, and ride operators only have to check wristbands rather than measure kids.

Inside the park, there is a paradise of rides just for little kids, and some of these rides have height restrictions that limit how tall riders can be! Hersheypark offers nearly two dozen charming rides specifically for

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younger guests, and some of them, like the Mini Pirate, are scaled-down versions of other park rides. These kiddie rides are gentle and creatively presented, with names such as the Bizzy Bees, the Balloon Flite, or the Dinosaur-Go-Round. For families with young children, Hersheypark delivers wonderful options for rides.

But Hersheypark aims to keep every member of the family happy, and on the other end of the spectrum, there are nearly a dozen coasters to make thrill seekers very satisfied. From the classic Trailblazer--a fairly standard steel coaster--to the Lightning Racer--a double-track wooden coaster that sends two trains simultaneously to race one another--to the first steel looping coaster on the East Coast, the SuperDooperLooper, Hersheypark has been building rides bigger, better, and faster over the years. The park's newest coaster, Fahrenheit, made my youngest daughter delighted to be a Twizzler (and made me feel just fine about watching her ride from a nearby bench!). This imposing coaster has a 90-degree vertical ascent right before its 97-degree negative drop, followed by some inverted loops, corkscrews, s-rolls, and high-speed curves. No wonder it's considered an 'aggressive' thrill ride!

Summers in Pennsylvania can be hot and humid. Well, Hersheypark has the answer for you with a large water park area called The Boardwalk. Going to the Boardwalk is nearly like going to a separate park within Hersheypark because guests in the Boardwalk area must wear swimsuits--not any street clothes or cutoffs--and the swim wear is not allowed in the rest of the park unless it is covered with street clothes.

We thought that the highlight of the Boardwalk area was the East Coast Waterworks, which is the largest water-play structure in the world. It is amazingly large and complex, with multiple slides (some of them several stories tall), hundreds of interactive water toys, pull ropes, tip cones, and two enormous buckets that dump a lot of water at once! My kids and I had to pick a meeting place because we constantly lost one another in this huge watery labyrinth. It was gloriously fun. If these waterworks are too overwhelming for little ones, there's the Bayside Pier area and Sandcastle Cove, which provide a much gentler water experience with zero-entry pools, bubbling fountains, small slides, water cannons, and jets.

The Boardwalk area also includes a set of four impressive water slides that start from 50 feet in the air, and a surfing "competition" ride. Then, if you think a water park is good, coasters are good, and a combination of the two must be awesome, there's The Roller Soaker, which lets riders dump water onto spectators but gives spectators the chance to even the score with prayers to soak the riders.

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Hersheypark is adjacent to ZooAmerica, and admission to the zoo is included in Hersheypark admission. (You can, however, visit ZooAmerica separately, without Hersheypark admission.) The town of Hershey has had a zoo nearly as long as it's had an amusement park, but it has changed over the years. The present zoo exhibits animals that are native to North America. The animal habitats are set up in sections that relate to their homelands: grassy waters (Everglades), north woods (evergreen forests), cactus community (Sonoran desert), big sky country (Midwestern prairies), and eastern woodlands.

The fun does not stop when summer ends, however. Hersheypark offers seasonal special events at Halloween and Christmas. Hersheypark in the Dark has special trick or treating for kids (and considering the sponsor, it's a pretty safe bet there will be loads of candy), rides, special shows, and entertainment, as well as admission to Creatures of the Night at ZooAmerica. At Christmas, Hersheypark is bedecked in twinkling lights, festive decorations, and visitors can enjoy rides and visit with Santa and his reindeer as well as see cheery holiday shows.

If you have time after experiencing everything that Hersheypark has to offer, take a drive through the main part of town. A unique feature of Hershey, Pennsylvania is the streetlights, which are topped with gigantic Hershey Kisses (wrapped and unwrapped)! Perhaps you could consider a stay at the Hotel Hershey, with its fabled Chocolate Spa, where the pampering includes chocolate in new and interesting ways!

For more information about Hershey (the city and all its attractions), visit <http://www.hersheypa.com> and for more information on Hersheypark visit <http://www.hersheypark.com>

*About The Author: Mary Kraemer, a travel consultant with [CruisingCo/MouseEarVacations](#), loves to travel with her husband and four children. She is an avid Disney fan who visits Disneyland several times a year and is looking forward to a fall trip to Walt Disney World and a week on the Disney Cruise Line!*

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