

LIFE

SOUTHEAST GEORGIA

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Love the Least:
**A Family with
Love to Share**

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PLUS

DIAMOND DARLINGS • AGING AT HOME • ON THE ST. MARYS RIVER
GOING, GOING, GONE • SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA • FORT FRED • and More!



SIX

| by **BOBBY L. HICKMAN** |

When you've been a major entertainment destination for more than 40 years, you've got to keep doing it bigger and better every year to keep folks coming back. And that's certainly the case at Six Flags Over Georgia, which added another major roller coaster this year to its menu of attractions for visitors of all ages.

Located off Interstate 20 in Austell just west of Atlanta, Six Flags Over Georgia is the largest regional theme park in the Southeast at more than 200 acres. The second in the "Six Flags" chain (Texas was the first), the Peach State's coaster capital opened in 1967. Today it boasts 38 rides, six live musical and entertainment shows, visits from costumed Looney Toons and DC Comics characters, an array of dining choices, shopping venues, and a concert series featuring top-name stars.

Every year seems to bring a new roller coaster at Six Flags, and 2011 is no exception. This year's addition is the Dare Devil Dive, the 11th entry in the line-up. The ride begins by climbing 10 stories high, then immediately plunges down at a 95-degree angle. The thrills include three inversions, high-speed turns and hills with zero gravity. Dare Devil Dive also features the world's first "v-shape" trains, which are individual six-passenger cars



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with stadium seating. Billed as a “Euro fighter,” the ride aims to recreate the feeling of early 20th century stunt planes as it twists and turns along the 2,000-foot track at 52 miles an hour. Passengers are only held in place by lap restraints and have an unobstructed view of the course – which really gets one’s adrenalin pumping, zooming around the track in an open car.

While the newest ride typically gets the most attention, Six Flags still has a number of favorites that continue to draw visitors back to the park. Traditionally popular roller coasters include the following.

Goliath, the largest coaster in the park, reaches speeds of 70 miles per hour after scaling peaks more than 200 feet high.

The Georgia Scorcher, one of the tallest and fastest stand-up coasters in the Southeast. The Scorcher is 3,000 feet long and almost 11 stories tall, hitting a maximum G-force of 4 and speeds of 54 miles per hour.

The Great American Scream Machine, a traditional wooden coaster that was once ranked the tallest such structure in the world. More than 40 million visitors have ridden this classic, which opened in 1973.

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The Georgia Cyclone, another wooden structure that is also the South's only twister coaster.

Superman: Ultimate Flight, the region's first flying roller coaster.

Add in such favorites as Ninja, Mindbender, Sky Coaster, Acrophobia, and Batman: The Ride, and you can spend the entire day soaring, bumping, screaming and laughing on a wide range of exciting thrill rides.

However, roller coasters aren't for everyone, so Six Flags has plenty of other activities for youngsters, oldsters and the faint of heart. Family rides bring generations together to share fun, whether it's gliding over the treetops in the Peachtree Square Sky Buckets, spinning around on the Wheelie gondolas, rattling around in Dählonega Mine cars, or riding the bulls at Toro Toro. The classic Monster Plantation attraction that dated back to the 1980s was recently renovated as Monster Mansion – while retaining its traditionally friendly animatronics creatures and peaceful indoor boat ride. Kids of all ages enjoy Thunder River, a whitewater rafting adventure that's guaranteed to leave everyone in your party soaking wet (Tip: bring a change of clothes for this one!).

In addition to the milder family rides, there are 20 rides and play areas just for the youngsters. Those include tamer versions of the log flume, mine car and sky bucket rides; bumper cars, airplanes, and similar smaller rides; and the Riverview Carousel, a merry-go-round that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A trip around the park on the Six Flags Railroad is

a great way to get familiar with the grounds and decide where to make your next stop.

When the family needs a break from theme park action, a live show can provide just the right pause for everyone to catch their breath. The "Looney Tones Dance Off" and the "Mr. Six Dance Party" showcase Bugs Bunny and his cartoon friends in musical settings. "Soda Shop Sweethearts" offers nostalgic songs from the Golden Age of rock 'n roll, while "Show Stoppin" spotlights current country, pop and rock hits. And all members of the family will enjoy the slapstick, wild west show "Shenanigans!"

In addition to daily entertainment, Six Flags also has a variety of special events on tap for 2011. The Southern Star Amphitheater is again hosting the STARBURST Summer Concert Series. Artists appearing in late summer include Mike Posner, We the Kings with The Summer Set, and Reed, Leland and Johnny Diaz. And no October would be complete

without "Fright Fest," the largest Halloween event in Atlanta that provides haunted attractions and unique entertainment venues.

For 2011, Six Flags Over Georgia is open daily through August 7, followed by weekend operations through October 30. For discount ticket offers, special events and hours of operation, visit www.sixflags.com/overgeorgia.

Also, don't forget about nearby Six Flags White Water off Interstate 75 in Marietta, the largest water park in the Southeast. White Water has more than 50 attractions for all ages, ranging from the relaxing "Little Hooch" lazy river to thrill rides like Cliffhanger – one of the world's tallest freefalls at 90 feet. Visit www.sixflags.com/whitewater for details about the current park schedule and prices. □

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