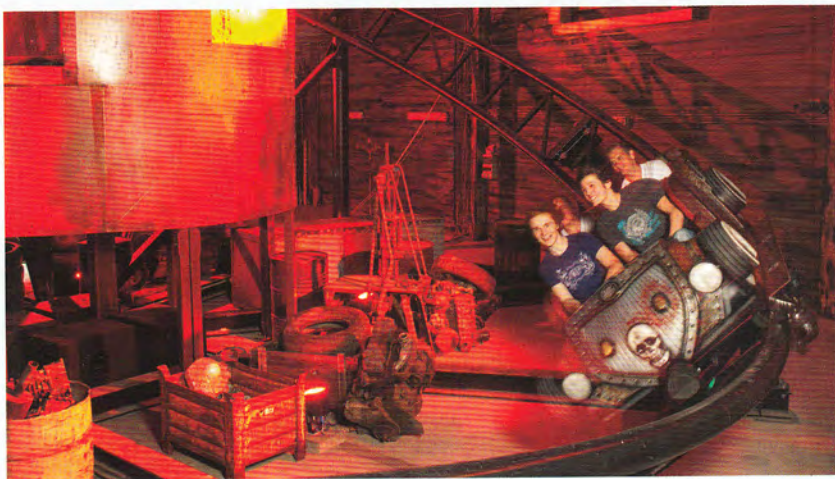


and will be the trend which will ultimately meet today's and future demands," while on the subject of accommodation, he sees a different take. "We have observed no increase in



Van Helsing's Factory is one of the more recent additions to Movie Park (Image courtesy Movie Park)

the number of guests wanting short breaks as well as the ones staying for a single day. Yet we are prepared to meet both groups' demands."

For von Bentzel, the main trend is attractions that go back to nature, so things made out of wood or themed more naturally, unlike like Sponge Bob for example, while on the accommodation question, he observes: "Yes, I think so. If you offer accommodation you have the possibility to target groups of people who want to stay for two or three days. They want short breaks where they can relax because the outside world is so fast!"

Sepe adds: "Despite the fantastic improvement in visitor numbers, what went drastically down is the in park spend. It was 70/30 per cent spending, with 30 on food, but this is now down to 20 per cent for F&B and 80 per cent on revenue from the entrance price. It's a little worrying and a very clear sign of the crisis. The fact that visitors are bringing their own food more is very evident."

On the question of people looking for more short break opportunities and the resulting increase in accommodation at park venues, Sepe is in no doubt that this is a growing area of the market. "100 per cent. We have built 320 beds in 80 bungalows. We have specialised in the safari park and amusement side so are not hoteliers and have no experience in this, so were really afraid to do it but I felt we should. Since we started we've seen a 30 to 35 per cent increase in occupancy each year and in our fourth year we are still seeing an increase in numbers. We are planning to do more and this again mirrors the crisis situation with the economy."

"The major trends in the past were marketable rides with a high visual impact on the visitors," comments von Elverfeldt. "This changed as we see a lot of renovations of

rides and areas. Some are because the areas are outdated, others use this to deal with a limited space. All in all there are a lot of attractions being built that replace existing ones at the moment.

"In the past two years the classic roller coasters and all kinds of family attractions had a big demand in our market. From small kiddie coasters to the big upside-down roller coasters, a lot have opened in recent years."

And for Zierer? "More developments towards indoor/weather resistant attractions and in general parks still feel the need to keep on changing/adding rides, so that they remain competitive. As in past years it is still evident that parks very much look at the theming of the ride. Special and nice theming does still attract riders a lot."

Our interviewees highlight a number of specific challenges and difficulties currently facing German park owners and operators, apart from competition from other types of leisure attraction and bad weather, and they cover a variety of areas. A lack of qualified employees, the global economic crisis, issues surrounding being a more diversified business, the possible introduction of a minimum wage in Germany, different VAT rates in different European countries (German parks have to levy a 19 per cent rate on ticket prices), high fuel prices and attractions that have been financially supported by local government or the state are some of the key issues mentioned.

Germany is, of course, one of the most mature markets in the industry with a wide array of park venues throughout the country. So is there room for more in the west of the country? Not in the opinion of the majority of our interviewees, who first off cite the fact that the country already has enough parks, which will continue to develop, but who also mention other reasons that make it difficult to develop new ones. Getting a return on investment is one area Mack mentions, while Leicht notes various regulations



This Zierer Force One coaster goes under the name of Indianer-Achterbahn at Heide Park Resort (Image courtesy Zierer)