

## COASTER

▶ Definite speedy drops and particularly a successful indoor area are the characteristics of this new coaster

The two-headed feathered snake Quetzalcoatl has found new lodgings at the animal and theme park Bellewaerde, in the form of a Zierer coaster that leads visitors into a temple where the mighty god of the elements Huracan has been closed in.

Text & Photos: Rik Engelen

▶ Photos show the station, two rooms in the Darkride section, and the ascent



# Huracan

The park that opened in 1959 has been known for its lush surroundings, laid back atmosphere and a good mixture of rides and animal exhibits, but until now it has not been known for its coasters. Although the park is home to the world's first, and still in great condition "Boomerang" coaster from Vekoma, as well as a large Zierer Tivoli coaster, it's only now after 29 years that "Huracan" joins its coaster siblings as a custom made, themed, indoor-outdoor coaster.

Bellewaerde Park was home to the 1991 Mack Darkride "Los Piratas". Deemed to have become too expansive in repairs, it was decided to remove it from the large building, and to replace it with a

new ride construction. "Huracan" is the name of the new attraction that has been placed in the existing building situated next to the atmospheric Mexican plaza in the far eastern part of the park, surrounded by the "Boomerang" and the Topple Tower "El Volador" from Huss.

Flanked by statues, the entrance of the ride creates a lot of attention, and visitors reach the station area by way of a large and winding queue through mine shafts and mural decorated hallways. The consistent and good theme, and various lighting effects are very effective. Guests however are only let into the station area per ride cycle, depriving the successful station unfortunately of well deserved attention from the waiting riders.

The snake-train offers comfortable seats and enough room. Separate lap bars make it possible for passengers to partake of the ride with a height

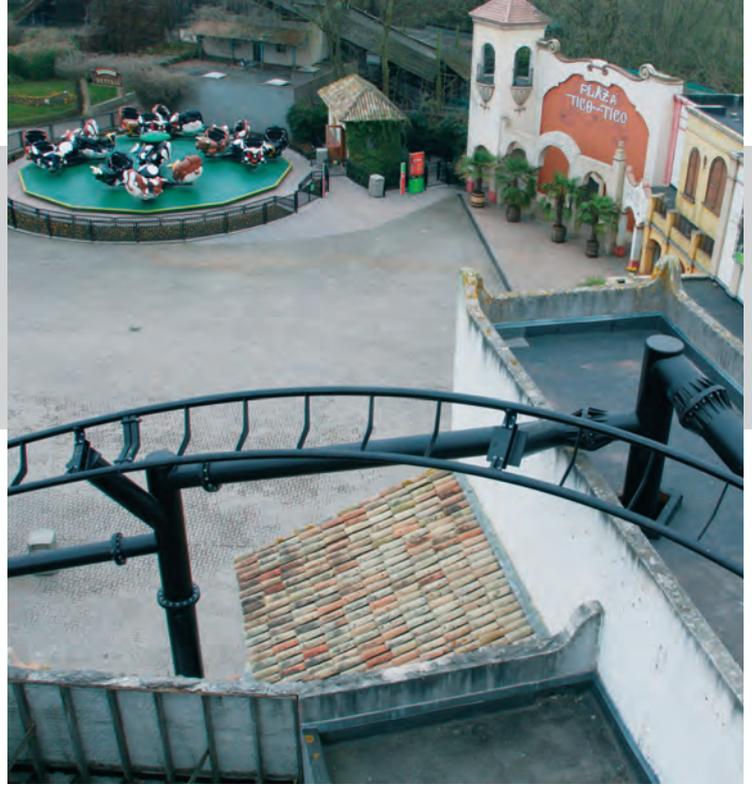




from one meter, and the story is told through a sound system behind the head rests (4 speakers per car). Unfortunately the backrests are so high that there's hardly any uninterrupted view to the front, not even from the lead car. The question therefore comes to mind as to whether the park shouldn't have opted for the ESC-type coaster from Zierer (Elevated Seating Coaster). These are more open, and more accessible for loading and unloading, and would have probably increased the feeling of riding on the snake's back. Shortly after the snake gets moving, it travels into the dark ride section and moves slowly through several chambers with various elements, past two impressive waterfalls, a chamber of fire, a room filled with mist, and a large area with wind. The theming by TAA (Theming and Animatronics Industries S.A.) is beautiful, and has been effectively done. Bellewaerde Park indeed succeeded

in creating the required atmosphere and storytelling. The train moves at a speed of 6 km/h per friction drive propulsion, but this speed is adjustable by the park according to crowds. All the while when moving through these chambers, the custom composed music is played through the sound system and every room has its own piece. It is very refreshing to see the work put into this, as opposed to just playing a single piece of music right through. A swift lift brings the train from Huracan's temple upwards and outside of the building. The transition from top to drop is fairly slow but this allows for a nice view of the Mexican square and is great for onlookers as well. Although having enclosed coasters popping out of the building is an interesting feature seen elsewhere before, it also enhances the experience and it gives the spectators a small idea what to expect indoors.





**The lift leads the train out over the roof**

A mild but great curve drops to the right and back into the building. This is where “Huracan” then starts unleashing its power, as the building is pitch black, which gives riders the feeling of disorientation. The coaster has a total length of 500 meters, but the dark section makes it seem longer. The train accelerates during the good and long drop in the dark building, and unexpected curves and turns follow at a fast pace. Apart from a bit of a slower section, the speed of the attraction is very good.

towards the queue for another ride, which is always a very good sign that everything was done well.

“Huracan” is very good family coaster and a great addition to Bellewaerde Park. The story as well as the theming are original and fit in well with the existing Mexican part of the park. The dark ride, exterior section, fast dark section and end effect make for a great mix, and Zierer offers a silent and smooth ride experience.

It may not be the most thrilling coaster on the planet but this wasn't the park's goal either. Bellewaerde Park aims to be a family oriented park and with “Huracan”, it plays the market well. The ride should show up on everyone's 2013 calendar and will no doubt be a hit with visitors and fans alike.

**FAST FACTS**

- Opening: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2013
- Track length: 500 m
- Track height: 15 m
- Max. difference: 13.5 m
- Deepest drop: 10 m (2<sup>nd</sup> drop)
- Max. speed: 55 km/h
- Max. acceleration: +4 g
- Total ride time: 1.30 min (incl. 40 sec Darkride and 14 sec lift) plus 30 sec in laser tunnel until entrance into the station
- 2 trains with 10 cars each, per car 2 Pers.
- Capacity: 1,000 p.p.h
- Theming: TAA Industries, Madrid, Spain
- Manufacturer: Zierer, Deggendorf, Germany
- Operator: Bellewaerde Park, Leper, Belgium

Following a final curve to the left, the train goes into the final magnetic brakes, facing into a neat tunnelled laser effect. The train waits here until the station is free, and the snake then crawls back into its starting position. Returning to the Mexican square one can see kids and adults alike running

