



Germany's first wing coaster has been thrilling guests since the start of the season at Heide Park, Merlin Entertainments' flagship German resort property. Flug der Dämonen (Flight of the Demon) from Bolliger & Mabillard (B&M) also enjoys the honour of becoming the park's new signature attraction. **Owen Ralph** reports



Flug der Dämonen

Flying high at Heide Park!

Installed at a cost of €15 million, this soaring, swooping and somersaulting coaster creates a wonderful visual spectacle for park visitors as each of its two extra-wide ride vehicles move majestically through its 772 metres of track. For those on board, the experience is as smooth as you'd expect from B&M, but a lot less intense than the menacing roar of the train might suggest. And that is why it's an attraction that should appeal to a broad range of Heide Park guests – or anyone brave enough between 1.4 and 1.95m.

"There were a number of reasons for choosing the Wing Coaster," says Sabrina de Carvalho, now in her first full season as Heide Park's general manager (previously she served as its sales & marketing director before going on to oversee Merlin's 'Midway' attraction unit in Germany). "First of all we wanted to offer something compelling and unique in the German market. The second is that we like to work with B&M, and had very good experience with Kraken [Dive Machine] in 2011. The third reason is that Merlin has already enjoyed great success and guest reaction to the Wing Coasters at Gardaland [Italy] and Thorpe Park [UK]. All of these factors came together and made the ride the obvious choice for Heide Park Resort."

Flug der Dämonen takes up a commanding position within the Transylvania section towards the far left hand side of the park. Finished in the same singular colour scheme and partially intertwined with the neighbouring coasters Big Loop and Schweizer Bobbahn, it contributes to a mass of white steel track visible from across the lake at the centre of the park.

But only Flug der Dämonen offers passengers the thrill of riding in low-slung seats suspended outside of the track, with nothing above or below. Like other B&M Wing Coasters, each train features an impressive 5m (16ft) wingspan. This particular installation has been designed to take account of the topography at Heide Park and the layout is not, stresses de Carvalho, the same as either Raptor at Gardaland (opened in 2011)

or Swarm at Thorpe Park (2012). "It's actually my favourite of the three," smiles the park's GM. "You get some really great slow-motion sequences, it's almost a little dreamy."

As they take flight with the demon, Heide Park guests experience five inversions, a wing over drop, high speed camelback, revolution roll, panorama curve, Immelmann, pretzel and over-banked turn, plus a descent below ground level. The ride's highest point is approximately 40m (130ft). Reaching speeds of up to 100km/h, passengers (24 per train) experience forces of up to 4g.

Although it comes into close contact with surrounding coasters and structures as many as seven times, the park has arguably missed a trick by not including any of the carefully choreographed near-miss elements with purpose-built structures, as other parks with Wing Coasters have.

Scenic work was carried out by Theming & Animatronic Industries (TAA), its seventh successive Heide Park commission, together with some themed Dämonen rooms for the resort's Hotel Port Royal. Responsible for on-site assembly of the ride itself was Rollercoaster Construction Services. Owner Max Eberhard tells *Park World* this was a testing process due to presence of several surrounding rides and buildings, which nevertheless add to the theming. But the park left plenty of time, and construction was in fact completed back in November.

"Obviously we hope Flug der Dämonen will give us a significant boost this season," concludes de Carvalho. "It's a great coaster, but also a great ride for families. We always try to keep balance between the big rides and the smaller ones, so for the next couple of years we are going to concentrate on things for the family market. But for now I'm convinced €15 million for Germany's first wing coaster is the right investment." ■

flug-der-daemonen.de

HEIDE PARK COASTERS

