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ONE PARK. ENDLESS ADVENTURE.

CALIFORNIA'S GREAT AMERICA IS AN UNRIVALED FESTIVAL OF FUN.

BY KATIE JOLL

More than 100 acres of sprawling amusements await your family at **California's Great America (CGA)**. With 50+ rides, **South Bay Shores** water park, special-event experiences, and live entertainment, you can expect to spend most of a day (or more!) steeped in thrilling amusement.

Founded in 1976 to celebrate the United States' bicentennial, Great America has undergone plenty of change in its 40+ years in operation. At one point, the park boasted the largest roller coaster in the world, Tidal Wave (later renamed Greased Lighnin'), and continues to push the limits of entertainment with daring new attractions.

TIMELESS THRILLS

CGA features nine roller coasters rated at various thrill levels. Seven of those accept "Fast Lane" passes—an add-on that allows you to skip the regular lines at 18 rides and attractions. Spend less time waiting and more time experiencing Northern California's tallest and fastest wooden roller coaster, Gold Striker, or the fan-favorite, Patriot, which compliments the certified classic Flight Deck. RailBlazer, arguably the most adrenaline-pumping ride in the park, is one of the first single-rail roller coasters to be introduced in the United States, making it a can't-miss experience.

Limiting yourself to only Great America's roller coasters would be a big mistake. There are several other thrill rides throughout the park, like Delirium, Orbit, and, of course, the ever-popular Drop Tower, which takes riders 225 feet in the air before freefalling 20 stories in 3.5 seconds.

FAMILY FUN

Not everything is about pushing the limit. The whole family can come together and enjoy beloved staples of the park, like the historic Celebration Swings, or if you're traveling with younger kids, the iconic and architecturally stunning Carousel Columbia. Meanwhile, the resident log ride, Whitewater Falls, offers riders a chance to "cool off" with a 45-foot plunge into the water! The Star Tower slows things down with a gradual ascent to a 200-foot vantage point above Great America, allowing for a breathtaking view of the Bay Area.

California's Great America has plenty of rides available for younger riders too. The most popular section of the park for kids is Planet Snoopy, where Snoopy, Woodstock, and the rest of the Peanuts gang hang around. From the Woodstock Express roller

coaster to Sally's Swing Set and Joe Cool's Dodgem School, kids will stay entertained while parents have the chance to relive the characters of their youth.

SUIT-UP AND COOL-OFF

You don't have to lose the thrill to cool off when you visit South Bay Shores. Grab your swimsuit and make a splash at Great America's on-site 11-acre water park. Rides like NorCal Wipeout, Pacific Surge, and Coastal Cruz combine steep drops, high speed, and family competition as you race to the pools below. Plus, there's always the Rushin' River for a relaxing float around the edge of the park, or you can catch some waves at Breakers Bay.

ANNUAL EVENTS

Depending on when you're visiting Great America, you might be able to take part in one of the park's annual events. WinterFest, hosted from December through early January, turns the grounds into a holiday wonderland, while Tricks and Treats adds a spooky atmosphere during October. Carnivale brings a Mardi Gras-style celebration to Orleans Place in the summer. Regardless of what event you attend, there's plenty of music, food, and special programming to entertain all ages.

PRO TIPS TO PLAN YOUR TRIP:

Traveling with foodies? Look into all-day dining passes, which can help you save on food and fuel up for more fun!

Visiting with a big group? This park is safe and family-friendly enough to tackle the most adrenaline-pumping rides as a group or split up for a bit of independent exploration. Special accommodations can be made for a variety of groups and events.

Need additional accommodations? Almost every ride in California's Great America is wheelchair accessible, meaning guests with accessibility needs must transfer into the seat on their own or with the assistance of a companion. Carousel Columbia, Character Carousel, and Mass Effect: New Earth all feature full accessibility, meaning they can be experienced without riders exiting their wheelchair. You'll also find full wheelchair access in all restaurants, gift shops, theaters, games, arcades, and restaurants

Ready to schedule your visit? Park hours vary by season, so make sure you call ahead! Visit cagreatamerica.com for more information or call 408-988-1776.