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Ohio Invites Families to Create Their Own Fun-Filled Adventures

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Families have been coming to Ohio for years, seeking adventures first on the shores of her waterways and then on the tracks of roller coasters. Whether looking for adrenaline raising thrills, educational insights or reconnection among Mother Nature’s serenity, Ohio offers families an abundance of vacation offerings.

Ohio’s theme parks are unrivaled for offering the highest, fastest rides in the world. Nothing evokes a scream like rocketing out of a starting gate and within seconds, reaching a speed of 120 miles per hour, careening up a 420-foot steel skyscraper and then racing down toward the Earth. Thrill seekers need look no further than Cedar Point and its “Top Thrill Dragster” for this hair-raising experience. Coaster fans who want the thrills to last for minutes can head for “Millennium Force” with its twisted mazes of sleek steel. Named the “Best Amusement Park in the World” by *Amusement Today*, Cedar Point boasts 16 roller coasters and 51 other rides, including four kiddie areas, allowing it to live up to its recognition.

Paramount’s Kings Island is the destination for wooden roller coaster aficionados. “The Son of Beast” is the world’s fastest and highest wooden coaster with its predecessor, “The Beast” taking the title of the longest wooden coaster. Opened in April 2009 is Diamondback, the tallest and fastest roller coaster at Kings Island. The park offers 364 acres of excitement. With more than 40 different rides and attractions, Kings Island features roller coasters, thrill rides, live shows and kiddie rides all in a multi-themed environment.

Visitors, who love the water and want to enjoy it rain or shine, flock to Great Bear Lodge in Sandusky. Here guests can spend days at Bear Track Landing, a 33,000 square-foot indoor water extravaganza. Great Bear Lodge also features a 271-room log cabin themed hotel, two on-site restaurants and is conveniently located next to a shopping mall.

Families, who believe creature comforts are best enjoyed in natural surroundings, need to head to Ohio’s zoos. Ohio is home to five world-class zoos in Akron, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus and Toledo. The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is home to more than 700 species and 6,000 specimens. Known worldwide for its success in breeding endangered animals, the Columbus Zoo features hundreds of species threatened with extinction in the wild, including bald eagles, black rhinos, Asian elephants (come see the newest addition—Beco!), okapi, Mexican wolves, West Indian manatees, bonobos, leopards, sea turtles and Andean condors.

The Cleveland Metroparks Zoo is home to the largest collection of primate species in North America. Located just five miles from downtown, the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo also is home to The Rain Forest, a two-acre, two-level building showcasing more than 10,000 plants and 600 animals from the jungles of the world in a naturalistic setting where rainstorms occur regularly within the animal exhibits.

The Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden is consistently ranked as one of the top zoos in the country. Opened in 1875, it is the nation's second oldest zoo and a national historic landmark. The Zoo's 75

acres house more than 500 animal species and 3,000 plant varieties. The zoo is internationally known for its success in the protection and propagation of endangered animals and plants, and engages in research and conservation projects around the world.

The Toledo Zoo exists to promote wildlife and its conservation through animal management, educational programs, and scientific activities while providing visitors with an enjoyable, recreational, and family-oriented experience. Twenty species-specific areas allow visitors to get up-close and personal with zoo residents, especially polar bears and hippos. The zoo's newest addition is a five-acre paddock that houses many species of African savanna animals, including giraffes, zebras, antelope and ostriches.

The Akron Zoo recently celebrated its 50th birthday and is rapidly becoming a statewide favorite. African lions, Sumatran tigers and Sun Bears along with birds, reptiles and a host of other species offer visitors a fascinating look into animal life.

The state also is home to The Wilds, North America's largest animal conservation facility. The Wilds strives to promote learning that will contribute to the sustainability of wildlife. Effective solutions start with strong leadership in scientific study and research, and individual empowerment through creative education. This education and commitment can be found at The Wilds where animals such as rhinos, giraffes and antelope roam freely in grasslands similar to their indigenous homes.

Families also can explore the mind, the body and the world around them with a visit to any of the state's remarkable interactive science museums. COSI Columbus, named the No. 1 science center in the country for families by *Parents Magazine*, features eight interactive exhibition areas; each geared toward many scientific topics under one theme. The Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland is one of America's largest interactive science museums. More than 400 hands-on exhibits, daily demonstrations, educational programs and the OMNIMAX Theater show visitors the delicate interdependency of science, environment and technology. The Boonshoft Museum of Discovery in Dayton offers a unique adventure environment. The Hall of the Universe and its planetarium and laser shows, the Mead Treehouse, EcoTrek and Beiser Discovery Center are just a few of the places within the facility where children can learn about the universe.

Families seeking an outdoor vacation can enjoy Ohio's 74 State Parks, more than 500 miles of biking trails and the chance to hunt for fossils in ancient caves. Lake Erie offers fishing, boating and swimming along with unique lakeside communities and family-friendly resorts. Or explore one of two zipline canopy tours—Hocking Hills Canopy Tours in Rockbridge (southeast Ohio) or Ozone Zipline Adventures in the Little Miami River Valley (opened in May 2009, southwest Ohio).

No matter the kind of vacation a family is seeking, Ohio offers value-conscious, activity-diverse experiences that will put a smile on everyone's face.

For more information about Ohio's family travel opportunities, visit www.DiscoverOhio.com or call 1-800-BUCKEYE.

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