



An American Tour: 31



Houston's *AstroWorld*

AstroWorld was the home of many unique attractions and also developed or debuted several prototype ride concepts including the world's first river rapids ride (Thunder River, 1980), the first successful Arrow suspended-swinging coaster (XLR-8, 1984), the first Arrow mine train coaster to utilize tall steel column supports (Dexter Frebish Electric Roller Ride, 1972), and the first S&S Power sky-swatter ride (SWAT, 2003).

The park's original layout was created by famed Hollywood designer and architect, Randall Duell, who also worked on Six Flags Over Texas, Magic Mountain, as well as Marriott's Great America parks, among others. The park name, as well as the names of The Astrodome, the Astros baseball team, and all other Astrodomain properties, were a homage to Houston, as home of the Johnson Space Center, in 1965.

AstroWorld was constructed on land that was swampy and prone to flooding. Approximately one million cubic yards of dirt were used to fill the site in preparation for construction. Some areas of the site were filled to depths as great as six feet. Ahead of its time, a unique feature of the park's infrastructure included 2,400 tons of outdoor air conditioning powered by systems built by Carrier Corporation. Underground pipes carrying chilled water radiated out to most areas of the park and provided cool air to queue lines, picnic tables, shops, restaurants and other large open spaces. Air conditioning ducts and grates were disguised and blended to match the area's theming. No expense

was spared in the design of AstroWorld and very high standards were set by Judge Hofheinz. Guest comfort and overall experience while visiting the park were of high concern. Many rare and valuable antiques, some from Mr. Hofheinz's personal collection, were used to enhance the theming in areas. The original landscaping, all designed in-house, included approximately 10,000 trees, 20,000 shrubs, and countless millions of flowers; nearly 600 varieties of plants were combined to create a distinct atmosphere for each of the themed areas.

In 2005, Six Flags CEO, Kieran Burke, announced that the company's legendary AstroWorld theme park in Houston, Texas, would be closed and demolished at the end of the 2005 season. Some of Astro-World and WaterWorld's rides and attractions were relocated to other parks while many were scrapped or were too badly damaged during demolition to be reassembled elsewhere.

[<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

