

## Revolutionise dark rides, urges Oscar-winning duo

Gavin and Jason Fox, creative directors for Oscar award-winning visual effects company Framestore, have said that dark ride creators must step up their game as technology and consumer expectation increases.

Speaking in the latest edition of *Attractions Management*, the twin brothers, who are currently working together on their own top-secret dark ride project, said that rides are “the pinnacle of creative entertainment” but that media content being introduced into a ride simply isn’t enough to interest an ever-evolving millennial audience.

“Not so long ago people were wowed simply by putting



The pair created effects for films such as *Guardians of the Galaxy*

media content into the context of a ride,” said the pair. “Physically and seamlessly moving within a creative

environment was enough to create a feeling of awe. But this approach is now prolific – and its novelty is waning.”

After Gavin and Jason joined Framestore as creative directors in 2014, they worked on visual effects for films such as *Gravity* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, the first winning an Oscar and the second nominated for both a BAFTA and an Oscar.

“As technology develops, consumer expectations simultaneously increase,” said the brothers. “So audiences now expect and demand better quality from media-based attractions. It now has to be better acted, better written and better directed: and in nothing less than the Hollywood-level fidelity they are used to seeing in these worlds portrayed.”

More: [http://lei.sr?a=d9e4p\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=d9e4p_A)

## Focus on fun for Ardent after operator sells health clubs

Ardent Leisure is planning significant investment in its entertainment ventures after offloading its health club business in a AU\$260m (US\$198.3m, €175.6m, £150m) deal to private equity house Quadrant.

Ardent’s health club division, which comprises its Goodlife Health Club franchise and Hypoxi training studios, has 76 location across Australia, with Goodlife the lead health club operator in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

Commenting on the sale, Ardent said the move would enable it to become a high growth, global leisure and entertainment business, welcoming more than 20 million visitors across Australasia and the US in the next year.

The sale of Ardent’s health club division will mainly be used for the company to grow its US-based Main Event operation. A chain of 25 FECs, Main Event increased profits this year by 18.7 per cent to AU\$57m (US\$43.5m, €38.5m, £32.9m) off revenues of AU\$229m (US\$174.7m, €154.7m, £132.1m). Ardent sees Main Event as a key driver of its business and is planning a further 11 FECs to open in the US in 2017.

Ardent also revealed full-year profits of AU\$42.4m (US\$32.3m, €28.6m, £24.2m) for 2016, an increase of 32 per cent driven by a 15.6 per cent rise in revenue to AU\$687.6m (US\$524.6m, €464.5m, £396.8m).

More: [http://lei.sr?a=j9M3D\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=j9M3D_A)



Ardent is now focused on ‘pure-play’

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The wheel will be the centrepiece of the Bluewaters Island entertainment district

## Ain Dubai starting to take shape

The world's tallest observation wheel is taking shape on Dubai's Bluewaters Island, with the structure's hub and spindle safely placed on top of its 126m (413ft) high legs.

Two of the world's largest cranes have assembled the key components of the wheel, which will be called Ain Dubai. The current weight of the structure is 1,805 tonnes – equivalent to four Airbus A380 aircraft.

The hub will now be connected to the wheel's rim via 192 spoke cables. The final attraction will be 210m high (689 ft). Work is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Ain Dubai will be the main attraction of the AED6bn (US\$1.6bn, €1.4bn, £1.25bn) Bluewaters Island, which will feature entertainment, retail, residential and hospitality offerings.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=x3N7Q\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=x3N7Q_A)

## Exoskeleton could change VR game with haptic feedback to simulate touch

Chinese technology company Dexta Robotics has unveiled a new product that promises to revolutionise virtual reality – a wearable exoskeleton hand making it possible for users to physically touch things in a digital world.

Dubbed Dexmo, the futuristic glove can communicate with VR items, simulating the feel of virtual objects using haptic feedback as though the user is touching or holding the items with their hands.

Haptic feedback is rare to the VR market currently, as it uses dynamic force to simulate the shape and density of objects. As a result, Dexmo is thought to be the most advanced version of hand interaction technology for VR to date. HTC's Vive and Oculus' upcoming Oculus Touch – which use a combination of



The futuristic glove can simulate the feel of objects

buttons and movement to control functionality – are other variations on the technology.

According to Dexta, Dexmo can do things such as “simulate the clicky sensation of a button or trigger” or “simulate the shape of a doorknob and allow you to grasp and turn.”

More: [http://lei.sr?a=s8Y9V\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=s8Y9V_A)

# Controversial Grand Canyon plans advance

Officials from the Native American-governed US territory Navajo Nation are considering contentious plans to develop tourist attractions at the edge of the Grand Canyon.

The Grand Canyon Escalade project has been touted for a reservation that borders the eastern edge of the Grand Canyon National Park. The controversial plans feature installation of an eight-person gondola that would carry tourists to the canyon floor, where they could visit a restaurant on the Colorado riverside, and a Navajoland Discovery Center, which would be overseen by an advisory board.

Scottsdale-based Confluence Partners, the company behind the proposal, estimates the development could attract as many as three-million extra visitors and US\$70m (€62.7m, £52.5m) in additional revenue to the canyon each year, which at present attracts five-million people annually. Legislation introduced this week proposes US\$65m (€58.3m, £48.7m) in tribal development funds on top of further costs, which would be used for things such as roads, running water and electricity.



The US Park Service has opposed the construction, with concerns over the scenery and wildlife

The US Park Service has opposed the construction, with the body concerned that the development may have an impact on the scenery and wildlife of the area. Critics to the development have also voiced concerns regarding intrusion upon sacred sites, but

Confluence's consultancy group includes several members of the Navajo tribe, on whose land the project is planned to be built on. Several Navajo elders were also consulted while formulating the plans.

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=T8D7v\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=T8D7v_A)*

## Dan Ashe to take AZA reins after being named new president and CEO

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) has named Dan Ashe as its next president and CEO, effective January 2017.

As the new head of the AZA, Ashe will handle day-to-day operations of the Association, working with the board of directors to conduct and promote all programmes and initiatives under the AZA banner. Currently director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Ashe will succeed

Jim Maddy, who retired earlier this year.

Named the 16th USFWS director by the US Senate in June 2011, Ashe has led the agency through a number of challenges, rising through the ranks of the national body over the course of 13 years.



Ashe was named USFWS director by the US Senate in 2011

"Hiring someone who understands zoos and aquariums as centres of conservation was very important to us," said Steve Burns, AZA board chair and director of Zoo Boise. "Dan's passion and dedication to wildlife are admirable and I know we all look forward to working with him."

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=F5Q8q\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=F5Q8q_A)*



The three-month trial could be lucrative

### Western Australia trialing humpback whale swims

Ningaloo Marine Park in Western Australia is trialing swimming experiences with humpback whales, which the government hopes will make the area a major tourist destination.

With the species on the rebound, the government is running a three month trial to see if the operation is viable.

The swims could be a big money-earner for Ningaloo, with its existing whale shark swims injecting AU\$6m (US\$4.6m, €4.1m, £3.5m) into the local economy every year.

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=t5j8M\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=t5j8M_A)*

# Board approves US\$49m Peabody expansion

The Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, is one step closer to a US\$49m (€43.4m, £37.2m) facility expansion after the city's Design Review Board approved the project unanimously.

Now moving on to its construction document phase, the project will enter a new round of city review and approvals ahead of a proposed groundbreaking later this year.

Plans originally envisioned a US\$200m (€177m, £151.6m) expansion, but were abandoned following the death of the project's architect Rick Mather in 2013.

New plans based on the original designs of Mather, with subsequent work from Richard Olcott of Ennead Architects, were unveiled last year. According to the new designs, the museum will gain a 40,000sq ft (3,716sq m) wing for galleries and temporary exhibition space, while a new 80,000sq ft (7,432sq m) Collection Stewardship Center will be built off-site.

Scheduled to open to the public in 2019, the three-storey development occupies



Groundbreaking for the development is expected in 2016, with the new wing opening in 2019

the northwest corner of the museum complex where the Asian Garden – which will be relocated – currently sits. No existing galleries will be demolished during development and when the new

wing opens, gallery space will be increased 15 per cent to 100,000sq ft (9,290sq m), ranking Peabody Essex among the top 20 art museums in the country for size.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=s7G8r\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=s7G8r_A)



Farnan is well-versed in brand promotion

## Former Man Utd MD to oversee Ferrari expansion

Ferrari has brought in former Manchester United International managing director Mike Farnan to help drive its growth strategy in China, including the launch of its first theme park venture in China.

In March Ferrari inked a non-binding agreement to build its first theme park in China. In his new role, Farnan will oversee the park, handling marketing and promotion of the venture.

"Our aim is to make Ferrari more tangible to its 560 million fans worldwide, especially in China," said Farnan.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=V2w8w\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=V2w8w_A)

## Alton Towers accident has affected a 'healthy' European theme park market

Last year's Smiler accident at Alton Towers has had a notable impact on European theme park statistics, negatively affecting a "healthy market", according to AECOM EMEA director, Margreet Papamichael.

With attendance at both Alton Towers and Thorpe Park severely suppressed in the wake of the roller-coaster crash where 16 people were injured when their carriage collided with an empty one – two having to undergo leg amputations – it paints a muddy picture for the overall health of the region, according to Papamichael.

To get a clearer view on how the accident affected the sector, AECOM looked at the average growth of Merlin's other theme parks, and applied that increase to Alton



The Smiler ride reopened nine months after the accident

Towers and Thorpe Park. According to those results, had the Smiler accident not happened the EMEA's top 20 theme parks would have enjoyed a rise of 4.9 per cent instead of the reported 3.2 per cent in this year's Themed Index report.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=r5b8u\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=r5b8u_A)

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# Satellite visitor centres for remote heritage sites

Two architecture studios hope to show how remote heritage sites can be served by satellite visitor centres through their own design for a tourist hub which celebrates an uninhabited Scottish archipelago from a location on a nearby island.

Scottish studio Dualchas Architects and Norway's Reiulf Ramstad Architects, who are working in the UK for the first time, have unveiled their masterplan for the St Kilda Visitor Centre. They propose the building, known as Iomart Hiort in Gaelic, should be built on the more accessible Isle of Lewis 50 miles away.

With the backing of UNESCO, a number of organisations in Scotland have been developing a multi-functional visitor hub that will capture the story of St Kilda and showcase the Hebridean landscape and culture, while regenerating the communities on the surrounding islands.

"We're trying to show how we can experience and represent World Heritage Sites that are very difficult to access," architect Rory Flynn, from Dualchas, told AM2.



The satellite model could potentially be replicated across other remote heritage sites

"Some around the world are in war zones or extreme landscapes and locations, so this is hopefully seen as a prototype project for how you might design a satellite centre.

Exhibition design firm Metaphor have designed the content for the museum,

which will include exhibition galleries using cutting edge technologies, a digital laboratory and an observation room looking towards St Kilda. The site will also have a cafe and restaurant.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=s9U2q\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=s9U2q_A)



Godzilla's 4D experience opens 13 Jan

## Godzilla set to headline Universal Cool Japan 2017

Godzilla is going on the rampage in Japan again – this time at Universal Studios to tie in with the release of the new movie.

Shin Godzilla – the 31st film in the Godzilla franchise – hit Japanese cinemas on 29 July. The new experience at Universal will be closely tied to the reboot, with an all-new story exclusive to the Osaka theme park.

The cinematic attraction – 'Godzilla: The Real 4-D' – opens on 13 January to kick off Universal Cool Japan 2017.

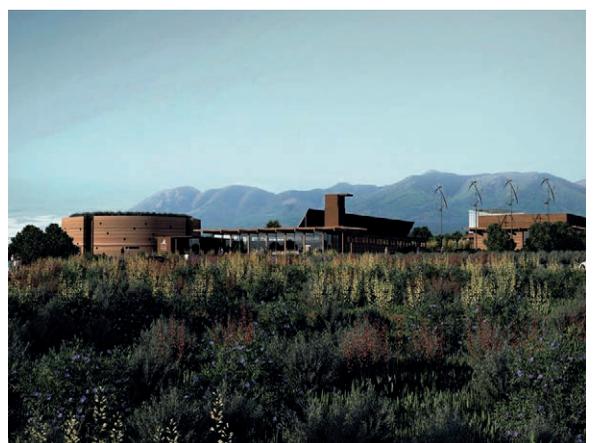
More: [http://lei.sr?a=B3n8J\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=B3n8J_A)

## Utah's new US\$8m discovery centre combines science and nature

A US\$8m (€7.1m, £6.1m) science centre telling the story of the Colorado Plateau and encouraging exploration of the wider area – which is home to the Grand Canyon – has opened its doors to the public in Utah.

Located in the city of Monticello, the 16,200sq ft (1,500sq m) Canyon Country Discovery Center looks at the Four Corners region – the quadri-point in the Southwest US where the states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah meet.

The centre is fully equipped with a conference hall, four breakout spaces, an exhibition hall with 30 hands-on learning stations



The centre has nature at its heart, with 48 acres of wild land

and an observatory for night sky viewing. Encouraging physical activity as well as scientific education, the energy-efficient centre also includes a climbing wall and nature playscape.

Designed by Salt Lake City-based EDA Architects, the centre expects 35,000 visitors a year and has an operating budget of US\$2.4m (€2.1m, £1.8m).

More: [http://lei.sr?a=c2T6v\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=c2T6v_A)

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15 OCTOBER 2016

**Halloween at Leolandia****Leolandia Park, Capriate****San Gervasio, Italy**

The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) is inviting its members to experience Halloween at Italy's largest theme park dedicated to families with young children. The full day event includes a TEA presentation, lunch, guided tour to the Halloween show at the Palco Cowboy, Mediterranean tour and guided tour of Peppa Pig World. Event also includes a free visit of the park.

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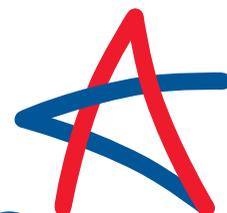
**IAAPA Attractions Expo 2016****Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida, US**

With more than 30,000 industry professionals expected to attend this year's IAAPA conference, including 20,000 buyers coming from more than 100 countries, the event will explore the theme of 'Every Experience Matters'. The trade show floor will cover over 550,000sq ft, with more than 1,000 companies set to exhibit their latest projects and cutting-edge innovations from 125 categories. Industry leaders, decision-makers, and trendsetters from across multiple sectors, including manufacturers and suppliers, and the owners and operators of theme and amusement parks, waterparks, FECs, zoos, aquariums, science centres, museums, resorts, and more, will be on-hand at the event.

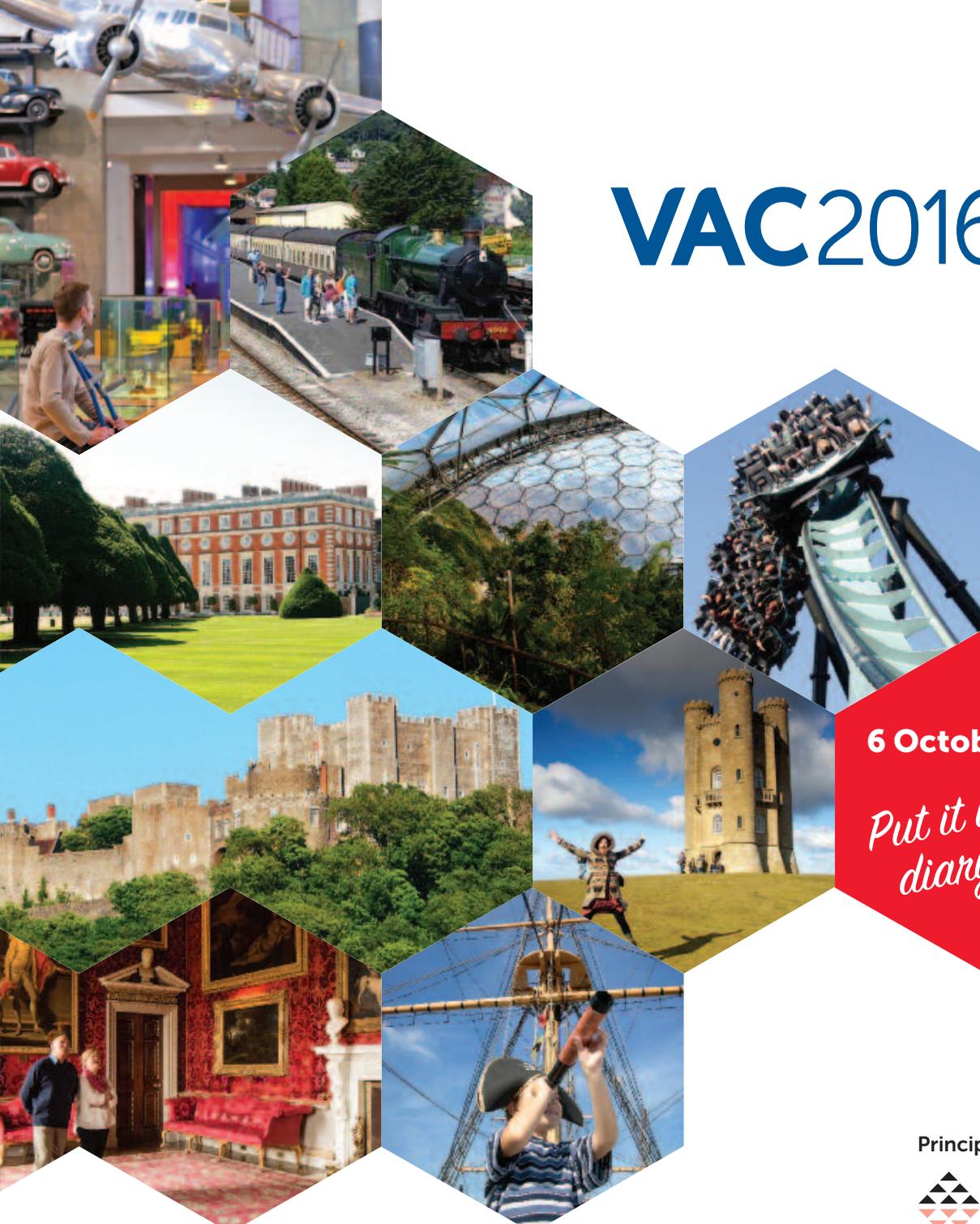
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# Stephen Merchant to host Crystal Maze revival

Following huge success as a visitor attraction, Channel 4 will reboot British game show *The Crystal Maze* with celebrity contestants a part of its Stand Up To Cancer campaign.

Funded by an ambitious IndieGoGo drive last year with the aim of developing a full-scale replica of the show, the recreation captured the imaginations of nostalgic fans of the hit 90s game show, selling out its ticket allocation almost immediately.

Marking the show's return to television for the first time in two decades, the special, hosted by comedian Stephen Merchant, will be filmed at the London attraction.

"As a huge fan of the original series, I'm honoured to support Stand Up To Cancer by hosting this one-off edition of *The Crystal Maze*," said Merchant. "Richard O'Brien and Ed Tudor-Pole leave big shoes to fill, but I have size 14 feet, so I'll do my best."

To coinciding with the announcement, new tickets for March, April and May 2017 have been released, with the TV special expected to spark further interest in the visitor attraction.



Merchant will fill the position of host, leading a team of celebrities around the *Crystal Maze*

"Seeing people's joy at playing *The Crystal Maze* for themselves has been a dream," said *Crystal Maze* Experience co-creator Tom Lionetti-Maguire. "We're

overjoyed that the beautiful world we created will be the backdrop to such a special comeback and such a worthy cause."

More: [http://lei.sr?a=z8Y8V\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=z8Y8V_A)



The waterpark will handle -16.7°C

## Tropical waterpark for sub-zero Siberian climate

Polin will handle development of Russia's largest indoor waterpark, with the planned all-season facility in Tyumen designed to handle a Siberian winter.

The waterpark will include large translucent domes overhead to allow sunlight in while keeping the -16.7°C (1.94°F) temperatures out. Within the domes, palm trees will decorate the landscape, while a number of Polin slides will offer thrill-seekers a number of experiences within the 10,000sq m (107,000sq ft) waterpark.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=x5z2d\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=x5z2d_A)

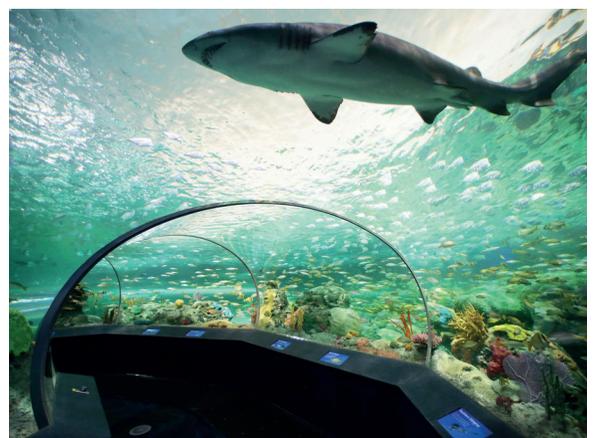
## Ripley's Aquarium offers shark diving experience in its Dangerous Lagoon

Ripley's Aquarium of Canada has already sold out of its diving with sharks experience, but is taking bookings for next year.

The Toronto-based visitor attraction is offering 30-minute guided SCUBA dives through Dangerous Lagoon every Wednesday. Guests will be underwater with sawfish, sharks, turtles and many types of fish.

The two-person experience, which is for certified divers only, includes backstage tours and photos, a selection of souvenirs and admission to the aquarium.

Dangerous Lagoon is the attraction's largest tank – with a visitor tunnel the length of a football field, and filled with



The experience is only for those who are already trained

sea creatures, including the Pacific sea nettle jelly fish.

As Canada's largest indoor aquarium, Ripley's also boasts the biggest shark collection in North America.

Attractions operator

Ripley Entertainment opened the CA\$130m (US\$101m, €89m, £77m) aquarium in Toronto, Ontario, in 2013, the third in Ripley's marine portfolio.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=z5Q6HL\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=z5Q6HL_A)



The new flying theatre experience at Miners Landing

**Dynamic Attractions' flying theatre soars to new heights**

Dynamic Attractions has installed a state-of-the-art flying theatre at a historic attraction in Washington, Seattle.

The brand new Wings Over Washington ride offers guests a "flying" experience, during which they soar over the state's landmarks and landscapes. The 20-minute ride experience, located at Pier 57's Miners Landing attraction, was created

using the latest technology, including 6K cameras, innovative art laser projection, image capture drones, creative design agency Super 78's virtual reality collaborative planning tools and surround sound.

The multi-sensory ride features a variety of locations. The film was created and produced by Brent Young of Super 78.



LA's topography is illustrated in the experience

**Interactive media ushers visitors on to Skyspace deck**

Events AV specialist World-Stage has completed two interactive installations at the newly opened Skyspace open-air observation deck in Los Angeles, California.

Working alongside the experiential design team at Stimulant, a 360 Landscape and Reflection Wall were created to bridge the gap between the elevator ride and

the entry to the attraction atop the city's US Bank Tower.

The video projection experiences create an interesting transition space for visitors.

The 360 Landscape is a nine-projector, 50ft-wide (15m) screen mapping the topography and panoramic views that await visitors, featuring interactive elements to learn about landmarks and points of interest.



Hurricane is a 3D production, filmed over a five-year period

**nWave to distribute giant screen 3D film Hurricane**

nWave Pictures have acquired Worldwide Distribution Rights to the Immersive Giant Screen Film *Hurricane* Movie distributor nWave Pictures has acquired the worldwide distribution rights to Hurricane, a giant screen 3D documentary film produced by Ouragan Films.

The 40-minute film will be screened in October 2016

at the Giant Screen Cinema Association Conference in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

*Hurricane* follows meteorologists and emergency crews as they battle to predict the storm's path, while those in harm's way prepare for the worst. Meanwhile, NASA's satellites and hurricane tracking aircraft capture the enormity of the storm.



The touchscreen-operated lockers help boost revenues

**VLocker supplies storage system at Texas Typhoon**

Newly opened waterpark Texas Typhoon in Katy, Texas, has been fitted with electronic lockers by VLocker.

The VLocker solution is touchscreen operated, enabling waterpark visitors to select and pay for a locker by credit card or by a RFID or NFC wristband, without having to queue.

The lockers are manufactured for maximum security

from stainless or galvanised steel. Being easy to use, cashless, safe and convenient makes the lockers an obvious purchase for guests, contributing to the waterpark's overall revenues.

"Just a couple months into our season, we have already found we are renting the same door three or four times a day," said Typhoon Texas general manager Evan Barnett.

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## Tourism chiefs call for action plan after Paris attacks cost industry €750m

Terrorist attacks, strikes and serious flooding have cost Paris an estimated €750m (US\$847.5m, £640m) according to new statistics, with tourism chiefs calling for action in the face of an “industrial disaster” for the French capital.

Between January and June 2016, Paris welcomed a million fewer visitors compared with the same period in 2015. Figures from the French capital’s tourist board also shows that hotel stays are down 8.5 per cent, with an 11.5 per cent decline in foreign tourists. Paris’ most popular visitor attraction – Disneyland Paris – has also



Officials have called for major investment into tourism

been feeling the sting, with numbers down 11 per cent between April and June.

“It’s time to realise that the tourism sector is going through an industrial disaster,” said Paris region

tourist board head Frederic Valletoux. “This is no longer the time for communication campaigns but time to set up a relief plan.”

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=H8j7n\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=H8j7n_A)*

## South Korea’s Universal theme park plans in jeopardy over funding problem

Universal’s plans to open a multi-billion dollar theme park and resort in South Korea have hit a stumbling block, with the consortium of Korean and Chinese investors behind the project divided over how to finance the mega development.

The plans, which looked dead in the water after three years of silence following the financial crisis, were resurrected in December last year when the consortium formed to realise the project by 2020.

According to *The Korea Times*, the consortium remains divided over the project’s financing, which has delayed the signing of a formal contract, which was due to be signed by the end



The Universal plans envisage a 4.2sq km mixed development

of August. That deadline has now been extended.

The deal is reportedly hinging on whether or not the state-run Korea Development Bank (KDB) will be able to fund part

of the cost, which is not a guarantee as it is also leading South Korea’s restructuring of its burdened shipbuilders, shipping lines and other companies.

*More: [http://lei.sr?a=6t8q7\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=6t8q7_A)*

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