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# AM2

The news & jobs magazine  
from Attractions Management

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18 OCTOBER 2017 ISSUE 89

## Parques Reunidos linked to potential SeaWorld sale

Parques Reunidos could be about to make a big splash in the attractions industry after fresh reports linked the Spanish operator with a potential takeover of SeaWorld.

Following reports that Merlin Entertainments was also interested in a deal for the company – something Merlin has since denied (see back cover) – *Bloomberg* cited “people familiar with the matter” who suggest that Parques Reunidos, which operates more than 60 visitor attractions worldwide, is considering a bid.

At this stage it is unclear as to whether the deal would be a full or partial takeover, with Parques Reunidos reported to be considering a “combination” with SeaWorld.



SeaWorld has seen its share value drop 25 per cent in 2017

SeaWorld shares rose 3.6 per cent on Tuesday (10 October), giving the company a market value estimated at US\$1.3bn (€1.1bn, £986m). Parques Reunidos, by

comparison, is worth about US\$1.25bn (€1.05bn, £948m).

In addition to its SeaWorld attractions, SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment also owns two Busch Gardens theme parks in Williamsburg and Tampa, the Sesame Place attraction near Philadelphia, five waterparks across the US and Discovery Cove in Orlando. It's also developing a theme park in Abu Dhabi and a second Sesame Place theme park at a location yet to be confirmed.

In 2017, SeaWorld has seen its share value drop 25 per cent as CEO Joel

Manby tries to turn around the company's public image in the wake of the ongoing backlash from the 2013 documentary *Blackfish*.  
More: [http://lei.sr?a=j9V9W\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=j9V9W_A)

## Blackpool Pleasure Beach's Amanda Thompson to lead IAAPA

Amanda Thompson OBE will become only the third woman to chair IAAPA in its 100-year history, after the global attractions body announced the Blackpool Pleasure Beach managing director would take over in 2020.

Thompson was elected second vice chair of IAAPA, a position she will hold through 2018, before becoming first vice chair in 2019 and then chair in 2020.

The Thompson family has been involved with Blackpool Pleasure Beach for more than a century, with the attraction first established by her great-grandfather, WG Bean, in 1896. Her grandfather, Leonard Thompson, assumed leadership in 1931, and her father Geoffrey oversaw the business from 1976 until 2004.

Amanda has led the park as managing director since then, with her brother



Thompson was awarded an OBE in 2012

Nicholas Thompson serving as the attraction's deputy managing director.

In addition to becoming only the third woman in a century to chair the global trade association, the appointment represents a series of firsts for IAAPA. British-born Thompson will become the first woman from Europe to chair IAAPA and it will be the first time a second member of the same family has chaired the association – following on from her father Geoffrey who led IAAPA in 1996.

“Today, I'm excited for this opportunity to give back to this industry I love,” said Thompson. “It's been a part of our family and business for many decades. I hope to serve as a role model for the increasing number of young women leaders in the attractions industry.”

More: [http://lei.sr?a=N3t5B\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=N3t5B_A)

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AM2 is published fortnightly by The Leisure Media Company Limited, Portmill House, Portmill Lane, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1DJ, UK and is distributed in the USA by SPP, 75 Aberdeen Road, Emigsville, PA 17318-0437. Periodicals postage paid @ Manchester, PA POSTMASTER Send US address changes to Spa Opportunities, c/o PO Box 437, Emigsville, PA 17318-0437. The views expressed in print are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the publisher The Leisure Media Company Limited. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recorded or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright holder. Printed by Preview Cromatic Ltd.

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Koons' Balloon Rabbit will first appear virtually at the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France

## Snapchat signs up Jeff Koons for AR project

American artist Jeff Koons has teamed up Snapchat to create virtual art installations using augmented reality.

The artist – famously known for reimagining everyday objects and turning them into art – has developed the digital installations based on his works, which will be available in multiple locations worldwide.

Using the messaging application's filter system, Snapchat users can access 'lenses' within 300 metres of designated locations, which on their smart device will add the artworks to their photos and videos.

Available initially in nine cities, lenses will be available at each location for two weeks, before moving to a new destination.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=c3t2t\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=c3t2t_A)

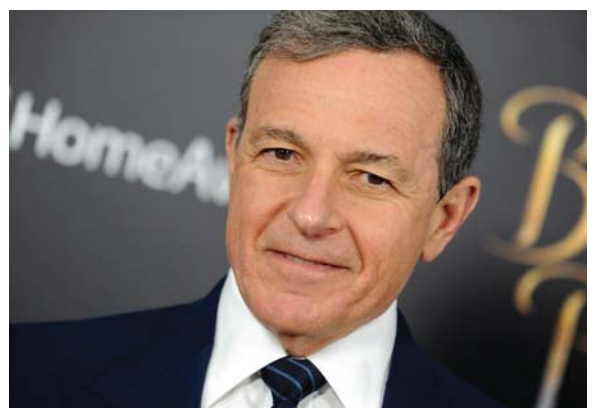
## Bob Iger to step down as Disney chief executive in 2019: 'This time I mean it'

Disney chief executive Bob Iger has announced his intention to leave the company in 2019, saying "this time I mean it", after extending his contract as chief executive earlier this year.

Iger, who was set to leave Disney in June 2018, was initially thought to be being replaced by COO Tom Staggs, but the 25-year Disney veteran's departure in April 2016 changed that, leaving Iger with no clear successor.

As a result, Iger extended his tenure as Disney's president and CEO until 2 July 2019, saying at the time that he would be working with the company's board to "to identify a successor as CEO and ensure a successful transition."

Speaking at the Vanity Fair New Establishment Summit, Iger told



Bob Iger says he definitely plans to leave Disney in 2019

attendees "I am leaving Disney in mid-2019. This time I mean it."

Commenting on his next steps after leaving Disney, Iger said that he was yet to make a decision on the matter.

"I'll figure it out when I have to figure it out, but it's premature right now," he said.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=p7X9m\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=p7X9m_A)



## Harlem's Studio Museum extension to break ground in 2018

Sir David Adjaye's US\$175m (€148.7m, £131m) vision for Harlem's Studio Museum will break ground next year, marking the institution's 50th anniversary.

Since 1982, the museum – which celebrates the work of contemporary artists of African descent – has operated out of the former New York Bank for Saving.

New design renderings for the museum showcase a planned five-storey extension, designed by Adjaye Associates in collaboration with Cooper Robertson. According to design brief, the architects were tasked with creating an extension “that expresses the museum's core values of openness and engagement.”

A public-private initiative in partnership with the City of New York, the 82,000sq ft (7,600sq m) building will rise on West 125th Street on the site of the current museum, giving 115 per cent additional space for exhibiting art, and the outdoor areas will also almost double in size.

Facilities will include temporary and permanent galleries, a welcome centre,



The museum's extension is designed to be porous and welcoming at street level

educational spaces, a café, a roof terrace spanning the entire building and a tiered public hall – likened to an “inverted stoop” that invites people to step down from the street into a multi-use space used for presentations and gatherings.

Sir David, Adjaye Associates founder, said the extension will “build on the museum's incredible legacy and deepen its relationships with the local community and an expanding global audience.”

More: [http://lei.sr?a=B9v9E\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=B9v9E_A)

## Tom Mehrmann to head up Universal's CN¥50bn Beijing park

Former Ocean Park CEO Tom Mehrmann will play a lead role in the development of the CN¥50bn (US\$7.4bn, €6.65bn, £6bn) Universal Beijing, after being named president and general manager for the upcoming theme park and resort.

Mehrmann, who has held senior roles across the attractions industry, led Ocean Park's HK\$5.5bn (US\$709m, €672m, £568m) master redevelopment plan during his 13-year stint, also increasing attendance from less than three million visitors to more than 7.8 million by 2014/2015.

Prior to joining Ocean Park, Mehrmann was vice president and general manager of both Warner Bros Movie World Madrid and Six Flags, and spent 21 years competing against Disney as vice president of park operations and entertainment for Knott's Berry Farm. In 2016, he founded Themed Advisors – a company providing professional advisory services for themed attraction development and operation.

“Tom will bring tremendous industry knowledge, business acumen and

international experience to our project,” said Page Thompson, president and COO International, for Universal Parks and Resorts. “He has exactly what we and our partners need to help create a world-class theme park entertainment destination.”

Being developed in partnership with the Beijing Shouhuan Cultural Tourism Investment Company – a consortium of five Beijing state-owned enterprises – Universal Beijing was initially given the green light in September 2014.

Due to open in 2020, the development will include in its first phase a theme park, the world's first Universal-themed resort hotel and a retail entertainment complex – all to be completed within five years. A second stage of development in 2021 will include a second theme park, a waterpark and five more resort hotels.

The park will be the company's fourth Universal resort in Asia, following the sites in Japan and Singapore and the forthcoming Universal Studios in South Korea.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=a7A2x\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=a7A2x_A)



Mehrmann helped to increase attendance at Ocean Park to more than 7.8 million

# V&A boss calls for pedestrianisation of Exhibition Road

V&A director Tristram Hunt has called for a full pedestrianisation of South Kensington's Exhibition Road following the car crash that left 11 injured on 7 October.

Exhibition Road, London, which is home to not only the V&A but also to the Science Museum and Natural History Museum, is an outdoor area shared by both pedestrians and vehicles, with patterned street tiles and no raised pavements.

Around 11 million people a year walk through the area, which underwent a £30m (US\$39.6m, €33.5m) transformation in 2012.

Commenting on the traffic arrangements for the road, Hunt – who was named V&A director in January – called them “confusing, dangerous and unsatisfactory”.

“The safety and security of our visitors, staff and volunteers is paramount,” Hunt said.

“We believe that reviving the original vision for the area as an open, civic space and shared cultural quarter will greatly improve the experience for all visitors to one of the world's great cultural destinations.



Police were on the scene after the car hit several people outside the Natural History Museum

“Saturday's incident has made it clear that we need a solution, and we will be working together with our neighbouring organisations, residents and the council to address this.”

Following the incident, since confirmed not to be a terrorist incident, a 47-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of dangerous driving, but released the following day.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=Z4N5P\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=Z4N5P_A)



The gift is the largest in LACMA history

## David Geffen donates US\$150m to LACMA

David Geffen has donated US\$150m (€128m, £114.1m) towards the US\$600m (€511.9m, £456.6m) campaign to expand the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).

The donation is the largest single cash gift from an individual in the museum's history, with his philanthropic support also making him the largest individual donor to the Building LACMA campaign.

“This innovative addition to the LACMA campus will ensure ongoing and expanded access to their permanent collection,” he said.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=z5A3Z\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=z5A3Z_A)

## Richard Zimmerman to take Cedar Fair reins from Matt Ouimet in 2018

Cedar Fair has announced plans for the company's existing president and COO, Richard Zimmerman, to succeed Matt Ouimet as CEO.

After more than three decades in the hospitality and leisure industry, Zimmerman joined Cedar Fair as executive vice president in 2007, going on to be named COO in 2011 and then president in 2016.

He takes up his new position as CEO from 1 January 2018, with Ouimet taking the newly created role of executive chair of the board of directors. Additionally, Debra Smithart-Oglesby will be named lead independent director.

“I have very much appreciated the opportunity to serve as the CEO of Cedar



Zimmerman takes up his new position from 1 January

Fair and I am proud of what our team has accomplished,” said Ouimet.

“Richard is a perfect choice to succeed me as CEO and I look forward to continuing to partner with him as the executive chair going forward.”

More: [http://lei.sr?a=X5D2e\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=X5D2e_A)





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# Wake up and dream

AMC strikes US\$20m deal with Dreamscape Immersive to bring VR to cinemas in UK and US

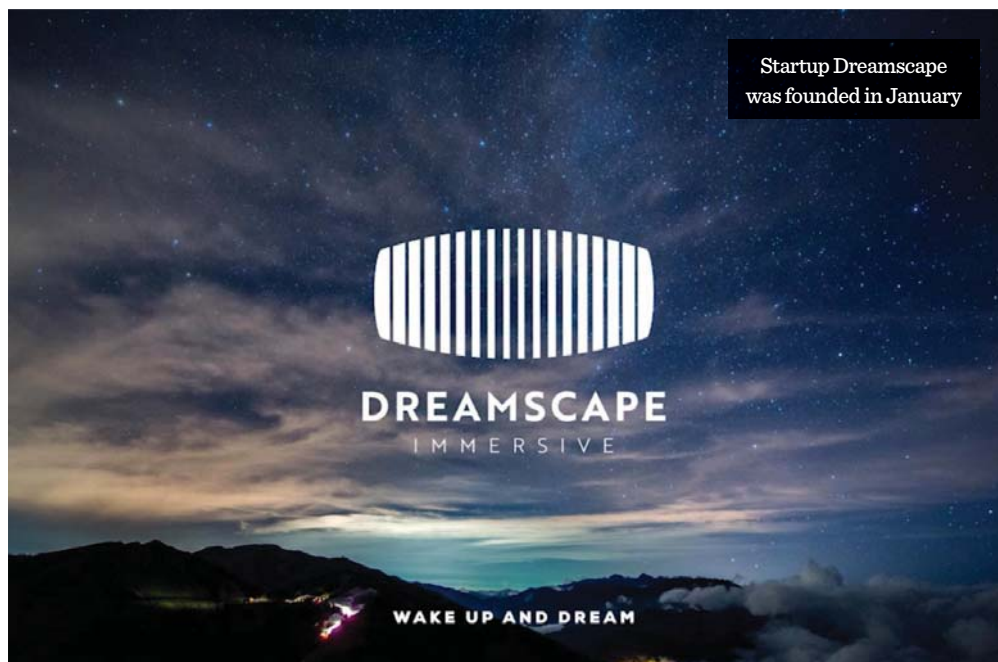
**C**inema chain AMC Entertainment has invested US\$20m (€17m, £15.2m)

into virtual reality specialists Dreamscape Immersive, in a bid to bring VR to British and the US cinemas next year.

Founded in January, the Los Angeles-based Dreamscape is developing VR attractions utilising full-body tracking technology by Swiss motion capture specialists Artanim. A VR headset attached to a backpack computer offers up to six users untethered movement around large physical spaces, with the system supporting shared interactions such as high fives, handshakes or real-life object manipulation.

The investment – which comes in the form of a US\$10m (€8.5m, £7.6m) equity investment in the VR company, as well as a US\$10m investment in creating content – is the first step of a “wide-ranging strategic partnership” from the Wanda-owned AMC, that will rapidly scale Dreamscape in the coming months.

Since launch, the VR startup has had backing from some of Hollywood’s biggest names, with



**While Dreamscape’s immersive technologies represent the cutting edge of the digital world, its heart and soul rests firmly in the shared language of film**

the likes of Steven Spielberg, Warner Bros, and MGM all supporting the project.

Its leadership team is also impressive, with prolific film producer and former studio head Walter Parkes and Emmy Award-winning producer Kevin Wall acting as co-chairs, while its chief executive Bruce Vaughn spent 23 years at Disney, most recently as chief creative officer for Walt Disney Imagineering.

“While Dreamscape’s immersive technologies represent the cutting edge of the digital world, its heart and soul rests firmly in the shared language of film,” said Parkes. “It’s tremendously exciting that our first major commercial partnership is with the world’s largest cinema exhibitor.”

Dreamscape’s first opening – a standalone attraction – is slated to open at the start of next year, with a flagship site at the

Westfield Century City Mall in Los Angeles. It also owns a multiplex in Manchester, the UK. The company has also green-lit its first piece of original content, with the company saying it is currently in licensing conversations with several major studios and IP-holders.

Dreamscape is one of several emerging names in the world of VR attractions, with many seeking investment from big name companies as this new realm of immersion takes its first steps. Among those, Disney has thrown its weight behind VR startup Jaunt, while Magic Leap’s mixed-reality technology has received investment from big names including Google and Warner Bros. The market continues to hot up with other competitors such as Russian startup Anvio, the Void and Zero Latency all looking to make their mark on the industry.



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23-27 OCTOBER 2017

**European Union of Aquarium Curators**  
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8-9 NOVEMBER 2017

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For 2017's event, IAAPA is inviting show attendees to "join the creation nation"

13-17 NOVEMBER 2017

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13-18 NOVEMBER 2017

**AZA: Creating Successful Exhibits**  
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6-8 DECEMBER 2017

**PARX Japan Theme Park Expo**  
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16-18 NOVEMBER 2017

**Museums Association Conference**  
**Manchester, UK**

The Museums Association Annual Conference & Exhibition is the largest event of its kind for museum and heritage professionals. This year's event follows three themes this year – Audiences, Collections and Workforce – with more than 1,500 senior staff gathering to discuss the latest issues, discover new practice and meet the world's leading suppliers and consultants.

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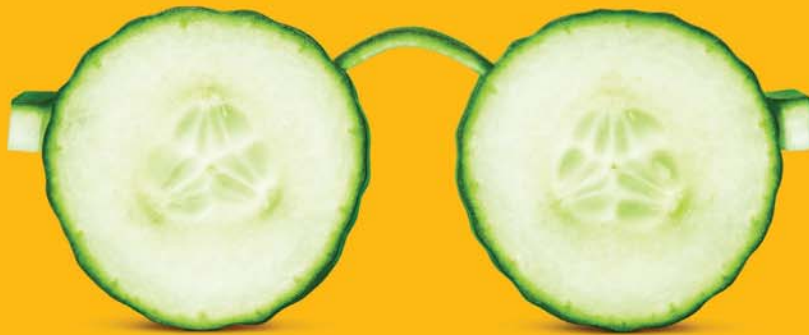
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## Bob Rogers reveals lineup for 2017 IAAPA Legends Panel

Some of the attractions industry's brightest minds will come together next month for an open panel discussion about the creative process and challenges involved with turning popular IPs into real-life places.

Taking place on 15 November at the IAAPA Attractions Expo in Orlando, Florida, the Legends Panel will examine how the worlds of *Avatar*, *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars* and *Spiderman* became a reality. During the session, the panel will share personal insights with an audience comprising the next generation of creators, operators and leaders within the sector.

Hosted by BEC founder Bob Rogers, Joe Rohde, executive designer and vice president of creative at Walt Disney Imagineering is the first panel member for this year's lineup. Joining the Imagineering team in 1980, Rohde's most recent work was as lead designer for the newly opened Pandora, The World of Avatar.

Leading creative development for Universal Parks and Resorts globally, Thierry Coup,



Bob Rogers, founder and chair of BRC Imagination Arts, will host the Legends Panel

senior vice president at Universal Creative, is the panel's second member. Working at Universal for more than two decades, Coup has worked on projects including Universal's *Spiderman*, *Transformers* and *King Kong* rides, as well as the Wizarding World of Harry Potter attractions.

The panel's third member is an Imagineer overseeing Disney's *Star Wars* projects. Scott Trowbridge is currently working on *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* – the two new themed lands coming soon to Disneyland and Disney's Hollywood Studios.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=6r3Y9\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=6r3Y9_A)

## Unesco and Hermitage Museum join forces to protect cultural heritage

Unesco and Russia's Hermitage Museum of Saint Petersburg have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to help protect and restore cultural properties in areas of conflict.

Under the agreement, the museum will provide the world heritage body with support for the assessment of damage to cultural property, and will help to devise operational plans for urgent safeguarding measures and restoration efforts worldwide.

The museum will also offer technical supervision and training in order to assist national authorities in affected regions.

"We are very grateful for this cooperation, for all of what the Hermitage is bringing to us in terms of knowledge and expertise," said Unesco director general, Irina Bokova, speaking at the signing.



Heritage sites are slowly being recovered from enemy forces

The partnership is part of Unesco's 2015 strategy to better protect global culture in the event of armed conflict, which Bokova said responds to a "real necessity" to do work in areas now accessible after spending long periods under the control of hostile forces.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=U6a5A\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=U6a5A_A)



A beachfront waterpark is in the plans

### Waterpark planned for Deira Islands resort

Developer Nakheel and Thai hotel group Centara Hotels and Resorts have unveiled plans to open a hotel, beach resort and waterpark on Dubai's Deira Islands.

Set to open in 2020, the 600-bedroom resort will be managed by Centara, which has a portfolio of 67 hotels across Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East.

Covering 300,000sq ft (27,900sq m), a large beachfront waterpark is included in the plans, as well as multiple restaurants, a kids club, spa, fitness centre and business facilities.

More: [http://lei.sr?a=a7N3z\\_A](http://lei.sr?a=a7N3z_A)



The CAVE showcases plans as virtual reality walk-throughs

## Holovis partners with Cullinan Studio for design tool

Immersive experience designer Holovis has collaborated with architecture firm Cullinan Studio to create BimSpace – a Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (CAVE) visualisation suite that can be used to turn on-site construction facilities into multi-purpose Building Information Modelling (BIM) environments.

Billed as a tool for architects, the CAVE is a portable four or five-sided space with multiple projectors displaying 3D content onto its walls.

Using the CAVE, architects are able to showcase complex plans as life-sized walk-throughs, while head-tracked 3D glasses offer a 1:1 scale of the information and allow users to interact with the plans.



Dr Pieter Cornelis previously worked at Toverland

## Cornelis joins Jora Vision as project strategy director

Experience design and production company Jora Vision has appointed Dr Pieter Cornelis as its project strategy director.

Cornelis has previously held management and board positions at the Efteling and Toverland theme parks, including a stint as the vice president of Strategy and Development at Toverland. He has also worked as a lecturer and

associate professor at various universities, including Tilburg University and Universitat Rovira i Virgili, across the Netherlands, Austria and Spain.

He will serve as an attraction investments and economics consultant for family attractions, including theme parks and zoos, and will be responsible for strategic master planning at the company.



Vortex president and CEO Stephen Hamelin has led the growth

## Vortex makes list of Canada's fastest-growing firms

Aquatic play specialists Vortex has been acknowledged as one of Canada's companies to watch, included on the PROFIT 500 list for the third year in a row.

The list, published by Canadian Business, ranks Canada's fastest-growing companies in terms of five-year revenues and has been a respected resource for

Canada's business community for the past 29 years.

"During our 22 years, we have always experienced steady growth. Making the PROFIT 500 for the third consecutive year validates our strategy and mission, especially as our percentage revenue growth continues to climb," said Stephen Hamelin, president and CEO of Vortex.



BRC worked with Hall of Fame inductees such as Alice Cooper

## BRC Imagination Arts creates Say it Loud experience

BRC Imagination Arts has created the Say it Loud story booths for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio.

Following the Power Rock immersive show, also designed by BRC, guests enter the Say it Loud zone and are encouraged by Rock Hall inductees, including Alice Cooper, Smokey Robinson and Deep Purple's

Glenn Hughes, to tell their very own rock 'n' roll stories.

Guests scan their wristbands on entry into one of the four story booths. They are then greeted by name and can select a Hall of Fame inductee to share their story. When the artist finishes telling their story they invite the guest to choose from a list of questions and share their own rock n roll stories.



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# National Manager Programmes and Events

## THE WILDFOWL AND WETLANDS TRUST

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**JOB LOCATION: SLIMBRIDGE, UNITED KINGDOM**

Our public programmes and events, created for the diverse range of adult and family visitors to our nine Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust centres across the UK, are key in attracting visitors and making their day out an enjoyable, engaging, inspiring and sometimes surprising experience (in a good way). We think they're so important that we have created this new post, to lead on developing and coordinating our national programmes, and also have some input to local centre events.

We're looking for someone who is drawn to work for a conservation charity and has an instinctive feel for creating and supporting delivery of programmes or events at visitor attractions. Ideally you'll have experience of multi-site event management and your positive and engaging people skills will enable you to influence and promote new programmes across WWT. This will be balanced with your ability to sort out logistical stuff and get stuck into practical tasks too.

WWT is a conservation charity, protecting wetlands for wildlife and people and pioneering in working with communities to save threatened wetland wildlife and habitats across the globe. We believe that extraordinary wetlands can ignite passion in people to conserve them, so we offer amazing experiences at our unique UK wetland centres for over one million visitors every year.

This role will require regular travel to our nine centres which will sometimes entail overnight stays. The role is preferably based at Slimbridge Wetland Centre, but can be negotiable - for example at another WWT centre or home based. If home based, SW England is preferred.

Please state on your application form your preferred location and if you would like us to consider any flexible working/part time patterns.

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**Closing date: Thursday 26 October 2017**  
**First Interviews: Friday 10 November 2017**

*Registered Charity Number England & Wales, no 1030884 and Scotland, no SC039410*



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● **Executive Assistant**

Legoland

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Carlsbad, CA, United States

● **Retail Director**

Legoland

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Carlsbad, CA, United States

● **Duty Manager**

Madame Tussauds

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Hollywood, Los Angeles, CA,  
United States

● **Marketing - Brand Manager**

Legoland

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Florida, United States

● **Head of Operations**

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Salary: Competitive

Job location: New York, NY, United States

● **Commercial Director-  
Midway North America**

Merlin Entertainments Group

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Orlando, FL, United States

● **Guest Experience Host  
- All Departments**

Legoland Discovery Centre

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Kansas City, MO, United States

● **Guest Experience  
Host - Education**

Sea Life

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Minnesota, United States

● **Life Support Service  
Technician/ Aquarist**

Sea Life

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Minnesota, United States

● **Operations Manager**

Madame Tussauds

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Las Vegas, NV, United States

● **Guest Experience Host**

Sea Life

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Kansas City, MO, United States

● **Retail Manager**

Merlin Entertainments Group

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Atlanta, GA, United States

● **Director of Front  
Office Operations**

Legoland

Salary: Competitive

Job location: Carlsbad, CA, United States

● **Marketing Manager**

Madame Tussauds

Salary: Competitive

Job location: New York, NY, United States

For more details on the above jobs visit [www.am2.jobs](http://www.am2.jobs)

## Merlin denies interest in SeaWorld acquisition following purchase rumours

Merlin Entertainments has quashed rumours of a possible SeaWorld Entertainments takeover following reports suggesting the operator had made a bid.

A report from *Bloomberg* quoted “people familiar with the matter”, who suggested that the UK operator had made a bid to buy part, or all, of the US company, with the rumours following on from Merlin’s chief financial officer Anne-Francoise Nesmes calling SeaWorld’s assets “interesting”, particularly Busch Gardens.

“We can confirm that Merlin is not involved in any discussions that might lead to an acquisition of



SeaWorld recently unveiled its new Orca Encounter show

SeaWorld or any of its constituent parts,” said Merlin in a statement.

While Merlin is seemingly not interested in SeaWorld, a takeover or partial purchase of

the company could still come from elsewhere, with new reports linking Spanish operator Parques Reunidos to a potential takeover of the operator.

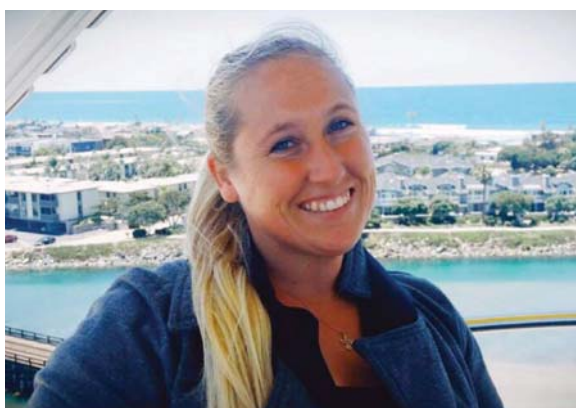
*More: <http://lei.sr?a=b2p2x-A>*

## Bob Iger pays tribute as employee Carrie Barnette dies in Las Vegas shooting

Disney CEO Bob Iger has paid tribute to employee Carrie Barnette – one of the 59 people killed in the Las Vegas shooting on 1 October.

A cast member, who worked at Disney California Adventure in the Pacific Wharf Café, 34-year-old Barnette had been working at Disney for a decade.

“Our hearts go out to everyone impacted by the tragic events in Las Vegas – the victims of violence, the witnesses, and the friends and families mourning loved ones. We are especially heartbroken over the loss of one of our own to this unconscionable and senseless act,” said Iger in a company-wide statement to Disney employees.



Carrie Barnette had been working at Disney for a decade

“I know we have many more Disney employees impacted by this latest act of senseless violence, who were either on site or had loved ones who were. Our hearts are with each of them as they begin to process this terrifying experience.”

A second Disney employee, Jessica Milam, was one of the more than 500 people injured during the shooting. The 23-year-old is currently recovering from a gunshot wound in a Las Vegas hospital.

*More: <http://lei.sr?a=3N9j6-A>*

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