



Arms are raised skyward by riders of the Giant Dipper as the train heads into its first big dive in 2007.

Giant Dipper still rolling after 90 years

Boardwalk
Iconic coaster still
a major draw for
Boardwalk

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SANTA CRUZ — It creaks, rattles and shakes, but after 90 years, age still hasn't slowed down the Giant Dipper at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

The park celebrated the ride's anniversary Saturday with free rides for an hour and other prizes throughout the day.

Opening on May 17, 1924, the National Amusement Park Historical Association lists the Giant Dipper as the oldest roller coaster in California, the fifth oldest in the country and the ninth oldest in the world.

"The Giant Dipper is the Boardwalk's signature ride, bringing visitors to the Boardwalk just

to experience its thrills," said Brigid Fuller, Boardwalk spokesperson. "And amazingly, after 90 years, it's still a really exciting ride."

Since opening, the Giant Dipper has thrilled close to 62 million riders, Fuller said, averaging about one million a year in recent history. The ride notched 60 million riders in July 2012.

The nearly two-minute ride stands at 70 feet tall, reaching speeds of 55 mph. While most

coasters begin with a lift hill ascent, the Giant Dipper throws a surprise into the mix, opening with a drop into a pitch-black tunnel.

"The initial plunge through the dark tunnel can be a shocker, then the sound of the chain pulling the coaster up the first big hill is pretty scary, and the first big drop takes your breath away," Fuller said.

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Visitors to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk enjoy a ride on the Giant Dipper Sunday as the coaster turns 90 years old.

DIPPER

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The Giant Dipper was built in 47 days at a cost of \$50,000, according to the Boardwalk. It was designed by Frank Prior and Frederick Church and built by Arthur Looff.

The Giant Dipper is not the only attraction at the Boardwalk created by the Looff family. Looff's father, Charles, built the Boardwalk's carousel in 1911.

In June 1987, the Giant Dipper, along with the Looff Carousel, were designated National Historic Landmarks by the U.S.

National Park Service.

Members of American Coaster Enthusiasts will visit the Boardwalk on June 19 to take a behind-the-scenes look at the Giant Dipper during Coaster Con XXXVII.

Kris Rowberry, ACE member and founder of the coaster enthusiast website Great American Thrills, described a ride on the Giant Dipper as a trip back in time.

"It was built at the peak of coaster innovation, the 'Golden Age,'" he said. "And while the modern 'woodies' can pack quite a punch, there's something about the Giant Dipper that the others don't have — a soul."

Nicholas Laschkewitsch, as-

sistant regional representative for ACE Northern California, called the coaster "one-of-a-kind."

"The Giant Dipper is a gem among coasters," he said. "It's rare nowadays to find such a historic and well-loved wooden coaster, and the Boardwalk has done a fantastic job of preserving it for future generations to enjoy."

"While the Dipper isn't the fastest or the tallest coaster in the world, it packs a punch and the view from the top beats any other coaster in the world," Fuller said.

Saturday also marked the Boardwalk's season kick-off event, featuring a preview of Street Drum Corp's new summer show and a free concert by Y&T.