



The Giant Dipper at Santa Cruz Boardwalk is shown in 1936. The roller coaster opened in 1924 and was designated a historic landmark in 1987 by the U.S. National Park Service. "It's a landmark on the beach; the wooden track gives you an authentic feeling," Garrett Matthew, of San Jose, said. "The ride is exhilarating. It's a pretty good view from the top and the dip is really nice."

Dipper gets its 60 millionth rider

Boardwalk
Boardwalk's signature ride hits major milestone

By Romain Fongsegrives
Santa Cruz Sentinel

SANTA CRUZ — The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk celebrated the 60 millionth rider on the famed Giant Dipper Roller Coaster.

Boardwalk officials announced that the park's signature ride would hit the milestone this week.

And Friday was the day.

The suspense built with every ride, said Boardwalk's spokesman Kris Reyes. Special treats and gifts were promised to the 24 passengers on the ride when it reached the 60 million riders mark.

"We enjoy and appreciate to see how much people love the Giant Dipper," Reyes said. "It's amazing to have something as special as this ride at our park and we take a lot of pride in it."

The lucky passengers crossed the Giant Dipper's turnstile around 2:30 p.m. to cheers. After the milestone, riders were given a custom hooded sweatshirt and other prizes.

Garrett and Carrie Matthew of San Jose learned about the celebration when they arrived at the Boardwalk on Friday. Although they just missed the milestone, they received a second ride for free.

"That's life, it's all good," Carrie Matthew said. "We got that double ride to make up for it."

Garrett Matthew said he is a Giant Dipper regular. He used to come to the Boardwalk as a youngster, driving over the hill with his grandmother.

"It's a landmark on the beach; the wooden track gives you an authentic feeling," Garrett Matthew said. "The ride is exhilarating. It's a pretty good view from the top and the dip is really nice."

The Giant Dipper opened in 1924, Reyes said. It was designed by resident Arthur Loof. The oldest roller coaster in California, the ride was named a National Historic Landmark in 1987 by the U.S. National Park Service.

"This ride has just been a part of our community for

almost a hundred years," Reyes said. "The outside world equates Santa Cruz with the Giant Dipper the same way people associate New York City with the Empire State Building."

The Boardwalk gave out 5,000 trivia coasters to visitors all week leading up to Friday's milestone. The items featured fun facts about the Giant Dipper, Reyes said.

GIANT DIPPER

A ride on the Giant Dipper is \$5 per person. Riders must be at least 50 inches tall to get on the roller coaster. For information about the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, visit www.beach-boardwalk.com.

The wooden structure requires regular maintenance to ensure the public's safety. Boardwalk employees walk down the track every day, making sure requirements are met, Reyes

said. The staff constantly repairs and replaces wood on the ride's body to keep it safe.

"It's like a vintage car," Reyes said. "You have to take real good care of it."

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