

## Local news

# Let 'em ride



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos



Parents and kids can ride a giant, dragon-like roller coaster together with the Boardwalk's new Orient Express, above. The Whirlwind, at left, also opened for the first time last week — just in time for spring break.

## Boardwalk adds three more rides to its bone-shaking repertoire

By **DAN WHITE**  
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**SANTA CRUZ** — The Beach Boardwalk already has lots of rides that are guaranteed to churn stomachs and rattle bones. Now it has yet another — the Whirlwind — plus a brand new climbing wall that will put muscles and bravery to the test, and a kiddie coaster that children can ride with adults.

It's all part of the subtle but ongoing series of additions and modernizations to this old beachfront park, owned and administered by the Seaside Company. The rides kick off spring break and the beginning of the tourist season.

The German-made Whirlwind whips its riders into a colorful blur as they sit inside spinning gondolas decorated with flag designs from across the world. Orient Express, manufactured in Colorado, looks like a segmented traditional Chinese dragon, with tourists sitting in each of its segments. It

trundles steadily across a red track that dips and curves but is much more gentle than some of the park's adult coasters.

A new Climb 'n' Conquer climbing wall, made by a Utah interactive amusement company, lets visitors strive for the top of a 24-foot-tall 'rock' made of fiberglass.

This attraction is one example of amusement parks becoming more interactive, said Barbara Phillips, general manager for Boardwalk rides.

The climbing area has an automatic belaying system. This means that a harnessed, roped-up climber can climb on the wall without need of an extra person to lower him or her, or hold the rope steady, if a misstep or slip should occur. An air-pressure system will slowly lower the climbers who fall. It will have three 'routes' to the top, ranging from beginner to advanced.

Marq Lipton, vice president of marketing for the Boardwalk, said it's necessary to revise and add to the park

continually. "There is so much competition for leisure time activities," he said. "People go to climbing gyms, family entertainment centers, water parks. The newest arcade equipment that we have now, two years from now, it's going in your living room."

Lipton said he and other staff members go to trade shows for amusement parks to help select the rides they want. Exhibitors come from all over the world. He said that the Boardwalk recently bought a surf-oriented ride from Italy in which tourists will whirl around in seats decorated with surfboards. The backdrop will feature the portraits of well-known local surfers.

This is all part of the updating. Even the amusement park's oldest and most famous attraction, the Giant Dipper, which will turn 75 next year, has been revamped in subtle ways. The layout is the same but Lipton said every piece of wood has been replaced. None of the original wood remains.