

Michael Slear

The 18-story-tall SkyWheel opened May 20 as the primary attraction along the Myrtle Beach Oceanfront Boardwalk and Promenade.

Hitting the beach

New attractions open along the Grand Strand

By Amy Clarke
STAFF WRITER
aclarke@greenvilleonline.com

If you're headed to Myrtle Beach this summer, there are a few new things waiting for you and your family to explore on the Grand Strand:

■ **SkyWheel Myrtle Beach**

This Ferris wheel on steroids towers 200 feet above Ocean Boulevard. The first observation wheel of its kind in the U.S., the SkyWheel includes 42 enclosed gondolas, each of which seats six passengers, that provide panoramic views of the shoreline and the Grand Strand. The SkyWheel, which opened May 20, will also feature nightly light shows from its more than 1 million lights.

The SkyWheel is part of the Oceanfront Boardwalk and Promenade, which opened last year featuring shops, cafes, arcades and more. Learn more at www.skywheelusa.com.

■ **Pirates Voyage**

The long-running Dixie Stampede, Dolly Parton's famed dinner and show, closed its doors in December to make way for a new adventure of the swashbuckling variety. After an $11 million facility upgrade and renovation, Pirates Voyage kicks off June 3.

The new show features a 15-foot-deep indoor lagoon where pirates battle in full-sized ships. Like its predecessor, Pirates Voyage shows will include a four-course meal, live animals and an original music score. Visit www.piratesvoyage.com.

■ **Wonderworks Science Center**

Wonderworks, a hands-on science attraction, opened in April at Broadway at the Beach. The signature upside-down building houses myriad interactive exhibits including a hurricane simulator, a Major League pitching demo, an indoor ropes course, an illusion gallery and a virtual roller coaster. Or try the outdoor zipline and ropes course. Visit www.wonderworksonline.com.

Other new and updated attractions:

■ **Ripley's Aquarium**: A new sharks exhibit opened in April, featuring more than a dozen species of sharks and 30 hands-on displays. www.ripleysaquarium-.com

■ **Legends in Concert**: The popular tribute show has relocated to Broadway at the Beach. The newly renovated theater will host portrayals of Elvis, Aretha Franklin, Michael Jackson, Tom Jones, Alan Jackson and ABBA during the summer season. www.legendsinconcert.com

■ **Myrtle Beach Pelicans**: The minor-league baseball team, long a Class A-affiliate of the Atlanta Braves, is now part of the Texas Rangers organization. Catch games all summer at BB&T Coastal Field. www.myrtlebeachpelicans.com

■ **Wheels of YesterYear**: The collection of muscle and classic cars was rotated and augmented for 2011. www.wheelsofyesteryearmb.com

■ **Pat Boone Family Theater**: The former NASCAR Café has been converted into a 600-seat theater that will house musical and magical acts. The theater is expected to open late in the summer.

aclarke@greenvilleonline.com

Gasoline prices are slowly nudging their way down, but most of us are still feeling the sting at the pump when it's time for a fill up.

But most of us are also still feeling the itch to take off on summer vacation, particularly after a few tough years had many opting for "staycations" instead of time away.

"I think people really experienced a lot of cabin fever," said Linda Burch, branch sales manager for AAA Carolinas. "Everyone wants to travel."

If the high cost of driving has got you rethinking a long summer road trip but you're still excited to get out of town on vacation, there are plenty of places a little closer to home to visit, explore or maybe just rediscover.

Auf weidersehen

Just a two-hour jaunt away is Helen, a Georgia mountain town styled to look like a German hamlet. The town offers shopping, activities and, of course, good German food, said Neville Bhada, vice president of communications and public relations for the Southeast Tourism Society.

Just outside of Helen, take a hike to Brasstown Bald, the highest peak in Georgia, and then cool off with a dip in the water.

"If you want a nice little cool splash, it's great to take a dip into the Chattahoochee River, whether it's leisurely tubing or kayaking or just wading into the waters there," Bhada said.

For more: www.exploregeorgia.org.



Chattanooga Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Lookout Mountain Incline Railway, in Lookout Mountain, Tenn., is known as the steepest passenger railway in the world.

Choo-choo

For a family on the go, Chattanooga offers a plethora of fun activities, from exploring Rock City and Ruby Falls to taking in a ballgame or a day at the amusement park.

The Tennessee Aquarium, which houses 10,000 animals, is one of the city's chief attrac-

See TRAVEL on page 2C

FROM PAGE 1C

tions, said Carol Timblin, a travel journalist who writes primarily about the South. Try out the aquarium's new addition: a high-speed boat ride that's part thrill ride, part nature

River.

Take the family for a day of fun at Lake Winnepesaukah Amusement Park (Lake Winnie, for short), walk across the historic Walnut Street Bridge, visit the famed Chattanooga Choo-Choo, cheer for the Chattanooga Lookouts or ride the world's steepest passen-

By Amy Clarke

Lookout Mountain.

For more: tnvacation-.com.

On your feet

A walk through the woods more your speed? You can't beat some destinations right up the road.

The Cashiers and Brevard areas are renowned for their abundant and beautiful waterfalls (there are waterfall maps widely available in the area or online).

And don't miss the nearby Sliding Rock, a popular summer destination where visitors can slide down a rock face into a deep (and chilly!) pool.

"It's a natural water park," Timblin said.

Brevard also features the summer-long Brevard Music Festival with almost daily performances from June 24 to Aug. 7.

Or venture a little further up the road to the North Carolina High Country. Places such as



Chattanooga Area Conv. & Visitors Bureau

Ruby Falls, in Lookout Mountain, Tenn., is America's highest underground waterfall.

Blowing Rock and Linville Falls and Caverns are perennial favorites for kids and adults alike.

If y
at the
Game
Granc
Highl
July 7
For
water
vardm
www.g

Take

Sma
body t
abounc
and be
perfect
new ar
history
ery.
Mt. A
the nos
and offe
ping an
Bhada.
Or try
where t
er Trail,
ect, offe
varied te
bikers t
For hi
borough

Regional trips are just a tank or two away

SUMMER TRAVEL IS CALLING



The Chattahoochee River just outside of Helen, Ga., offers plenty of opportunities to cool off during the hot summer months.