

MEDIA INFORMATION

TEA conference on future trends in theme parks

Emotion beats technology, even in the future! This was the conclusion of high-ranking international representatives of the theme park industry at the TEA (Themed Entertainment Association) conference at the beginning of May in Europa-Park. Theme parks will therefore see an increased use of VR and projection technology as well as digitisation in the future. However, the feelings associated with each visit remain the most significant factor. 'People love contact with each other,' was a keynote from the experts. 'Technology is simply a tool.' In contrast, the environments of a theme park and how they successfully embed visitors within stories will continue to be what guarantees success in the future. Among the 120 international participants of the TEA conference were managing directors of leisure and water parks, designers, architects, and engineers from 17 countries. Which rides will visitors experience in the future? How does a modern theme park manage these challenges? And what trends are driving the leisure industry? These questions alongside others were tackled at Germany's largest theme park. On two particular days, the discussion focussed on SATE: storytelling, architecture, technology and experiences. Host and Europa-Park owner Roland Mack highlighted this with reference to their own family history and the past, as well as future, tasks as a leisure company.

Throughout the year, the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) organises a specialist conference in China, Europe and America. This year's European meeting took place on 2nd and 3rd of May at Europa-Park. David Willrich, President of TEA, said: "The association is known for high standards. That's why our conference always takes place at a top destination. This includes Europa-Park as one of the best theme parks in the world." More than 120 participants from 17 countries around the world accepted the invitation to Germany's largest theme park. On the agenda were the four topics of storytelling, architecture, technology and experiences. "When all four points come together, fabulous themed worlds can emerge," says David Willrich.

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The conference also discussed trends and developments ? especially the expansion in the Asian leisure market, digital future technologies such as rooms interacting with guests and the further development of urban shopping centres into entertainment districts. The experts were particularly interested in a novel sound system from America, which could in the future combine different language versions of a movie within a theatre. David Willrich: "Our secret for great ideas? We are a group of people who will never grow up."

Challenges of a leisure destination

At the start of the conference, Roland Mack, owner of Europa-Park, gave an overview of the success of the family business and its challenges in both past and future. He particularly addressed the difficulty of bringing existing recreational facilities into harmony with nature and local residents. Roland Mack: "The risk of founding the park was high. We had no experience and had to use all our equity to get everything going. It was certainly a mix of courage, enthusiasm, passion, joy, and optimism that drove us. At that time, we did not expect such a sensational development. Looking into the future, I think being close to visitors is extremely important. We need to take in moods, preferences, and wishes in order to always have a new sense of what we still have to work on. With this contact, we can continue to embrace new trends at an early stage and implement them."

"When you enter Europa-Park, you immediately realise that the Mack family has brought to life a vision with heart and soul," said David Willrich.

Emotionalisation through storytelling

An essential task for the theme park industry in the future will be the realisation of integrated story worlds. In addition to an innovative ride, this will include sophisticated theming that brings stories to life for visitors. Together with friends and family, guests can explore, interact with, and experience adventures that evoke lasting emotions and memories. The experts see digital technologies less as an 'attraction', but rather as a tool to convey stories in an impressive way.

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