

[This transcript has been lightly edited for flow and sentence structure]

Lizzie: Hello, hello everyone. It is Lizzie back for episode two of Once Upon A Coaster. We are so happy that you have decided to join us for another great episode where we dive deep into these old forgotten coasters that just deserve a little bit of our love and attention too. We had such a great time recording episode one and we hope you had a great time listening to it. We are testing out some new audio this episode so let us know if you like this audio better. We are slowly getting the feel for how podcasting works. So like I said, these first couple episodes, they might be a little rough, but we hope that the content of what we're giving you guys is more than enough to keep you coming back as we work through the audio. Also if anyone has great recommendations for some USB microphones, let us know. We've been doing some research and we'd like to purchase one. We just want to know your opinion out there for something that works.

So that being said we are ready to keep going with the rest of the season. We have it all mapped out. We cannot wait to let you guys know all the coasters that are going to be included in this season. We are going East Coast, West Coast, middle of America, all over to try to bring you some forgotten coasters that you might not know about.

This week we are headed out to the West Coast. So take a look at a ride that seems to fly under a lot of people's radar. It's one of those rides that people forget about until you mentioned it and then they're like, "Oh, yeah, I rode that ride once." It's not a super flashy ride and it's going to certainly be overlooked by people if they really don't know a lot about the ride. But it has such a great history that shows how our advancing technology has continued to contribute to the development of newer, faster coasters. We are looking today at Montezooma's Revenge in Knott's Berry Farm. And Montezooma's Revenge is the first of its kind ever built. And it also has the distinction it is the last of its kind still standing today. And somehow this ride has never been moved- way to go Knott's Berry Farm- and so it's in its original location. You don't always find that anymore with some of these older coasters. You hear so many stories of older coasters that have been moved or transported just by sale or because they need to move it to a different place in the park. So we all love that Montezooma's Revenge has never changed, never moved. It is still going strong all these years later. So here we go, strap in! We're going to take a deep dive into Montezooma's Revenge.

Let's get into some stats on Montezooma's Revenge. If you listen to the first episode, you know that I am a huge stats geek. I love stats when it comes to rollercoasters, but I was almost a little embarrassed last week to have to give you the stats on Leap the Dips because the stats are so pitiful. It's like tallest height is 41 feet and when you really think about that, you're like "That, that's it? That's all that ride can do?" But thankfully Montezooma's Revenge is a little more redeemable in terms of their stats. We should start by saying it is a launch shuttle roller coaster. And it was the first of its kind ever built. It opened May 21, 1978 at Knott's Berry Farm. And the manufacturer for this ride was Schwarzkopf. Always love a good Schwarzkopf ride. I've been on quite a few and like they're never super exciting, but they also never fail to disappoint. Like they're fun. Maybe I just haven't ridden enough of them, maybe some of you will be like "No, this

is not it," but they're a fun ride and I do really enjoy them. So the tallest height on Montezooma's Revenge tops at 148 feet. That's over 100 feet more than what Leap the Dips topped out on so keep that in perspective, as you're thinking about this. This coaster doesn't hit 150 feet tall, but it is still somehow 100 feet taller than Leap the Dips. And the tallest drop a Montezooma's Revenge is 137 feet, and it's gonna hit speeds of 55 miles an hour. And 55 miles an hour is pretty standard for coasters nowadays, but it was still impressive at the time for the technology they were using to launch this coaster.

The one negative downside, in my opinion, about this coaster is just that the duration of the ride is so short. You launch and are back in the station in only 36 seconds! And, as a coaster rider, I like a little more to my rides than just that. If it's the only ride like it in the park, I can deal with it. It's just not what I prefer. I'm gonna prefer a ride that gives me a little bit more than just a 36 second ride in and out.

So what makes this ride so unique is that it was the first flywheel launch coaster ever built. So when you think about today's launch coasters, to launch the car out of the station, they're probably either using LIM or hydraulic technology to launch the coaster from the station. But that technology was not available when this coaster was built. And so Montezooma's Revenge uses a flywheel launching system. And I'm going to simplify this in the easiest terms to understand if you don't understand what this means. But basically, how this works, is a wheel very, very quickly and it creates kinetic energy. And that kinetic energy then is transferred to the train, and the energy pulls the train behind it as it's released.

The way this is done in Montezooma's revenge, if you ever have the chance to go ride it, go to the front of the car. And in the front of the car, there's like an extra little piece that is attached to the very first ride vehicle. And this is called a bob. And the bob is the mechanism that receives all of the kinetic energy that the rotator builds up. And when it releases, the Bob then literally takes the energy starts moving forward, and because it's attached to the rest of the train, the rest of the train comes with it! So it's a pretty simple idea. It's a lot more complex than that than that when you think about how much energy is needed to actually launch this coaster 55 miles an hour. But at the time, this was very unique and very innovative, because you did not have to use any chain lift hill for half the ride. Gravity was not playing a part in getting this coaster started, which was the first for the time. Because before this, you always needed to have a lift hill! You always needed to get that car to the top of the coaster, where the energy would take over, and get the car back to the station.

Even going forward in the future, this was still be a bit of a novelty idea for a while. Vekoma started building their infamous boomerang coasters in the 80's. So, we've all ridden at least one of those boomerang coasters, if not two. Because Six Flags bought, I think like 30,000 of them, which is maybe only a *tiny* exaggeration. So we've all been on those Vekoma boomerangs, and even those that were built after Montezooma's revenge, they're still relying on a lift hill. You're still backing out of the station, up the hill, before releasing and letting gravity do its part. This is the first time you're really going to see no gravity needed to get the coaster started.

So the bad, problematic side, of this sort of system is that it's not energy efficient. There is a *huge* loss of energy between how fast the wheel is spinning, the transfer of that energy that's created, to the bob that's pulling the car through the entire track. So because there's such a loss of energy, coaster builders realized pretty quickly they needed a smarter, better way to be able to launch this coaster.

It's a great idea. It has a lot of really cool things that you could work with and play with to make it a unique ride experience. But at the end of the day, people don't want to invest in coasters that are going to be super inefficient. And that's kind of what Montezooma's Revenge is.

So I love this ride. And I've ridden it as a kid. I was in middle school when my family went out to California to go to theme parks, because that's all my family did on vacation. We traveled to theme parks, we rode rides, we went home, I didn't realize beach vacations were a thing until I was a little older. I legit thought people just went to theme parks. But Montezooma's Revenge holds such a sweet spot in my memories because I was short for my age- I've always kind of been on the shorter side- so it took me forever to be tall enough to ride some of these rides. And Montezooma's Revenge has a pretty low threshold for a looping coaster. So it was one of those coasters that I was riding, and I felt like I was a big kid. I was an adult. I was cool because I could go on this ride and it was an adult coaster. It wasn't a kiddie coaster.

So this ride has always had just that spot in my mind where it's like, "Oh, this is that big adult coaster I went on at Knott's Berry Farm." This was also my first launch coaster and my first shuttle loop coaster. So it really ticked a lot of boxes for me in learning about the different types of coasters that exist in this world. And it was a fun ride. This ride, similar to Leap the Dips, like this one is not going to overwhelm you. I think most of the rides in this podcast, they're not going to overwhelm you with all of their tricks that they can do because they're older. But at the time, the tricks were pretty impressive. But this is still really fun ride. Especially when you realize just how primitive the launch system is. It's not using fancy technology. It's not really using computers to launch it in. It's just simply a circle spinning as fast as it can and then using that energy to launch the coaster forward. It's the simple ideas that are sometimes the best ones.

And because it's such a simple idea, because it is so easy to wrap your mind around the concept of how this coaster runs, I kind of have hope that this coaster is going to be able to survive and thrive for years to come. I'm not sure. But I have hoped that Cedar Fair isn't going to tear this down. Let's take a quick break. And then when we come back, I'm gonna look into exactly why I think this coaster has better than average odds.

Okay, let's talk about the future of Montezooma's Revenge. Call me optimistic, call me way too hopeful- after the year we've had I probably wouldn't blame you. But I have high hopes for this ride. I could see this ride easily celebrating its 50th birthday. It is 43 years old this year. And seven years from now, I would take that bet that it would still be operating and still be thrilling guests at Knott's Berry Farm. Maybe, like I said, that is way too naive of a view to take. I feel like five years from now, I'm going to need to really listen to all these episodes and just look at how many times I was actually wrong about my predictions. But this prediction I feel pretty

comfortable making because there are quite a few reasons why it makes sense for Knott's Berry Farm, and Cedar Fair, to keep Montezooma's Revenge.

The biggest pro to keeping this ride is how little space this ride takes up in the park. I know Knott's Berry Farm is like squashed in there and they need land and they would love to be able to expand that park. And they are trying to use every available square foot to their best advantage to give you more rides, more thrills, more fun things to do. But Montezooma's Revenge is not a huge coaster. It does not have a big footprint in the park and so if you're going to tear out a ride, so that you could put another ride in there, that one doesn't make a lot of sense, mainly because it doesn't take up a lot of room.

And the other flip side to that, not only does it not take up a lot of room, but the room it does take up is pretty good for eating up customers. You look at the capacity per hour of a ride and you want it to be as high as possible without taking up as much room as possible. And Montezooma's Revenge does pretty well. The ride, when it's operating at full capacity, can have 1,300 people on that ride within an hour.

I guess from Knott's Berry standpoint, it's great that the ride only lasts 36 seconds because they can just keep cycling through passenger over and over and over again. From a rider standpoint, you don't like it because the ride feels like it's over so quickly. But then everybody gets to ride it on those crazy busy days in Southern California when the park is just swarming with people. They know that everyone can probably get on Montezooma's Revenge by the end of the day. So it's a good ride to keep for that reason also.

But there are definitely reasons why I could see it being torn down, eventually. The time comes for all coasters not named Leap the Dips- I have no clue how. But they all get to the point where it's time to make a decision about the future of the ride. And I could see this one eventually being torn down for also a couple of reasons. There's definitely a concern for parts and maintenance. As unique as this ride is and as fun as it is to say this is the only ride left in the world like this. Then you start to realize, well then they're not going to be making any parts for it. There's not going to be a lot of people who know how to service it. It's going to become costly and very, very timely to get things replaced or fixed or maintained on this ride. And is it worth it? For a while it might be for Cedar Fair, but eventually I think Cedar Fair is going to look at the cost it takes to keep it operational and the amount of money that ride is probably generating for the park, and realize it's not worth it to keep this ride anymore.

So what do they do at that point? Do they close it down and tear it out? Or do they do something crazier and close it down and put in a new launch system? The bones of this ride are still good. I mean, it's not exciting, it's just a shuttle loop. But if you were to go in there and replace the launch mechanism with something of today's standards- is it worth keeping? Is it worth doing a rebrand- Montezooma's Revenge Part Two. What's a revenge of revenge? I don't know. Like, if they just call this Montezooma's Ride, then they could rebrand it to Montezooma's Revenge. But how do you revenge the revenge? I'm talking in circles now. But a rebrand could be worth it if it's not that expensive, because all you would have to do is swap out the old ride

mechanism, the old launch mechanism, for something that's much more modern and energy efficient.

I don't know. I don't know which way Cedar Fair will go. They don't always have the best track record of saving rides. Sometimes they save them and they really put the energy into preserving them, which I'm very appreciative of. And then sometimes the ride is called Disaster Transport and they just rip it out and rip a small part of your soul out with it. So, I don't know which way Knott's Berry Farm and Cedar Fair will lean on Montezooma's Revenge when it comes time to make that decision. I do feel confident that decision is not going to be made probably anytime soon. I would hope this ride can make it to 2030. I could be wrong, but I have a feeling that it's such a small ride, that there really isn't a reason to tear it down unless there's no ability whatsoever to get a part or to get trained people to maintain it.

Well, there we go. A whole episode about Montezooma's Revenge! But before we go, I have a funny story for you in that haha funny kid kind of story way. When I got back from my trip to California, I went back to school obviously cos otherwise I'd be a truant. And for years I spelled Montezuma wrong because of Knott's Berry Farm. Knott's Berry Farm, if you are listening by some crazy chance, you gotta think about the kids when you're naming these rides.

As an adult, I get the irony of the "zoom" in Montezooma, but I did not understand for many years that that is not how you actually spell Montezuma. And so to this day when I have to write out Montezuma, which isn't often to be fair, I'm not going around talking about Montezuma at like parties with friends. But should the occasion arise where I have to talk about Montezuma for some reason, I always pause and have to remind myself that it's not "zoom", as in "zooma" at Knott's Berry Farm. That it's, in fact, spelled incorrectly and I really need to stop paying attention to them.

So, we're gonna wrap up with that little tidbit of fun for you and hopefully, it made you smile. We are back with our next episode. We're going back to the heartland. I say back to the heartland, we actually haven't been to the heartland yet. We were in Pennsylvania week one. This week, we are in California, and next episode we are going to the middle of America to one of the biggest parks in middle America but probably not the one you're thinking of. If you're thinking we're going to Cedar Point next week, we are not. I hate to, I hate to let you down. But we will definitely be at Cedar Point at some point this season because they do have so many good rides that are older. But we are going to a different Cedar Fair Park to look at a ride that has actually been torn out. So I'm not thrilled. I'm not thrilled about making this episode. I mean I'm thrilled about it. But I'm just sad because the end is not "Go ride this ride!" Like today I can say off by saying you really need to go to California, you really need to go to Knott's Berry Farm, not only because they have some really great rides there but just to get on Montezooma's Revenge if you've never been. I'm not going to be able to sign off that way next week.

But, if you follow us on Instagram, you'll probably be getting a preview of what ride we're going to be looking at that is no longer there. Our Instagram account is @onceuponacoasterpod. You can follow us there and that's usually where we release little previews of what's coming but until

then, I hope you guys are safe and I hope you guys have a great week we will see you next episode on Once Upon a Coaster pod! Bye!