

= Dragon Challenge =

Dragon Challenge (known as Dueling Dragons from 1999 to 2010) is a pair of intertwined inverted roller coasters in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter area of Universal Studios ' Islands of Adventure in Orlando , Florida , U.S .. The ride is themed to two chasing dragons , one side being Chinese Fireball and the other Hungarian Horntail . It features a layout in which the two trains share adjacent lift hills but then traverse two unique courses . The ride was designed by Bolliger & Mabillard of Switzerland . The Chinese Fireball dragon reaches a top speed of 60 mph , and the Hungarian Horntail dragon reaches a top speed of 55 mph . Both versions feature five inversions . The total ride time is about two minutes and 25 seconds .

When Islands of Adventure opened on May 28 , 1999 , the ride was called Dueling Dragons and was located in The Lost Continent area with the two sides named Fire and Ice . During much of the ride 's history , the trains were dispatched simultaneously , providing three near @-@ miss encounters along the courses . However , after two injuries related to loose objects hitting riders on the other coaster , the roller coasters are now dispatched separately . After a renovation period , the attraction reopened in mid @-@ March 2010 , and was officially renamed as Dragon Challenge with The Wizarding World of Harry Potter grand opening on June 18 , 2010 .

= = History = =

= = = Dueling Dragons (1999 ? 2010) = = =

Dueling Dragons was one of Islands of Adventure 's original attractions , opening with the theme park on May 28 , 1999 , in the park 's The Lost Continent area . At the time , it was the only fully inverted dueling roller coaster in the world . The ride was themed to two dueling dragons , with one track named Ice and the other named Fire .

During construction , Superior Rigging & Erection was responsible for erecting the supports and track of the two roller coasters .

= = = Dragon Challenge (2010 ? present) = = =

In May 2007 , Universal announced plans to construct The Wizarding World of Harry Potter , a new section devoted to the popular Harry Potter book and film series . Dueling Dragons , as well as the adjacent Flight of the Hippogriff roller coaster , were shown to be included in the new section . Universal later announced that the attraction would be renamed Dragon Challenge upon the re @-@ opening of the attraction and that the two roller coasters would be renamed as Hungarian Horntail and Chinese Fireball .

Construction on re @-@ theming the queue began in the third quarter of 2009 . In the first quarter of 2010 , the ride closed in order to refurbish the attraction to incorporate the Harry Potter theme . In mid @-@ March 2010 , the roller coasters reopened to the public . On June 18 , 2010 , with the opening of the entire The Wizarding World of Harry Potter section , the ride officially became Dragon Challenge .

During the summer of 2011 , there were two accidents (one serious) caused by what is believed to be loose objects hitting riders while riding the roller coaster . The most serious accident was when a man got struck with an object and had to get his eye removed due to the amount of damage . On the same day that the man got hit , Universal Studios announced that the coasters would not duel until an investigation was completed . For two months the coasters were dispatched separately and in mid @-@ October 2011 , Universal made the decision to remove the dueling aspect of the ride permanently without any explanation to what caused the injuries . No injuries have been reported since .

= = Ride experience = =

== Queue ==

When first entering the queue , guests are taken past a number of banners for the Triwizard Tournament showing support for the four contestants . After passing the Weasleys ' crashed flying Ford Anglia , they enter the Champions ' Tent . From there guests pass a large pedestal with the Triwizard Cup glowing at the top , and several dark " tunnels " which lead to both coaster 's stations . Just before entering the station guests must choose which coaster they want to ride : Chinese Fireball to the left or Hungarian Horntail to the right . Once in the station , on the ceiling , there is a projection of the dragons .

The queue before the Harry Potter refurbishment was set as a ruined castle where the Fire and Ice dragons lived . The queue passed through dungeons and included human skeletons , torches , and cobwebs . Just like the present queue , to ride Fire , guests would go left while riders wanting to ride Ice would go right at the intersection point .

In April 2015 , metal detectors were installed as a permanent fixture to the entrance . The attraction now officially has metal detectors , security with metal detecting wands , and a zero tolerance policy for cell phones , wallets , coins , watches , cameras , anything that can be placed in one 's pockets ; all pockets must be absolutely empty prior to boarding . Persons in violation will be sent to the lockers or possibly ejected from the park without a refund .

== Track layout ==

=== Chinese Fireball ===

Upon departing from the station , the train makes a slight left turn leading into the transfer track section before beginning to climb the 125 @-@ foot (38 m) lift hill . Once at the top and after going through a pre @-@ drop , the train makes a sharp 115 @-@ foot (35 m) left @-@ hand drop back to the ground . Then , the train goes back up , through an Immelmann followed by a slight downward right turn before entering an air @-@ time hill (this was the first of three near @-@ miss points with the Hungarian Horntail train when the roller coasters duelled) . Next , the train drops back down turning left slightly leading into a second Immelmann . After a downward right helix and a short section of straight track , the train goes through the second former near @-@ miss point with the other train , a vertical loop . After the loop and another section of straight track , the train makes a right turn leading into the third and final former near @-@ miss element which is a corkscrew . Then , the train makes a left turn followed by a small drop leading into another section of straight track before entering the final element in the coaster layout , another corkscrew . The train then make a left turn into the final brake run . Following a left turn , the train returns to the station where the riders unload and the next riders load .

=== Hungarian Horntail ===

Upon departing from the station , the train makes a slight right turn leading into the transfer track section before beginning to climb the 125 @-@ foot (38 m) lift hill . Once at the top and after going through a pre @-@ drop , the train makes a sharp 95 @-@ foot (29 m) right @-@ hand drop back to the ground . Then , the train goes through a 270 degree right overbanked turn before entering a Zero @-@ gravity roll which was the first of three former near @-@ miss points with the Chinese Fireball train . Then , the train makes a slight right turn heading straight into a wall before entering a Cobra roll . After a straight section of track , the train enters the second former near @-@ miss point with the other train , a vertical loop . The train then makes a right turn into the final former near @-@ miss point , a corkscrew . Next , the train makes a right turn followed by a left turn leading into the final brake run . Following a right turn , the train returns to the station where the riders unload and

the next riders load .

== Track ==

The steel track is approximately 3 @, @ 200 feet (980 m) in length and the height of the lift is approximately 125 feet (38 m) for both roller coasters . The first drop for Chinese Fireball is 115 feet (35 m) while Hungarian Horntail 95 feet (29 m) . Chinese Fireball 's track is red and Hungarian Horntail 's is blue . Both coaster 's supports are white .

== Trains ==

Dragon Challenge operates with several steel and fiberglass trains . Each train has eight cars with four seats for a total of 32 riders per train . All the Hungarian Horntail trains resemble a blue ice dragon while all the Chinese Fireball trains resemble a red fire dragon .

When the coaster cars duelled , in order to make the trains meet at each of the three near @-@ miss points along the layout , the trains would be weighed once they were loaded at the station to adjust the dispatch times . For example , if the Chinese Fireball train weighed more than the Hungarian Horntail train , the Fireball would be dispatched after the Horntail .

== Reception ==

Dragon Challenge has generally been well received , with most riders preferring the Chinese Fireball track .

In the annual Amusement Today Golden Ticket Awards for the Top Steel Roller Coasters , Dragon Challenge ranked in the top 50 every year between 2000 and 2012 . It peaked at position 11 in 2002 .

In Mitch Hawker 's worldwide Best Roller Coaster Poll , the two tracks are ranked separately . In every year that the steel roller coaster poll has been held , Chinese Fireball has ranked higher than the Hungarian Horntail . In 1999 , Chinese Fireball and Hungarian Horntail peaked at positions 9 and 18 , respectively .

These poll results are supported by a review by Jeremy Thompson of Roller Coaster Philosophy . Thompson ranks the Chinese Fireball a B- and the Hungarian Horntail a C + ; only The Incredible Hulk and Jurassic Park River Adventure are ranked higher . Thompson also made comparisons between the ride in its generic @-@ themed state versus the Harry Potter theme added in 2010 stating the " roller coaster has also lost a certain poetic quality that made the original so pleasurable " . The loss of the dueling function also contributed to the lower ranking .