

## = Superman : Ultimate Flight =

Superman : Ultimate Flight is a steel flying roller coaster designed by Bolliger & Mabillard . Themed to the popular comic book character , Superman : Ultimate Flight has been installed at three Six Flags theme parks around the United States : Six Flags Over Georgia , Six Flags Great Adventure and Six Flags Great America . Superman : Ultimate Flight simulates flying by positioning its passengers parallel to the track , supported by harnesses and facing the ground through most of the ride . In the station , riders board the train sitting down . After the train is locked and checked , the trains are raised into the flying position . After the ride , the seats are lowered back into the sitting position for the next round of riders .

## = History =

The first flying roller coaster , in which passengers ride parallel with the track , was launched in 1997 at Granada Studios Tour as Skytrak Total . Shortly after , Bolliger & Mabillard began designing their own flying roller coaster . In January 2002 , both Alton Towers in the United Kingdom and Six Flags Over Georgia in the United States announced their intentions to build Bolliger & Mabillard " Flying Coasters " . On March 16 , 2002 , Alton Towers opened the first installation , Air . Less than a month later , Superman : Ultimate Flight opened at Six Flags Over Georgia , in Austell , Georgia .

Six Flags ordered two more versions of the attraction for the 2003 season for Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson Township , New Jersey , and Six Flags Great America in Gurnee , Illinois . Six Flags Great Adventure 's version of the ride officially opened to the public on April 17 , 2003 . In preparation for the ride 's installation at Six Flags Great America , the park removed Shockwave , an Arrow Dynamics roller coaster that was located on part of the park 's parking lot . Grading works also had to take place to convert the parking lot into something more suitable for Superman : Ultimate Flight . The ride at Six Flags Great America opened on May 3 , 2003 .

In 2006 , a clone of the Superman : Ultimate Flight installations opened as Crystal Wing at the Happy Valley amusement park in Beijing , China .

## = Characteristics =

Whilst all three Superman : Ultimate Flight roller coasters are the same model , there are some differences between them . All three feature a top height of 106 feet ( 32 m ) and a 100 @-@ foot ( 30 m ) first drop . They all reach a top speed of 51 miles per hour ( 82 km / h ) and feature two inversions . Superman : Ultimate Flight 's signature element is its 78 @-@ foot @-@ tall ( 24 m ) pretzel loop ; it was the first roller coaster in the world to feature one . A single cycle of the ride takes nearly 3 minutes to complete .

The original version at Six Flags Over Georgia features a dual @-@ platform loading station , permitting three trains to operate simultaneously . Each train has seven cars , with each car carrying four riders side @-@ by @-@ side in a single row . The other two versions use a more standard single @-@ platform loading station . While this allows a maximum of only two trains to operate at a time , each train compensates by having one additional row for a total of eight rows per train .

The length of the ride also varies between the locations . Both the Georgia and New Jersey installations feature a track length of 2 @, @ 759 feet ( 841 m ) , while the Illinois version features a track length of 2 @, @ 798 feet ( 853 m ) . The ride reaches its maximum speed of 51 miles per hour ( 82 km / h ) at the bottom of the 78 foot tall ( 24m ) pretzel loop , not on the first drop because the ride dives slightly below ground level .

The New Jersey and Illinois versions were also built on what used to be sections of parking lot . Georgia 's version was built on hilly terrain , and hence there is a short tunnel when the track enters the 270 degree helix leading into the heartline roll . All three roller coasters were manufactured by Clermont Steel Fabricators located in Batavia , Ohio .

As its name suggests , Superman : Ultimate Flight is themed after DC Comics ' Superman character . The track of all three rides is red , with yellow rails and blue supports . The rides ' queues

are contained within each ride 's footprint and contain various elements of Superman theming . The installations at Six Flags Great America and Six Flag Great Adventure have dedicated gift shops near the ride 's exit that sell a variety of DC Comics merchandise .

= = Experience = =

= = = Station and loading = = =

Once in the station , riders of Superman : Ultimate Flight board a train sitting down , in a similar style to inverted roller coasters . Riders are restrained through a padded over @-@ the @-@ shoulder harness and a lap bar . At the ankles , two flaps hold the legs in position and close as the harness is locked in place . After the train is fully locked and checked , the trains are raised into the flying position and depart the station .

= = = Ride layout = = =

Superman : Ultimate Flight begins as the train turns to the right and begins to climb the 106 @-@ foot @-@ tall ( 32 m ) chain lift hill . After cresting the top of the lift hill , the train drops 100 feet ( 30m ) to the right at 51 miles per hour ( 82 km / h ) and prepares to enter the pretzel loop . In a pretzel loop , a train swoops up to a height of 78 feet ( 24 m ) before diving toward the ground , looping back under the starting point . At the bottom of the loop , riders face upward and experience strong , positive g forces . To complete the pretzel loop , the train climbs back to the top of the element , parallel to where it started . After exiting the element , the train then enters a 270 @-@ degree turn to the left , dropping back through the middle of the pretzel loop .

Next , the train passes through two consecutive horseshoe turns , first to the right and then to the left . As the name suggests , Horseshoe turns are highly banked horseshoe @-@ shaped turns which feature track entering from roughly the same direction as where it exits . As the train exits the second horseshoe , it swoops down and begins a 270 @-@ degree helix to the right , which leads into the ride 's second inversion , an inline twist . The inline twist sees riders perform a full rotation around the track , starting from a position where they are facing downward . After completing the twist , the train reaches the brake run and a final right @-@ hand turn that leads back into the station .

= = Reception = =

Superman : Ultimate Flight was generally well received . Arthur Levine from About.com rated the ride four out of five stars , describing the flying sensation as wonderful . He also praised Six Flags for the choice of theme , saying , " the Superman theme is ideally suited for the flying concept and adds a nice touch " . Alex Bove of Ultimate Rollercoaster also reviewed the ride favorably : " From its comfortable restraints , silky ride and delightful pacing to its avian aesthetics , Superman : Ultimate Flight demonstrates B & M 's unmatched attention to detail and their genuine desire to create enjoyable rides that surprise us over and over again " . Jeremy Thompson of Roller Coaster Philosophy compared the ride unfavorably to Batman : The Ride , which also appears at all three parks : " Batman is gritty and intense and based on quick variations in the layout , while Superman is graceful and slower paced , based on creating a singular flight sensation , and quite honestly it 's all a tad boring " . However , he added that the " flying position does transform the ride experience into something relatively different from the rest " .

In Amusement Today 's annual Golden Ticket Awards , Superman : Ultimate Flight was ranked in the top 50 steel roller coasters numerous times since its opening . It peaked at position 35 in 2004 , before dropping off the poll in 2007 .

In Mitch Hawker 's worldwide Best Roller Coaster Poll , Superman : Ultimate Flight was ranked as three separate entries from 2002 through to 2010 . The entries were grouped from 2012 onward .

The ride 's ranking in the polls is shown in the table below .