

= SheiKra =

SheiKra (/ ʃeɪˈkrə / , SHEE @-@ krə) is a steel Dive Coaster roller coaster at the Busch Gardens Tampa Bay amusement park in Tampa , Florida , United States . The roller coaster was proposed by Mark Rose , vice @-@ president of design and engineering for the park , and designed by Bolliger & Mabillard . The ride was planned to be 160 feet (49 m) high , but the park 's executives rejected this and the height was changed to 200 feet (61 m) . SheiKra reaches a maximum speed of 70 miles per hour (110 km / h) and has a total track length of 3 @, @ 188 feet (972 m) . It first opened on May 21 , 2005 , and was converted to a floorless roller coaster on June 16 , 2007 , following the opening of its sister Dive Coaster Griffon at Busch Gardens Williamsburg that year .

SheiKra was the first Dive Coaster to be constructed in North America ; its track includes a splashdown and an Immelmann loop , both a first for its kind . It broke the records for the world 's longest , tallest , and fastest Dive Coaster , but lost these records when Griffon in Williamsburg , Virginia , United States and Dive Coaster at Chime @-@ Long Paradise in Guangzhou , China opened . The name SheiKra is derived from the word " shikra " , an Asian @-@ African hawk that is known to dive vertically for its prey . In 2005 , Amusement Today 's annual Golden Ticket Awards voted it the fourth @-@ best new steel roller coaster of that year in a three @-@ way tie and the 28th @-@ best steel roller coaster . It was voted the 38th @-@ best steel roller coaster in 2014 .

= = History = =

= = = Original attraction = = =

Mark Rose , vice @-@ president of design and engineering at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay , proposed a roller coaster that would be 160 feet (49 m) tall ; the experience would be " like riding a barrel over Niagara Falls ... straight down into water . " Busch Gardens executives rejected the proposal , saying it was not interesting enough . Rose changed his concept , adding another 40 feet (12 m) in height to the roller coaster and adding more features to the ride , which led to the executives ' approval of the plans . Peckham Guyton Albers & Viets Inc (PGAV) also helped plan and design the roller coaster .

Rumors of a new roller coaster being built at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay began to circulate after a roller coaster enthusiast emailed the park and received a response saying that a roller coaster would be built . These rumors stated that the roller coaster would include a splashdown and an inversion on Bolliger & Mabillard 's Dive Coaster , both a first for its kind . Later in the season , the park began to remove part of the track of Serengeti Express . On April 26 , 2004 , construction permits were discovered which confirmed that a roller coaster , restaurant , and gift shop would be constructed .

In May 2004 , further details were leaked including the height , speed and trains . A month later , Tiki masks with quotes relating to the project were placed on the construction walls , including : " I 'm a bird with no feathers , a beast with no equal , a fall that never hits the ground . What am I ? " , " What is taller than 10 giraffes and faster than a charging rhino ? " , and " What is too fast to see , but has a bird 's eye view ? " . Track and support pieces were later seen in a large field , which further confirmed the new attraction would be a roller coaster .

On October 20 , 2004 , SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment (owner of Busch Gardens Tampa Bay) filed a trademark for the name " SheiKra " . A week later , Busch Gardens Tampa Bay announced SheiKra , North America 's first Dive Coaster , as part of a deal with Bolliger & Mabillard . At the time of the announcement , about half of the ride 's foundations were complete . Superior Rigging & Erection constructed the supports and track of SheiKra and by January 28 , 2005 , the roller coaster 's highest track piece was placed along with an evergreen tree . Testing began in late April 2005 after the track had been constructed . After testing was completed , a media day was held on May 19 , 2005 , for international media outlets to promote the ride . Two days later , the roller coaster opened to the public on May 21 , 2005 . During SheiKra 's first year of operation , its computer systems experienced problems as it would halt operations when it sensed that pumps and

compressors were not working as they should . This caused riders to get stranded on the roller coaster and be forced to evacuate .

Bolliger & Mabillard took approximately six months to design SheiKra and four years to complete the entire project . After Busch Gardens Tampa Bay announced SheiKra , the park contracted with Bolliger & Mabillard so that the layout of the roller coaster could not be reproduced for several years . In 2009 , after the deal expired , Happy Valley Shanghai built an identical copy of SheiKra called Diving Coaster .

= = = Modified attraction = = =

In 2006 , speculation began that Busch Gardens Tampa Bay would be removing the floors from SheiKra 's trains . On January 31 , 2007 , the park confirmed the rumors at a press conference that was also broadcast on the internet . In late April 2007 , a month before the temporary closure of the ride , Busch Gardens Tampa Bay placed billboards along Interstate 275 and advertisements in newspapers announcing that SheiKra 's floors would soon be removed . One of the billboards said , " SEEKING , One last fling while I 've still got it . Sheikra (w / floor) ... " Callers to a telephone number on the billboards would hear a recorded female voice saying , " Hi , doll face " , " it 's been a fun ride " , and " one last fling @-@ a @-@ ding " .

On April 24 , 2007 , during the park 's High School Journalism Day , Busch Gardens Tampa Bay unveiled the first floorless train for the roller coaster . SheiKra closed for the conversion on May 28 , 2007 . The station was modified because retractable floors needed to be installed so riders could board and disembark the trains . Just under two weeks before the scheduled reopening , the new trains were tested . On June 16 , 2007 , the modified roller coaster soft @-@ opened to 100 roller coaster enthusiasts , news reporters from 40 media outlets , and 37 radio broadcasters before opening to the public later that day . On January 7 , 2013 , the roller coaster temporarily closed so it could be completely repainted in its original colors ; it reopened on February 16 , 2013 .

= = Ride experience = =

SheiKra has two queues ; the standby queue is for guests without passes and the Quick Queue is for guests who have a pass that allows them to bypass the queues for most of the major attractions at the park .

After the floors retract and the front gate opens , the train leaves the station and makes a downward right turn , immediately followed by an upward right turn , which leads to the 45 @-@ degree inclined chain lift hill . Once the train reaches the top of the 200 @-@ foot (61 m) lift , it turns right into a holding brake where it slowly moves over the first drop , stops for about four seconds , and then descends the 90 @-@ degree drop . As the train reaches the bottom of the first drop it reaches its maximum speed of 70 miles per hour (110 km / h) . Then , the train enters a 145 @-@ foot (44 m) Immelmann loop before making a banked , upward , 3.5G left turn into the mid course brake run . The train slows down and descends a 138 @-@ foot (42 m) , near 90 @-@ degree drop into an underground tunnel . Next , the train makes a right overbanked turn leading into a splashdown which sprays two 60 @-@ foot (18 m) lines of water in the air and takes approximately 1 @.@ 9 seconds to pass through . The train rises , makes a downward right turn , then enters the final brake run which leads directly back to the station . One cycle of the ride lasts about 2 minutes and 20 seconds .

= = Characteristics = =

= = = Track = = =

The steel , box track of SheiKra is 3 @, @ 188 feet (972 m) long and the lift is approximately 200 feet (61 m) high . The track is red and the supports are blue . The ride is equipped with an eight

@-@ passenger elevator that can return riders to ground level if a train must be evacuated while on the lift hill . The track and rails were shaped in Italy and fabricated by Clermont Steel Fabricators in Batavia , Ohio , which manufactures Bolliger & Mabillard 's roller coasters . SheiKra 's track spine is wider than those of Bolliger & Mabillard 's traditional roller coasters because of the extra weight of the trains compared to Bolliger & Mabillard 's four @-@ abreast cars . During the night , SheiKra 's track is illuminated with white lights .

= = = Trains = = =

SheiKra operates with several identical trains made from steel and fiberglass which are three times wider than the track . They were manufactured in Switzerland and shipped to Florida . Each seat has an over @-@ the @-@ shoulder restraint . SheiKra 's trains are fitted with nylon and polyurethane wheels to reduce the amount of friction created on the track . Underneath the trains are a pair of anti @-@ rollback devices that prevent the train from rolling down the lift hill should the chain break . There is also a " drop chain dog " that allows the trains to slowly enter the first drop . Each train has three eight @-@ passenger cars , allowing for a maximum capacity of 24 riders per train .

= = Records = =

When SheiKra opened in 2005 , it introduced two new roller coaster elements to the Dive Coaster . The splashdown causes the train to come into contact with water through " scoops " located on the last car of each train . The Immelmann loop is an element in which the train enters a half @-@ loop followed by a half @-@ twist and curve out in the direction opposite from which the train came . The loop was the first inversion used on a Dive Coaster . Since SheiKra , all Dive Coasters and other Bolliger & Mabillard roller coaster models have also had a splashdown and at least one Immelmann loop .

SheiKra was also the first Dive Coaster to feature a 90 @-@ degree drop . In 2005 , only two other Dive Coasters in the world had either an 87- or 87 @.@ 5 @-@ degree drop . When SheiKra first opened , it was the tallest , fastest , and longest Dive Coaster ever built , and was the first Dive Coaster in North America . However , in 2007 when Griffon opened at Busch Gardens Williamsburg , SheiKra lost the height and speed records . When Dive Coaster opened at Chime @-@ Long Paradise in 2008 , it took the length record .

= = Reception = =

SheiKra was mostly well @-@ received from the public and critics . Arthur Levine from About.com rated the roller coaster four and a half stars out of five , and awarded it a thrill rating of eight and half out of ten , writing , " It 's an unapologetic thrill ride that coaster lovers will adore and coaster wimps will avoid . " Joel Bullock from Coaster Critic rated SheiKra seven and a half out of ten and awarded it a thrill rating of four out of five . He wrote that the attraction was " underwhelming " and " didn 't live up to the hype " due to the ride 's short length and the lack of special elements . Bullock also said , " Overall , SheiKra 's no masterpiece , but is still an experience . " He praised the ride 's Immelmann loop , writing that the delay between the rise , inversion and finish of the maneuver was the highlight of the ride . " Jeremy Thompson from Roller Coaster Philosophy awarded the coaster a " B " , and wrote that , " riding the coaster is all about the visual experience " , and that , " Despite the 70mph top speed it 's quite gentle on the human body , although from the last row it easily wins the award for Most Airtime on a Roller Coaster in the State of Florida " .

Jay Cridlin from the Tampa Bay Times wrote that guests should expect long waiting times to ride , although the length of the ride is " probably a fair tradeoff . " Cridlin called SheiKra , " a majestic , one @-@ of @-@ a @-@ kind roller coaster experience " , and mentions that the attraction , " may be the world 's finest dive coaster " . In a 2005 article , Cridlin mostly praised the 90 @-@ degree drop and wrote that , " Despite its sheer size and dominance of the Busch Gardens landscape ... the

coaster likely will still inspire debate among park visitors . " Eric Michael from Orlando Sentinel wrote , " The 200 @-@ foot monster , Florida 's tallest , wins my vote for best drop , straight down at 90 @-@ degrees , and most shameless tease (riders hang at the top for a few seconds) " . In 2007 , SheiKra was featured on Discovery Channel 's television series Build It Bigger .

= = = Awards = = =