



by Chad Emerson

For a park focused on Africa and its amazing creatures, until recently, Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida hadn't fully explored the jungles of the Dark Continent.

That changed last year when the park debuted a new "land" known as Jungala. Since opening in April 2008, Jungala's lush theming and unique attractions have been met with great reviews and heavy traffic from Busch Garden guests.

Jungala creatively combines hard rides, immersive landscaping, and educational animal exhibits into a complete entertainment experience that offers something for guests of all ages. On the ride side of things, the land offers a zip line attraction as well as a launch tower. While neither provides white knuckle thrills, their surroundings definitely ramp up the overall excitement. For instance, the three separate routes of the zip line attraction are positioned among the "jungle top" trees and branches, giving riders a greater sense of height and speed than they actually experience. Similarly, the Wild Surge tower launch seems much taller than its actual four-story height since the ride begins by shooting guests up and out from inside a waterfall.

Jungala, though, is hardly limited to exciting rides. Instead, the new land also incorporates some of the most advanced animal exhibits at any theme park in the world. One of the signature innovations is Jungala's ability to get guests eye level with the land's permanent residents. Highlights include a raised observation platform for viewing the Orangutans of Orangutan Outpost, and a 360-degree viewing turret that allows guests to literally stick their heads up at ground level among the tigers of the Tiger Trail exhibit. Add in a unique tug-of-rope exhibit

CROUCHING TIGERS, HIDDEN GEMS

•Jungala at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, Florida

between guest and tiger, and its easy to see why Busch Gardens Executive Vice President and General Manager Donnie Mills declared Jungala to be "the only jungle that plays with you."

And, while it plays hard, Jungala also educates its guests with interesting information along the way. Throughout the land, guests encounter Zoo Educators (sometimes with animal in hand) trained in the care and knowledge of Jungala's creatures. From specialists in lemurs and toucans to the large Bengal tigers, these roving animal experts provide details on everything from feeding habits to living habitats for all the creatures. This gives Jungala's guests a unique opportunity to encounter these exotic animals up close while learning about them. Indeed, as Mills explains, "our goal is to teach you about these fantastic animals in a fun and memorable setting that you won't soon forget."

As a whole, this climbing, gliding, and exploring certainly make for a wild and breathless experience. For those guests who still have energy to burn, Jungala also offers a three-story rope climb and trail that accommodates most ages. For those who need replenishment, there's jungle-themed dining.

The Jungala experience doesn't have to end when the guest leaves the park, as Busch Gardens has developed a dedicated Jungala website (www.jungala.com) offering free downloads. It includes a Kid's Corner with an interactive game that allows users to color and print out some of their favorite Jungala residents on their home computers.

Needless to say, when Jungala roared into Busch Gardens Africa in 2009, it immediately raised the bar for guest and animal interaction to thrilling new heights.



Jungala at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, Florida



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