# Saudi Arabia's Malahi

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**Add to your bucket list:**

**'Malahi' Amusement Parks in Saudi Arabia — the loud, the crazy and the fun**

Saudi Arabia has been on a rollercoaster ride of sorts over the past one hundred years or so. Lives have shifted drastically since the early villages, cities and Bedouin lifestyles of the past. One aspect that has shifted significantly is childhood, specifically what children do and where they go to have fun.

The biggest news in the amusement park front over the past couple of years is the introduction of a Six Flags park project in the up-and-coming entertainment city of Qiddiya near Riyadh. This is a bucket list item you will not want to miss as it boasts what will be the world's longest, tallest and fastest roller coaster ride in the world. Its current projected completion is 2023.

Still, the Kingdom has had its share of outdoor and indoor amusement parks over the decades (albeit none at this level of fame and scope). Historically, the earliest outdoor parks generally date back to the late 1980s, with the long-standing ones such as King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Park (also known as Cobra Park due its rollercoaster) in Dammam, AlKhaimah Theme Park in Riyadh and Jeddah's Atallah Theme Park. Popular ones that popped up over the intervening years and are still around include AlShallal Theme Park in Jeddah and AlHokair Land in Riyadh.

The crazier the ride, the better. Once, safety standards weren't as critical, and somehow children survived.

Saudi also hosts a wealth of indoor amusement parks (known as family entertainment centers) that have spread throughout the country, the most famous being Al Hokair's extensive array of centers, such as AlHokair Time, Sparky's and Digital Land.

All these centers and parks have been a veritable explosion of fun and entertainment over the past 40 years, overshadowing but not replacing much of what our past generations used to do to have fun outside of the home. Back then it was about wide-open spaces, picnic areas and — whenever possible — waterside locales such as Ghadir Al-Banat in Taif. This last one was famous enough to draw people from neighboring cities to enjoy the lush green space, the flowing channel, the pony or donkey rides and the like. Nowadays you can still find big open spaces where people will gather to have fun, with some modern additions such as bouncy castles and quad bikes.

The world has endured a rather steep climb this year in the rollercoaster ride of life, but projects like Qiddiya can give us hope that the future is fun and bright for our children (and the inner child within all of us).

Special Contributor:

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