

Great Wolf Lodge, Wisconsin Dells

by *Rin-rin Yu*

Celebrating its 10-year anniversary, the Great Wolf Lodge in the Wisconsin Dells has served as the innovator and test center for all its other locations.

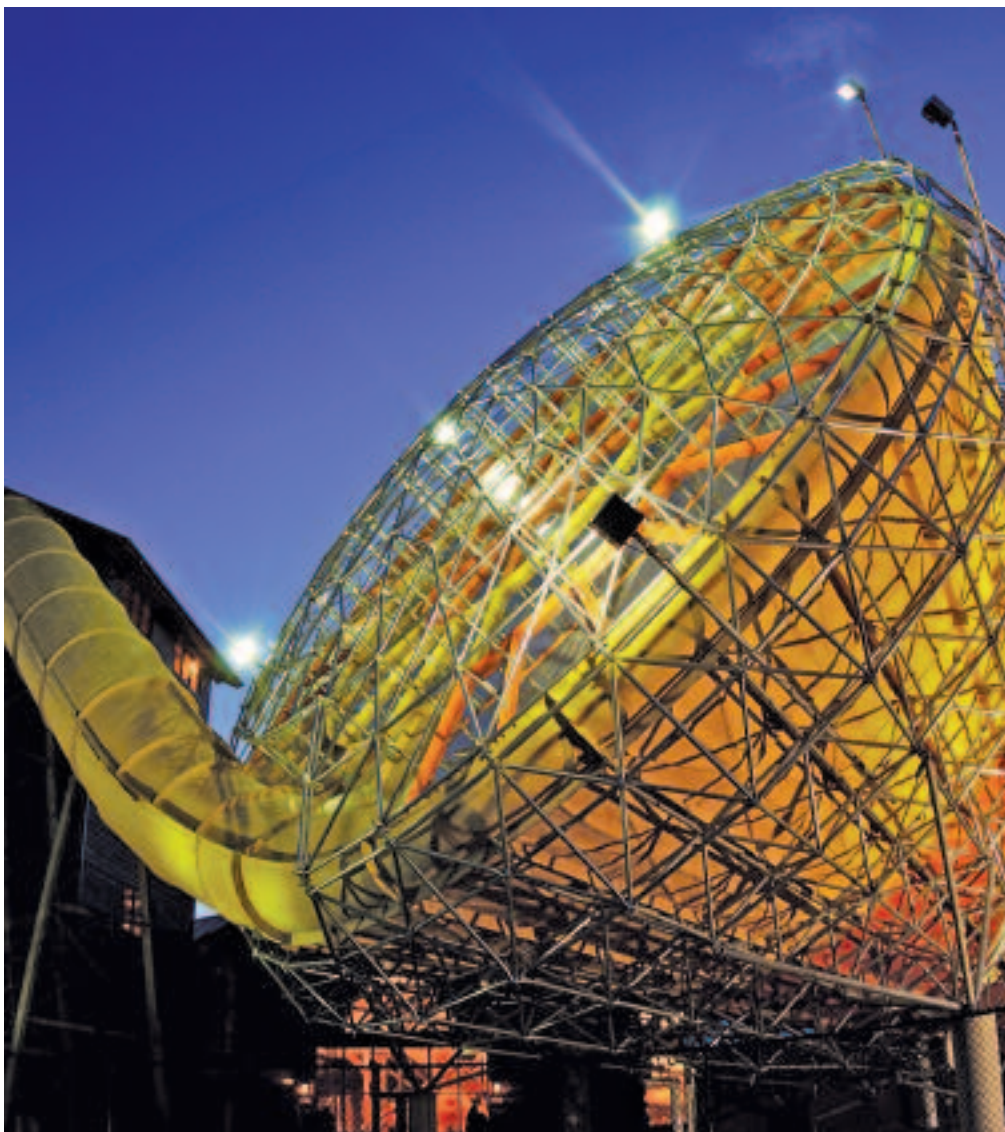
“Being able to debut a new attraction in the Dells resort is always a good barometer reading of how things can be received throughout the entire system,” says Tim Black, regional vice president of operations at Great Wolf Resorts Inc. “Visitors to [the Dells] are very savvy and familiar with the waterpark experience.”

At this Great Wolf location, it’s all about experience. Besides three indoor waterparks with 19 slides and an outdoor aquatic area in summertime, it’s an exclusive arrangement that raises the idea of “family resort” to a whole new level. Only hotel guests are allowed in the hotel area. Everything is under one roof, so families can treat the resort like their home during their two-night vacation, which is the average length of stay. At night, kids and even parents don their pajamas while listening to a bedtime story together in the soft lighting of the lobby.

Families from Milwaukee and Madison, Wis., Chicago and Minneapolis visit from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and in the winter.

“There’s nothing more special than swimming in 84 degrees when it’s snowing outside,” Black says. “The whole waterpark is like a reversed snow globe.”

For those winter months, guests never have to step out into the snow unless they really want to. Because the whole property is contained within one building, people can walk from activity to activity rather than attempt to pile their children into shuttle vans. Once inside, there’s not much reason to leave.



Year opened: 1997
No. of waterparks: 3
Square footage: 76,000
Amenities: Rock-climbing wall, spa, arcades, fitness room, outdoor aquatic area