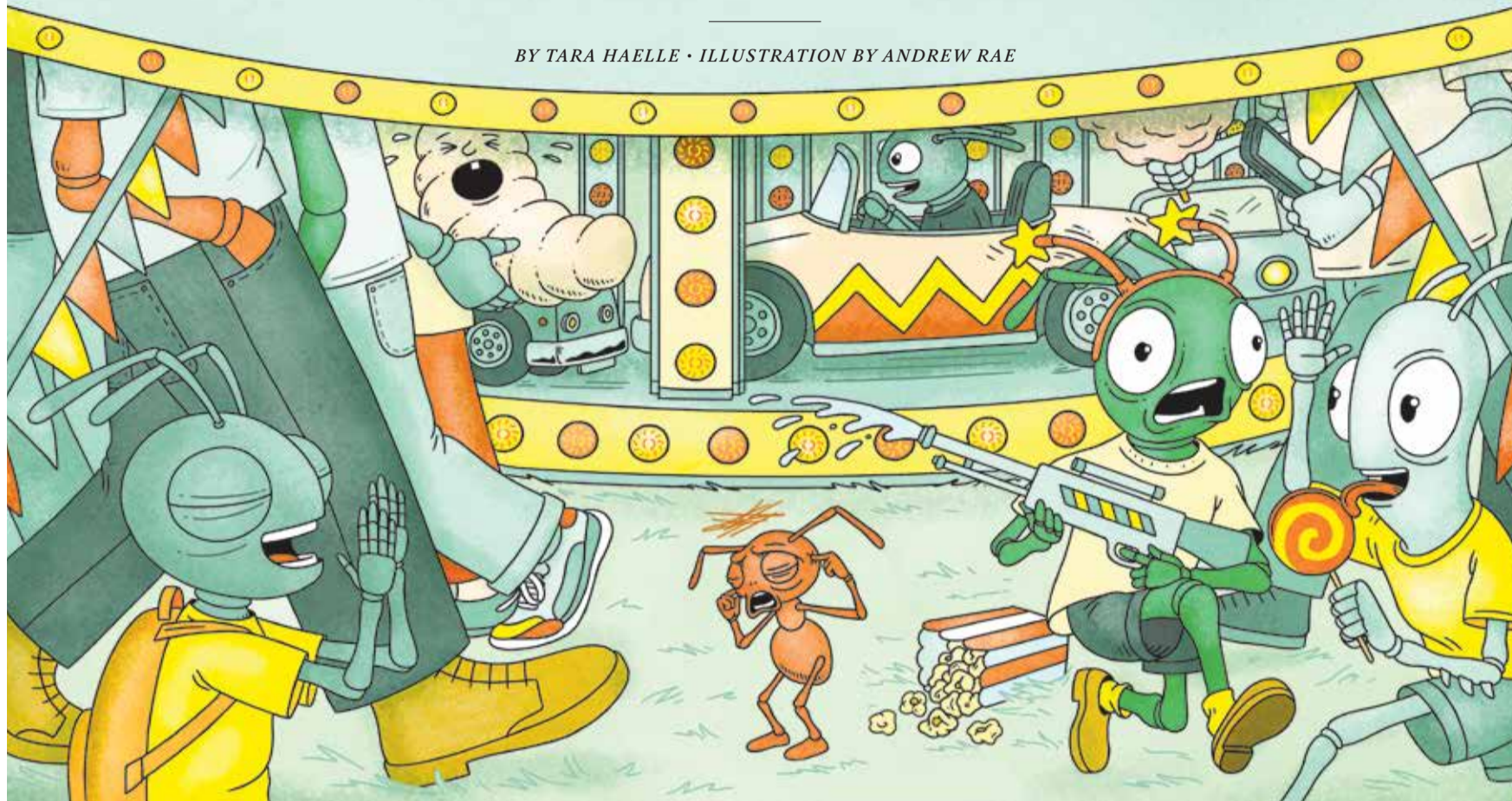


Travel



FOR SOME KIDS, AMUSEMENT PARKS ARE TOO MUCH

BY TARA HAELE • ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREW RAE



ERIK MOOERS, 13, is obsessed with roller coasters. To him, there's nothing better than feeling the air whooshing past as he rides his favorite one, RailBlazer, at California's Great America. But there's not much worse than waiting to get on it. Erik is autistic, so he experiences the world differently. He needs to move his body a lot, which makes it hard to stand in long lines. He's also sensitive to certain sounds that don't bother most people but can feel painful to him. "I don't

like crying babies," he says.

Crying babies and long lines are just two of the many annoying things a person is guaranteed to find at an amusement park. Lots of kids who have sensory issues like Erik's (meaning they become overwhelmed easily) love coasters and carousels but have trouble with the flashing lights, loud noises and crowded spaces that come with them. Park workers want all kids to have fun, so they've come up with ways to make the experience less stressful.

At Great America, close to Erik's home near San Francisco, people can rest in qui-

et, air-conditioned spaces. Cedar Point, in Ohio, has a sensory room with calm lighting and weighted blankets for rent. Six Flags parks post sensory guides online, explaining how each ride affects all five senses. These parks — and Universal Studios, Sea World, Sesame Place, Disney parks and others — also offer disability passes that let people with special needs skip lines or schedule their rides.

Morgan's Wonderland, in San Antonio, was designed to be "ultra-accessible," says the park's founder, Gordon Hartman. He was inspired by his daughter, Morgan,

who has physical and cognitive disabilities. "We don't have any blinking lights, or fluorescent lights that hum," Hartman says. "A normal merry-go-round makes a lot of noise. We don't do that." More parks are considering the needs of people with disabilities and introducing changes to make them feel welcome.

When things get loud, Erik thinks "happy thoughts" and takes deep breaths. He's got lots more parks to see and dreams of riding the Formula Rossa, the fastest coaster on Earth. It's at Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi! ♦

EVERYBODY IN!

AROUND THE WORLD, BATH TIME IS HANG TIME



BY HELEN I. HWANG



Bathers at a hot spring in southeastern Turkey. Public spaces where people can come together for a good soak are found in many cultures.

IN AMERICA, when people say the word "bath" it usually means water, soap and maybe a rubber ducky. But in some countries, a bath is a spaike place where people go to relax, chat, snack, sweat — or all of the above. (Think hot-tubbing, but better.) There are places like these all over the United States too. Some have age restrictions, but many welcome kids and their families to experience bathing cultures from around the world.

ONSEN (JAPAN)

In Japanese tradition, taking a bath is about soaking, not washing. At public

bathhouses and natural pools of hot spring water called onsen, people must shower before getting in. Then families and friends hang out in big, deep tubs together. It's natural to sit in the water and talk, says Hirokazu Kosaka, from the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center in Los Angeles.

BANYA (RUSSIA)

In hot, humid steam rooms at banyas, or bathhouses, some people wear nothing but a felt hat. (It protects the head and hair from the heat.) They may also be seen being smacked with a

bundle of birch leaves called a venik — which is supposed to be good for your skin and the muscles underneath — or plunging in a freezing cold pool. Sounds awful, feels awesome.

JJIMJILBANG (KOREA)

At a Korean jjimjilbang there are many warm, hot and really hot rooms to explore. The rooms contain different materials, like salt, clay or colorful crystals, which some believe act as natural medicine, says Jean Lee of Virginia's Spa World. Everybody is given a uniform of a T-shirt and shorts, so they

don't sweat in their clothes. People visit one room after another, hit the snack bar, play board games or nap.

HAMMAM (TURKEY)

In a steamy room at a Turkish hammam there is a large marble table, big enough to fit several people at once. (Usually men and women are in separate rooms.) They lie on the warm marble while an attendant lathers them up in foamy suds, massages them with a scratchy glove to remove dead skin and rinses them off with scoops of water. Warning: The last scoop is freezing. ♦



BUG OUT

5 WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THE FARMING, FLYING, BLINKING, BUZZING, WONDERFUL WORLD OF BUGS

BY RACHEL CHANG

SEE A FIREFLY LIGHT SHOW GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK, TENNESSEE

Every summer, thousands of fireflies put on a stunning light show in Eastern Tennessee. The flashy dance party is actually a mating ritual. Males fly around blinking in unison, while females stay still and light up in response. This year, the sensation will be at its best from June 4 to 11. It's a rare and awesome sight. But don't get too attached — the fireflies only live for a few weeks.

BEE AMAZED HONEYBEE DISCOVERY CENTER, ORLAND, CALIF.

Here, in the self-proclaimed "queen-bee capital of North America," visitors get up close to watch honeybees work in a plexiglass-covered hive. (As busy as they are, a worker bee makes only 1/12 teaspoon of honey in its entire life!) You can sample honey flavors while taking in other trivia, like this: Honeybees have really long tongues. Hang your arm down to your knees, says Carolina Burreson, who runs the center. If you were a honeybee, that is how long your tongue could be.

GET CAUGHT IN A WEB NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

How close would you get to a tarantula? Bean is one of the museum's resident eight-legged friends, and visitors might get to meet him during a live-animal pop-up. Visit in the fall, when you can wander through the Spider Pavilion, where hundreds of arachnids — like the golden silk orb weaver, whose webs can be as tall as a kid (or taller!) — are literally just hanging out.

MEET HALF A MILLION ANTS AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, NEW YORK CITY

Get this: Leafcutter ants started "farming" about 10 million years before humans did. They cut up leaves and feed them to fungus that they grow in little gardens for food. At the museum's new Gilder Center, watch a humongous collection of leafcutters toil the day away in a giant, see-through ant farm.

SEND YOUR HEART AFLUTTER BUTTERFLY WONDERLAND, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.

There are close to 3,000 butterflies from around the world here, emerging from chrysalises or flitting around a giant glass space. Stay still, and one might land on you for a butterfly kiss. Visit the insect vending machine to snack on chocolate-covered ants, cricket-flour chips and scorpion lollipops. ♦



TINY STORY

650,000

The approximate number of Legos an artist used to recreate a famous painting of water lilies by Claude Monet. The artwork is 50 feet wide and takes up a whole wall at the Design Museum in London.