

Alton Towers
Alton
Staffordshire
ST10 4DB

www.altontowers.com

Dear Student

Thank you for choosing Alton Towers as your research assignment, I am pleased to enclose our Student Information Pack herewith.

As I am sure you can appreciate, we receive thousands of student enquiries every year ranging from 'How many people visit Alton Towers?' to 'Why has Alton Towers built a second hotel?' and I hope that some of your questions have been included and that the given answers will be of help to your project.

However, if the information you have asked for is not included, it is because that particular material is either confidential or not available for public consumption.

GNVQ Key stage 3 & 4 Science resource packs and GNVQ Key Stage 3 & 4 Design and Technology resource packs are two additional resources on Alton Towers that are available to purchase by calling 0870 400 3090.

Yours sincerely

Russell Barnes
Divisional Director
Alton Towers

GENERAL ALTON TOWERS **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

What is Alton Towers?

Alton Towers is a theme park resort aimed at families. It has the UK's most famous theme park on site, two hotels, a major conference centre, Spa and waterpark.

Where is Alton Towers?

Alton Towers is situated in 500 acres of Staffordshire countryside approximately 50 miles north of Birmingham and 50 miles south of Manchester. Its nearest train stations are located 15 miles away in Stoke on Trent and Stafford, and the resort is easily accessible by road.

Why is Alton Towers located where it is?

Alton Towers wasn't built as you currently see it. The house itself was originally a simple hunting lodge, which was added to and enlarged over many years, until it became a stately home, which was occupied by the Earls of Shrewsbury until the 1920's. They developed the estate primarily for pleasure, hence the extent of the gardens that surround the house itself. Alton Towers as a leisure business started to really grow in the 1960's.

How old is Alton Towers?

The origins of the Towers date back many hundreds of years. However, the ruins that you now see date back primarily to the Victorian period. Although many architects worked on the building, the most famous is Augustus Welby Pugin, who worked under the supervision of Charles Talbot, the 15th Earl of Shrewsbury. He was largely responsible for the Chapel and the Banqueting Hall.

An excellent reference book giving a detailed history of the Towers is "Gothic Wonderland" by Father Michael Fisher (ISBN 0952 685523).

When did Alton Towers first become a theme park?

In 1924 the Talbot family sold the Alton Towers estate to a consortium of local businessmen, who opened the grounds and gardens to the public, and sold cream teas in the Banqueting Hall. With the outbreak of war in 1939, the Towers were closed and requisitioned by the army to be used as an Officer Cadet Training Unit. The estate remained under requisition until 1951 when it was finally returned to the company, at which point it was re-opened to the public. A travelling fun-fair was part of the attraction throughout the 60's, but in the 70's the Towers began to develop as a theme park – the key year was 1980 when the Corkscrew rollercoaster opened. This was the catalyst for a period of intense development and a number of iconic rides were introduced. Hotels were added to the resort in 1996 and 2003, together with a Spa, waterpark and Conference Centre. In 1990 the Park became part of the Tussauds Group, who were later taken over by the Merlin Entertainments Group in March 2007. Merlin is the World's second largest visitor attraction operator, and includes all the former Tussauds brands (Chessington World of Adventures, Warwick Castle, Thorpe Park, The London Eye, Madame Tussaud's London, Amsterdam, New York, Washington, Las Vegas and Hong Kong, Heide Park Germany) plus the Dungeon brand, Lego Land brand, Sea

Life centres worldwide and Gardaland in Italy.

How much does Alton Towers invest in new rides each year?

The amount Alton Towers invests every year in new rides and attractions varies, depending on the business objectives set by Merlin. It also depends on the type of attraction of course – a new resort hotel can cost anything from £20million to £40million, depending on its scale and components. A unique rollercoaster such as Rita - Queen of Speed costs £8million, and even a family ride such as Charlie and the Chocolate Factory can cost the same. We regularly invest smaller amounts in general infrastructure and adding variety to our base product, as was the case in 2007, and 2008 will see a relatively moderate £6million invested in a new rethemed area.

How many people visit Alton Towers each year?

Alton Towers no longer releases its annual visitor figures as, if taken in isolation, they can give a misleading representation of business success. However, our aim is to stabilise the number of guests at around 2.5 million per year.

How much profit does Alton Towers make each year?

As Alton Towers is part of a much larger group, it cannot discuss profits or losses but, like all businesses, there are very stringent profit targets that must be met.

Does Alton Towers have a vision?

As part of The Merlin Entertainment Group, Alton Towers shares the following vision:

Merlin Entertainments Group is a leading name in location based, family entertainment. Its aim is to deliver unique, memorable and rewarding experiences to millions of visitors across its growing estate, and it achieves this objective largely thanks to the commitment and passion of its managers and employees. Merlin's brands, while being household names, will never fail to be distinctive, challenging and innovative. They will, in short, have attitude! They will deliver the best financial returns in the sector and demonstrate a record of growth in market share that will be unrivalled. In every respect and to every group of stakeholders Merlin will always be an exciting company to be involved with.

How does Alton Towers develop a partnership with the local community?

Alton Towers works very closely with the local community and as a result has very strong ties with the surrounding villages. To reflect this relationship, a Local Community Charter was launched in 2007 which outlines Alton Towers' commitments to the area. You can view this Charter at altontowers.com/AboutUs/CorporateandSocialResponsibility.

Has Alton Towers won any awards?

Alton Towers has won a number of national and international awards. These awards range from 'Best Theme Park/Tourist Attraction 1997 and 1998 (awarded by Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled people.); to '1998 Golden Ticket Award for Best Ride Theme: Nemesis'; (awarded by Amusement Today); and 'Thrill of the Year 2001: Oblivion' to 'Staffordshire Family Attraction of the Year

2001 and 2002' (awarded by The Good Britain Guide). Alton Towers was also voted the overall winner of the Good Britain Guide's Best Theme Park Award in 2003. The Alton Towers Conference Centre has also recently won the Meeting and Incentive Travel Magazines award for Best UK Unusual Venue, for the fourth time running!

How many different departments are there within Alton Towers?

Alton Towers runs as one resort business, although there are a few departments that are specific to either the Park or Hotel. Shared functions include Finance, Marketing (including Entertainments and Contact Centre), PR, Corporate Events, Retail, Food & Beverage, Security, Medical, Uniform, HR, Health and Safety and Development. Location specific departments include Technical Services, Experience (Rides & Attractions), Housekeeping, Leisure Operations (including waterpark and Spa).

How many staff work at Alton Towers?

Alton Towers employs around 3,000 across the resort, many of whom are local (within a 20 mile radius). Staff transport is available for employees living in the surrounding towns and villages.

How can people apply to work at Alton Towers?

Alton Towers has its own Human Resources department that is responsible for recruiting and training all Alton Towers employees. Details about recruitment can be found on our website, altontowers.com/about-us/recruitment.

Where can I find further information on Alton Towers?

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MARKETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is the marketing strategy at Alton Towers?

Alton Towers has been repositioning as a resort since the mid-90's. The marketing strategy therefore is to communicate key brand messages to target markets – families primarily, then teens/young adults. The main objectives that must be met through this strategy are:

1. Deliver volume objectives in terms of individual visitors
2. Deliver profit objectives
3. Maintain brand leadership status within the UK
4. Underline Alton Towers' position as a destination resort

What type of advertising does Alton Towers do?

The advertising strategy is developed as a result of a thorough review of the competitive environment, the current economic climate, research results, visitor profiles and other internal and external factors affecting the European leisure market. The resulting strategy dictates the key communication messages for Alton Towers and therefore the choice of media and the timing plan. Alton Towers' advertising media includes TV, radio, press, direct mail, promotions and the Internet with the majority of the budget being spent on national TV.

What type of promotions does Alton Towers do?

Alton Towers runs promotions only with partners who reflect equal brand values to Alton Towers. The promotional plan must deliver high quality communication of the Alton Towers brand: strong incentives; national coverage; cover varying market sectors and ultimately ensure the Alton Towers brand is not devalued. The main types of promotions used by Alton Towers include BOGOF tickets (buy one get one free), children go free when one adult pays full price, and limited discounted tickets.

Which brand partners have Alton Towers worked with?

These are just some of the brands Alton Towers has worked with; Kellogg's, The Sun, The Daily Mail, McDonalds, KFC, Pizza Hut, Cadbury, Walkers, Tesco and Woolworths.

What are the demographics of visitors to Alton Towers?

Visitors to Alton Towers can be broken down into the following sections: social grade; type; age and geography. The social grade of visitors to Alton Towers can be summarised in the following way:

AB	29%
C1	27%
C2	23%
DE	21%

Female visitors account for 59% of total visitors, and 41% are male.

Statistics taken in 2002

What is the age of visitors to Alton Towers?

The age of visitors to Alton Towers can be broken down into the following age bands:

Age	%
0-7	21%
8-12	30%
13-17	28%
18-24	36%
25-34	41%
35-44	40%
45-54	18%
55+	5%

Statistics taken YE 2007

What areas of the country do visitors to Alton Towers travel from?

The geography of visitors to Alton Towers can be broken down into the following areas:

Greater London	8.9%
South East	15.1%
East Anglia	3.5%
South West	6.5%
Wales	3.0%
East Midlands	13.3%
West Midlands	18.0%

Yorkshire and Humberside	9.3%
North	3.2%
North West	14.2%
Scotland	5.0%

Statistics taken in 2004

Who visits Alton Towers?

The types of people that visit Alton Towers can be broken down into the following areas:

- Individuals / families
- Coach groups
- Companies
- School parties
- Group organisers

How are individuals targeted?

Through mainstream advertising and PR strategies, i.e. TV adverts, press adverts, poster campaigns, direct marketing and editorial features.

How are coach groups targeted?

Coach groups and group organisers are targeted via the trade sales department and through direct mail and trade PR. The Trade Sales Team work out in the field visiting coach operators and tour operators for example, helping them to set up trips to our attractions.

How are companies targeted?

Companies are a vital part of the trade market for Alton Towers and are targeted via the main TV campaign, trade PR, direct mail and direct calls from sales representatives.

How are school parties targeted?

School parties are targeted by direct calls and direct mail. Visits to Alton Towers are communicated to schools as a fun and educational day out. An onsite education centre has been established to help students with assignments on park.

How does Alton Towers know what guests want from their day out?

Alton Towers conducts extensive research to ensure our guests experience a magical day out. Questionnaires are left on car windscreens and in bedrooms at the Alton Towers Hotels. The results are collated and fed back on a monthly basis. This type of research is called Customer Satisfaction Research. We have been conducting the same type of research for over ten years, so comparative results are very robust. More specific questionnaires are also produced for special events to get instant feedback, this is known as Real Time Research.

What does Alton Towers do with this information?

Once the results have been collected and processed, they are distributed to appropriate departments who look at ways in which all aspects of Alton Towers can be improved.

What improvements have come out of customer research?

A good example is the introduction of branded food partners McDonalds, KFC and Pizza Hut that came about as a direct result of the research in 1997.

Why does Alton Towers hold special events?

Alton Towers holds many dynamic events throughout the year – Christmas, Easter, Summer and Halloween being the main periods. The objectives broadly are to increase visitor volume, increase dwell time and therefore spend, and add value to an experience, whether that be a day out or an overnight stay.

Who organises the special events?

Events can be split into two main categories – dynamic events, which are run by the Entertainments team following a brief from the Marketing team, and Corporate Events, which are run by the Corporate Events department and which are usually for a single client. Dynamic events involve every area of the business and are targeted at all guests; Corporate events range from sales conferences, to product launches to complete hotel or park buy-outs, but there is generally one client.

RIDES AND OPERATIONS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Who looks after all of the rides and attractions at Alton Towers?

From a technical perspective, Alton Towers has its own Technical Services department who carry out all of the maintenance including rides, catering equipment, attractions, electricity/water supplies, grounds and gardens. The rides are actually managed and operated by the Experience team, which is split into a number of smaller, ride specific areas.

How many rides/attractions are there at Alton Towers?

Alton Towers has over 50 rides and attractions ranging from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory to Rita – Queen of Speed, a launch coaster that catapults riders from 0-100kph in 2.5 seconds!

What is the fastest ride at Alton Towers?

Oblivion is the fastest ride at Alton Towers with a maximum speed of 110km per hour (the same speed created by hurricane force winds).

Which ride at Alton Towers has the highest g-force?

Rita – Queen of Speed has the highest g-force measuring 4.7 g's, followed by Oblivion with 4.5 g's (NASA astronauts only experience 3g at take off). Further ride specifications for Rita, Air, Oblivion and Nemesis can be found at the back of this booklet.

Why does Alton Towers have different types of rides?

Alton Towers aims to provide entertainment for all its guests. To do this effectively it has to provide a 'balance' of attractions, from white knuckle rides for thrill seekers to live entertainment for the whole family.

SECURITY AND HEALTH AND SAFETY QUESTION AND ANSWERS

Who looks after the safety of the guests at Alton Towers?

Alton Towers has its own Security department and Health and Safety department that are responsible for the safety and welfare of both guests and employees.

How does Security do this?

There are over 20 security staff who are responsible for looking after Alton Towers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. To help them do this effectively, close circuit television cameras, which are constantly monitored in a central control room, cover most areas of the resort.

How many car parking spaces are there at Alton Towers?

Alton Towers provides over 5,400 car parking spaces and 300 coach spaces.

What facilities does Alton Towers provide for disabled guests?

Alton Towers makes every effort to ensure the resort is accessible to all guests. On most rides, guests in wheelchairs and their helpers are allowed to approach via the exit, thus avoiding queue lines. There are disabled toilet facilities on the Park and in both hotels, and the Park has its own Medical Centre where special needs can be catered for, i.e. cold storage of medicines and specialised equipment. Wheelchairs are also available to hire from Guest Services. Both hotels have a number of rooms that have been specially adapted to accommodate guests with special needs and all floors can be accessed by lifts. Also, both the Spa and the waterpark are fully accessible to guests in wheelchairs. Alton Towers provides a special guide for disabled visitors, a copy of which can be obtained by visiting altontowers.com / General Info / Accessibility.

What is the procedure for looking after lost children at Alton Towers?

On the park, lost children are immediately taken to the windmill situated close to Old MacDonald's Farmyard, where they are then looked after by a host until they are reunited with their parents. In addition, Alton Towers runs a child wristband scheme which is free. Parents are encouraged to collect one for all children under 6 from Guest Services. There is space for a mobile phone number and means that if a child is found, they can be reunited very quickly. In the hotels, lost children are taken to the main reception area where staff will endeavour to track down the parents, using room details if necessary.

What happens to lost property at Alton Towers?

Based within the Administration Department, Alton Towers has its own Lost Property team who are responsible for collecting, cross referencing and locating all lost items. After a period of three to four months, unclaimed property is sent to a variety of charities including the British Red Cross.

Why do certain rides at Alton Towers have height restrictions?

Safety is a number one priority at Alton Towers. All of the rides have height restrictions, either minimum or maximum, which are set by the ride manufacturer and reinforced by Alton Towers' own health and safety legislation. These

restrictions ensure that safety harnesses on the rides are effective.

Are there any specific health and safety codes relevant to theme parks?

Alton Towers, as with other theme parks, is obliged to comply with a significant number of safety requirements including the Health and Safety Executives Guidance on Safe Practice at Fairgrounds and Amusement Parks (HSG175), The Amusement Devices Inspection Procedures Scheme (ADIPS), The Health and Safety at Work Etc Act 1974, The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY QUESTION AND ANSWERS

How many computers are there at Alton Towers?

There are over 450 computers at Alton Towers which are looked after by an IT department. IT is also responsible for installing and maintaining over 700 internal and external telephones, mobile phones and Blackberry's.

Does Alton Towers have a website?

Yes. The address is www.altontowers.com. This provides information on the resort, as well as allowing guests to pre-book tickets and rooms – something that is being encouraged and is on the increase.

RETAIL AND F&B QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Who looks after all the shops and restaurants at Alton Towers?

The shops are looked after by the Retail teams; the restaurants are managed by the Food & Beverage teams. These teams work across the whole resort, so are responsible for outlets on the park and in the hotels.

What types of gifts are available from Alton Towers?

Alton Towers sells a wide selection of merchandise ranging from Alton Towers pens to branded Alton Towers and Quiksilver clothing. The three key brands sold are Oblivion, 'Air' and Alton Towers.

How does Alton Towers know which products sell the most?

Retail work closely with IT in determining which items are the most popular. IT collects information from the tills at the end of each day, which is then passed on to Retail. This information shows how many items have been sold each day, from which shop they have been purchased and how much profit that item has made to date.

What type of food outlets are there at Alton Towers?

Across the resort guests will find a wide selection of food outlets ranging from KFC and Pizza Hut to Alton Towers' own branded family restaurants, such as Fresh Fish & Chips and Rita's Chicken & Ribs. All park outlets and the hotel restaurants provide a wide range of healthy food options, as well as the more traditional, and expected, chips!

How much food is eaten every year at Alton Towers

A lot! A good example is chips - 260 tonnes are consumed in a season - equivalent to eating the Statue of Liberty!

How many drinks are sold at Alton Towers every year?

The amount of fizzy drinks sold each season equates to having a bath a day for over four years!

ALTON TOWERS HOTELS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What makes the Alton Towers Hotels so different to other hotels, and what facilities do they have?

Opened in March 1996, The Alton Towers Hotel was the UK's first and only fully themed hotel and the only one located within a theme park. The £20 million hotel boasts 175 themed rooms and eight uniquely themed suites including the Oblivion Bedroom, The Peter Rabbit Bedrooms, The Chocolate Bedroom and The Imperial Suite. In June 2006, the Sleepover Suite was unveiled – a unique party suite for girls of all ages to pamper themselves and have fun in a soundproofed play zone!

The hotel contains one restaurant, The Secret Garden; two bars, The Dragon Bar and The Captains Bar; a luxurious Spa; Pirates Bill's Club for children, The Emporium Shop and a 200-seater conference room that can be divided into three self-contained suites.

Splash Landings Hotel opened in June 2003 and was the first waterpark hotel in Europe. Containing 215 rooms and incorporating a massive indoor and outdoor waterpark, Splash Landings is themed in a crazy Caribbean style, with brightly coloured driftwood furniture and beach effect carpets complete with crabs!

Linking Splash Landings and the Alton Towers Hotels is the Alton Towers Conference Centre, a unique venue that can cater for up to 550 delegates. Together, Splash Landings Hotel, Cariba Creek Waterpark and the Alton Towers Conference Centre represented an investment of £40 million.

How successful have the Alton Towers Hotels been?

The opening of the original Alton Towers Hotel and Splash Landings Hotel was a strategic investment, reflecting Alton Towers' new focus on the important and fast growing UK short break market. The Alton Towers Hotel was an immediate success in 1996, with occupancies of between 14% and 34% in the Park's closed season and 100% during the summer holidays. Since then, demand has continued to rise, and full occupancy in both hotels was reached within the first few weeks of Splash Landings opening!

Are both hotels open all the year round?

Both hotels remain open throughout the year, and the new 550 capacity Conference Centre, one of the largest in the UK, ensures that we are kept busy. In addition of course, the Waterpark ensures that guests have plenty to keep them occupied during their stay, and we are able to provide a number of dynamic events during November – February, and limited park availability for hotel guests.

THRILL RIDE DATA

RIDE NAME> RITA – QUEEN OF SPEED

LAUNCH DATE> > **March 2005**
COST> >£8 MILLION
TOTAL G-FORCE> >4.7 G'S
TRACK LENGTH> > 647 METRES
HEIGHT OF DROP> >18.4 METRES
RIDE DURATION> >49 SECONDS
MAXIMUM SPEED> >100KM PER HOUR
CAPACITY PER CAR> > 20 PASSENGERS
CAPACITY PER HOUR> >1150 PASSENGERS

RIDE NAME> AIR

LAUNCH DATE> > **16.03.02**
COST> >£12 MILLION
TOTAL G-FORCE> >3.5 G'S
TRACK LENGTH> >840 METRES
HEIGHT OF DROP> >20 METRES
RIDE DURATION> >189 SECONDS
MAXIMUM SPEED> >75KM PER HOUR
CAPACITY PER CAR> >28 PASSENGERS
CAPACITY PER HOUR> >1500 PASSENGERS

RIDE NAME> OBLIVION

LAUNCH DATE> > **14.3.98**
COST> >£12 MILLION
TOTAL G-FORCE> >4.5G'S
TRACK LENGTH> >373 METRES
HEIGHT OF DROP> >60 METRES
RIDE DURATION> >160 SECONDS
MAXIMUM SPEED> >110KM PER HOUR
CAPACITY PER CAR> >16 PASSENGERS
CAPACITY PER HOUR> >1900 PASSENGERS

RIDE NAME> >NEMESIS

LAUNCH DATE> > **19.3.94**
COST> >£10 MILLION
TOTAL G-FORCE> >4 G'S
TRACK LENGTH> >716 METRES
HEIGHT OF DROP> >13 METRES
RIDE DURATION> >195 SECONDS
MAXIMUM SPEED> >81KM PER HOUR
CAPACITY PER CAR> >32 PASSENGERS
CAPACITY PER HOUR> >1400 PASSENGERS