

# The real reason we ride rollercoasters

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The real reason we ride rollercoasters : YOU'RE flirting with death and you have only a limited time to run, but you don't.



People ride on the Cyclone

Rollercoaster in New York for the first time. Picture: Gregory P. Mango

## YOU'RE flirting with death and you have only a limited time to run, but you don't.

Your heart is racing and your palms are sweaty and you hear deafening screams.

You take a weak step closer to the thunderous roar ahead of you and panic sets in.

These are the feelings Malcolm Burt believes all people crave, as scary as it sounds.

Mr Burt, a rollercoaster enthusiast, has been obsessed with the rides all his life, ever since he was a "fat, awkward kid".

"I viewed these rides as a real escape," he said.

"I wasn't very good at sports and I lived in a small country town and these rides showed me I could be brave and tough."



Malcolm Burt sits at the front of a flume ride at Sea World when he was young. Source: Supplied

Mr Burt has travelled around the world defeating some of the world's most terrifying coasters, he even went to Disneyland for his 40th birthday, and he has realised the love people have for them is actually kind of insane.

"It's normal to queue for about two hours to go on a 60 second ride and we do it," he said.

Mr Burt has figured out the real reason we go on rollercoasters and basically it's because we are lazy.

"We live in a very lazy, consumerist society where we binge watch Netflix," he said.

"We're not going to go and climb Mount Everest, but rollercoasters give you the same biological reaction.

"Basically you feel like you've achieved something incredible and you're in the zone.

"People go on rollercoasters over climbing Mount Everest because they work and have limited amounts of paid leisure time, they don't have the money and they can't put in the months of training it takes to prepare and we'll probably die.

"It's easy for us to pop down to a theme park and scare ourselves and get the similar biological thrill."



Rollercoaster researcher Malcolm Burt stands in front of the Fuji-Q ride in Japan. Source: Supplied

Mr Burt said while people did come off a rollercoaster feeling tough and fulfilled, he believed it really wasn't an achievement at all.

The researcher films his experiences on some of the most exhilarating thrill rides, and while it may sound like the best job ever, it's something that certainly challenges Mr Burt's fear of heights.

He can't count the number of rollercoasters he's actually been on but he won't ever forget the scariest.

"Think of the Superman ride at Movie World and times it by 10," he said.

It's the Top Thrill Dragster in Ohio, which launches from 0km/h to 190km/h in just 3.8 seconds and rockets you about 130 metres into the sky.



Malcolm Burt rides the GateKeeper

GateKeeper rollercoaster at Cedar Point. Source: Supplied

Mr Burt said rollercoasters were promoted in a way that induced terror and were designed to be intimidating.

"Some people were wired up in the United Kingdom to measure the affect rollercoasters had on them and their heart rates because researchers wanted to see what parts of rollercoasters were the scariest," he said.

"It turned out most people were scared in the queue because of the elements of intimidation, the screams and the noise.

"It's when your fight or flight response starts to kick in."

Mr Burt has studied why rollercoasters exist for his Masters degree at the Queensland University of Technology and has just released a documentary.

He will soon start his PhD, exploring what the future is for theme parks.

"I'll make another documentary and hopefully will be done in three years," he said.

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