LOST ATTRACTIONS OF FLORIDA

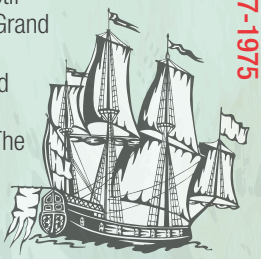
The Golf Industry Show arrives in Florida next month, and throughout the state's 170-plus-year history, it's been a popular vacation and tourism destination. Here are a few diversions you *won't* see on your upcoming trip to the Sunshine State, however, but that have retained a bit of their novelty as noteworthy notches in Florida's sizable archive of bygone attractions.

Africa USA
Boca Raton, Florida
1953-1961

Giraffes, zebras, camels and more roamed free on the 300-acre property, and the "zoo with no cages" concept was a precursor to Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando. Walt Disney himself was purportedly a frequent visitor to Africa USA, and even considered purchasing it. The park was chosen over Disneyland to appear on the cover of the Aug. 1, 1960 issue of *Life* magazine, but in the face of noise and traffic complaints from residents in nearby, newly developed housing, Africa USA's glory days would last just a little over a year after that.

Pirates World
Dania Beach, Florida
1967-1975

This southern Florida amusement park featured a full-sized pirate ship ride, but didn't let its buccaneer motif pigeonhole it, also offering rides such as the "Grand National Steeplechase," along with arcade and carnival games and a petting zoo. Pirates World was a concert venue too, and brought in such big names as Led Zeppelin, David Bowie and The Doors. Though it was successful in its early years, the advent of Walt Disney World in 1971 would raid Pirates' patronage.



Circus World
Haines City, Florida
1974-1986

Located about 30 miles southwest of Orlando, Circus World was originally a property of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The 847-acre park featured a carousel, Ferris wheel, wooden roller coaster, and 27,000-square-foot circus-tent-style building that housed an IMAX theater. Visitors could view performances that included live tiger, elephant, trapeze and acrobatic acts. After multiple changes of ownership, the final curtain closed on Circus World in 1986.

Splendid China
Kissimmee, Florida
1993-2003

The 75-acre, $100 billion theme park consisted of more than 60 miniature replicas of sites such as the Great Wall and the Temple of Confucius. Despite its opulence, the venture was plagued by controversy and protests (alleged to be a "propaganda park" owned by the Chinese government), and revenue never reached expectations. The park sat inactive but somewhat intact until 2013, when tear-down began to make way for a Margaritaville resort community, which will open this year. Splendid China's sister park of the same name in Shenzhen, China, is still in operation.