

# 18 Hotel Waterparks in USA Open in 2009

By Jeff Coy and Amanda McDaniel

November 9, 2009 --- Eighteen (18) hotel waterpark resorts opened in the US in 2009, despite higher unemployment, a stand-still construction industry and a lack of bank loans for commercial real estate construction. Although 7 projects were pushed into next year and beyond, 18 waterpark hotels with 4,267 rooms managed to open in 2009 compared to 24 openings in 2008 and 34 in 2007 --- due to securing financing before the economic slide began.

	Construction Project Growth Hotel Waterpark Resorts USA									
	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
Open at beginning of year	199	175	141	108	82	65	50	42	33	19
Openings during year	18	24	34	33	26	17	15	8	9	14
Total Open at end of year	217	199	175	141	108	82	65	50	42	33
Percent Change	9.0%	13.7%	24.1%	30.6%	31.7%	26.2%	30.0%	19.0%	27.3%	
Under Construction	28	50	67	60	58	35	18	9	10	14
In Development	244	199	166	108	121	69	46	19		

Source: Jeff Coy, JLC Hospitality Consulting.

There are now 217 hotel waterpark resorts in the USA, up from 199 last year and 175 the year prior. The number under construction during the year reached a high of 67 in 2007 and then dwindled to 50 in 2008 and 28 in 2009. While construction has slowed, the number in the development phase has climbed from 166 in 2007 to 199 in 2008 to 244 in 2009. Clearly, there is pent-up demand for hotel waterpark resorts when commercial lending resumes.

## Hotel Waterpark Resorts That Opened in 2009

Last January, **Great Wolf Lodge in Grapevine TX** added another 203 rooms and 20,000 square feet of meeting space --- bringing its room total to 403 and meeting space to 40,000 square feet. Visitors to Grapevine's latest attraction experience a north woods adventure theme including four restaurants, arcade, spa, an 80,000 square foot indoor waterpark sporting 9 slides and 6 pools and an 84,000 square foot outdoor waterpark. For more, call 817-488-6510 or go to [www.greatwolf.com](http://www.greatwolf.com).

In February, Jerry and Carolyn Fuhs opened their **Valley of Springs Resort** hotel and Big Splash Island indoor waterpark in French Lick IN. The 40,000 square foot indoor waterpark is covered by an aluminum & glass structure that lets in the light and keeps out the weather

with a high degree of energy efficiency. This is one of the greenest resorts ever. Call 812-936-4836 or go to [www.valleyofthesprings.com](http://www.valleyofthesprings.com).

At year end 2009, there are 218 hotels with 41,065 rooms, 3.6 million square feet of outdoor waterpark space and 5.7 million square feet of indoor waterpark space. Here's a list of hotel waterparks that opened in the USA in 2009:

USA Under Construction & Opening in 2009	Location		Number Of Rooms	OWP SqFt	Indoor WP SqFt.	Open Date
Great Wolf Lodge Room & Meeting Room Additions	Grapevine	TX	203		0	200901
Valley of Springs Resort & Big Splash Island	French Lick	IN	154		40,000	200902
Sahara Sam's Oasis	West Berlin	NJ	0		58,000	200903
Adrenalina Extreme Sports Shop at Willow Bend	Plano	TX	0			200903
Waterpark Redevelopment at Arizona Grand Resort	Phoenix	AZ	0	304,920	0	200904
Metropolis Hotel & Chaos Waterpark & Action City	Eau Claire	WI	107		30,000	200904
Holiday Inn Express Suites & Waterpark	West Valley City	UT	191		8,000	200904
Wilderness at the Smokies' Lake Wilderness 2nd OWP	Sevierville	TN	0			200905
Great Wolf Lodge	Concord	NC	409		81,000	200905
Castle Rock Resort & Waterpark on Green Mtn Drive	Branson	MO	100			200906
Splashtopia at Rancho Las Palmas Resort	Palm Springs	CA	466	87,000	0	200907
Ramada NW's Addition of Tropics Indoor Waterpark	Urbandale	IA	165		14,673	200908
Carnival Ecstasy Cruise Ship & Water Works	Galveston	TX	1026			200909
Greek Peak's Hope Lake Lodge & Indoor Waterpark	Cortland	NY	106		41,000	200910
Pirates Island & Proposed Hotel	Kalamazoo	MI	100		14,000	200910
Rocking Horse Ranch Resort's Indoor Waterpark Addition	Poughkeepsie	NY	0		6,000	200911
The Lodge at Deadwood (Mtn Resort & IWP)	Deadwood	SD	140		10,000	200911
Schlitterbahn Vacation Village Waterpark (Phase I)	Kansas City	KS	1100	1,045,000	0	200912
<b>Total Under Construction &amp; Projected Opening in 2009</b>			<b>18</b>	<b>4,267</b>	<b>1,436,920</b>	<b>302,673</b>
Cumulative Total Open Year End 2009			218	41,065	3,680,941	5,768,842

Source: Jeff Coy, JLC Hospitality Consulting

**Sahara Sam's Oasis** opened in February as one of only two privately-owned indoor waterparks not attached to a hotel. Located in West Berlin NJ, the 72,000 sf park features a retractable roof that lets in the light and keeps out the weather. It has a FlowRider surfing simulator and a 45-foot tall family raft ride. Sam sells half-day, full-day and 12-month passes and is open to the public. For more, go to [www.saharasams.com](http://www.saharasams.com) or call 856-663-7751.

**Adrenalina Extreme Sports** opened a retail store with a FlowRider surfing simulator at the Shops at Willow Bend in Plano TX. Adrenalina specializes in selling clothes and equipment for extreme sports, including skydiving, paintball and skateboarding. But it's the FlowRider that draws a variety of spectators from seniors to young parents, teens and toddlers. Riders slide down a ramp into the curl of a wave that is produced by high-output water pumps. Half-hour sessions with instructor are \$20.33 including tax. Typically, you'll see FlowRiders in outdoor waterparks, but Adrenalina brought one indoors to draw traffic into their store at

6121 West Park Blvd in Plano. For more, go to [www.adrenalinastore.com](http://www.adrenalinastore.com) or call 469-366-0111.

In April, the **Arizona Grand Resort** debuted is \$52 million redevelopment, which includes a new 25,000 sf lobby, golf course and 7-acre Oasis outdoor waterpark. The resort and the Children's Museum of Phoenix announced a partnership to cross-promote the two entities -- both of which draw children and families to the Phoenix area. Water plays an enormous role in a child's development according to museum president Debbie Gilpin and resort managing director Richard Behr. The two plan to add more child development activities using AGR's Oasis waterpark. The resort is owned by Grossman Company Properties. For more, call 602-438-9000 or go to [www.arizonagrandresort.com](http://www.arizonagrandresort.com).

**Metropolis Hotel** opened its 107 rooms in Eau Claire WI in 2008. But construction continued with the Chaos Resort Waterpark and Action City family entertainment center, which opened in April 2009. The indoor waterpark is 30,000 sf and the FEC is 55,000 sf. All three entities are under the same ownership and will be relaunched with a new resort name soon. The owners are Mark Steil, Tom Hahn and Kerry Kjelstad. Reach them at 715-852-6000 or go to [www.metropolishotel.com](http://www.metropolishotel.com).

A 107-room **Holiday Inn Express** opened in April with its 8,000 sf indoor waterpark in West Valley City (Salt Lake City) UT. The waterplay area, called Grins & Fins, includes 3 pools and a 183 foot-long waterslide. The hotel also has one small meeting room. Owner is Jeff Stockert, president of Utah Hospitality LLC. You can reach him at 800-465-4329.

The hospitality foursome of Pete and Patrick Helland and Tim and Tom Lucke opened their **Wilderness at the Smokies Resort** in June 2008 with the 234-room Stone Hill Lodge and 40,000 sf Salamander Springs outdoor waterpark along with announcements of new expansions every six months. In December 2008, the 472-room River Lodge and the 60,000 sf Wild Water Dome indoor waterpark were added. In May 2009, Wilderness expanded again with the addition of Lake Wilderness, the resort's second outdoor waterpark which features an adventure river, wave pool and poolside cabanas.

Wilderness features the region's only indoor SurfRider, which shoots 19,000 gallons of water under you to create 5-foot waves. Surfing lessons are offered in the morning before the park opens and class sizes are kept small. "It's never the same ride twice, it's a different experience every time," according to resort general manager David McGregor. "The lessons really help our guests get the most out of the SurfRider --- and some of them actually become very good at it," he says.

In November 2009, Wilderness opened its newest attraction, Runaway Canyon, which is located in the Wild Water Dome. Runaway Canyon is a 5-story high enclosed waterslide measuring more than 450 feet and featuring a drop of almost 60 feet. Using 8,000 gallons of water, Runaway Canyon pushes a raft of four people through a series of twists, turns and drops. For more, go to [www.WildernessAtTheSmokies.com](http://www.WildernessAtTheSmokies.com).

**Great Wolf Lodge in Charlotte-Concord NC** opened its 409 rooms and 81,000 sf indoor waterpark in May 2009. The resort has two wings --- one with themed rooms for families and another for adults and conference attendees. The average cost of a stay at Great Wolf is about \$289 per night, according to Phil Cunningham, general manager. Some rooms cost \$500 to \$600 per night, but they sleep eight people. Great Wolf's main attraction is its waterpark, which features 11 waterslides, a wave pool and 4-story, 12-level interactive tree



fort called Fort McKenzie with 60 guest-activated water effects. At the top of the fort, there's a 1,000-gallon bucket that dumps a huge gush of water every five minutes. The waterslides go outside the building and return to a pool of water inside. There's also a lily pad walk across the pool and an outdoor pool for sunny weather. Great Wolf has a lot to do for children when they're not in the waterpark --- like an arcade of family-rated video games, the MagicQuest interactive electronic scavenger hunt that sends

children scurrying about the resort, a kid's spa and (at last) a bedtime story at the clock tower. For teens, Great Wolf has Gr8 space, which features dance parties, karaoke nights and other activities led by a Great Wolf DJ. No parents allowed from 8pm until closing. For more, go to [www.greatwolf.com/concord/waterpark](http://www.greatwolf.com/concord/waterpark).

Since opening in June 2009, **Castle Rock Resort in Branson MO** has become quite popular. Castle Rock has 100 rooms in the Tower Building attached to an indoor waterpark as well as a full-service restaurant, gift shop, game room and party rooms. "We are a short drive from anywhere on the strip," according to co-owner Noela Kirkland. "Plus, there are two miniature golf courses, a wooden race track, several restaurants and a Walmart all within one mile of the resort." The indoor waterpark has 2 waterslides, 2 dumping buckets, a lazy river, kiddie slides and 3 outdoor pools. There's another 100 rooms in the Atrium Building but they are not connected to the indoor waterpark. Castle Rock is managed by American Resort Management of Erie PA. Jennifer Pulver is marketing director. For more, go to [www.castlerockbranson.com](http://www.castlerockbranson.com) or call 417-336-6000.

Splashtopia opened in July 2009 at **Rancho Las Palmas in Palm Springs CA** after a \$35 million makeover. The former-Marriott resort has 444 guest rooms, an 87,000 sf outdoor waterpark with two 100-foot long waterslides, a 425-foot long lazy river, main pool and beach area. The 20,000 sf Rancho Las Palmas Spa offers 26 treatments and a private pool with underwater music. There are four restaurants and a Starbucks inside the resort. Plus, the Aerial Tramway and Palm Springs Air Museum are nearby. Guest rooms start at \$249 for a room and breakfast package. In the summer, the same package for two goes for \$149. For more, go to [www.rancholaspalmas.com](http://www.rancholaspalmas.com).

Ramada Northwest Des Moines (Urbandale) IA completed major renovations in June 2009. Then it opened a new 14,673 sf indoor waterpark in August. The property is renamed and repositioned as the **Ramada Tropics Resort & Conference Center**. The waterpark features two 2-story, 160-foot long waterslides, 4 smaller waterslides, a Pirate Ship,

beached boat slide, lap pool, hot tub and game room. GM is John Sullivan. Owned and managed by Century Hospitality of Sioux Falls SD. Reach Bob Blumenthal, director of operations at 605-343-7117.

**The Carnival Ecstasy** cruise ship usually runs 4 to 5-day cruises from Galveston to Cozumel and Progreso, Mexico, but when it was dry-docked for a month beginning September 19, 2009, it received an extreme makeover. The Ecstasy is now equipped with Carnival WaterWorks, a new aqua park on the ship's top deck. Designed to appeal to all ages, WaterWorks features a twisting 300-foot waterslide, an 82-foot long two lane racing slide and several water spray devices. During the 28-day dry dock, the ship upgraded its 1,026 cabins with new plasma screen TVs and added balconies to 98 cabins. To see a video of the new aqua park, go to [www.funshipisland.com/#waterworks](http://www.funshipisland.com/#waterworks).

**Greek Peak Ski Resort in Cortland NY** opened its new Hope Lake Lodge in October 2009 with 106 condotel units, 3 restaurants and a spa. The lodge also features a new 41,000 sf Cascades Indoor Waterpark. The indoor waterpark has a wave pool, a waterfall, a 3-story tube waterslide, an indoor-outdoor pool and indoor-outdoor hot tubs. Greek Peak Mountain, the largest ski resort in central New York since 1958, attracts over 250,000 skier visits annually. The mountain has 32 trails, 6 aerial lifts, 2 surface lifts, beginner's slope and 3 Terrain Parks. Christopher Ryan is GM and oversees all aspects of hotel operations. Al Kryger is owner and president of Greek Peak.

The total funding was \$33 million. The quarter-share condotel construction loan of \$23 million was provided by a consortium of banks which includes Tennessee Commerce Bank of Nashville TN as the lead bank with M&T Bank of Binghamton NY administering the loan. Other participating lenders include Mid Atlantic Financial Partners of Germantown MD, Green Lakes of Tully NY, First Community Financial Inc of Franklin TN and HSK Funding of Binghamton NY. A \$10 million construction loan for the indoor waterpark was provided by Tennessee Commerce Bank with a permanent loan take-out of \$10 million. USDA provided an 80% loan note guarantee for the \$10 million permanent loan. \$9.5 million in equity was provided by local and regional investors, and numerous grants were awarded by the county and state. For more, go to [www.hopelakelodge.com](http://www.hopelakelodge.com) or call 607-835-6300.

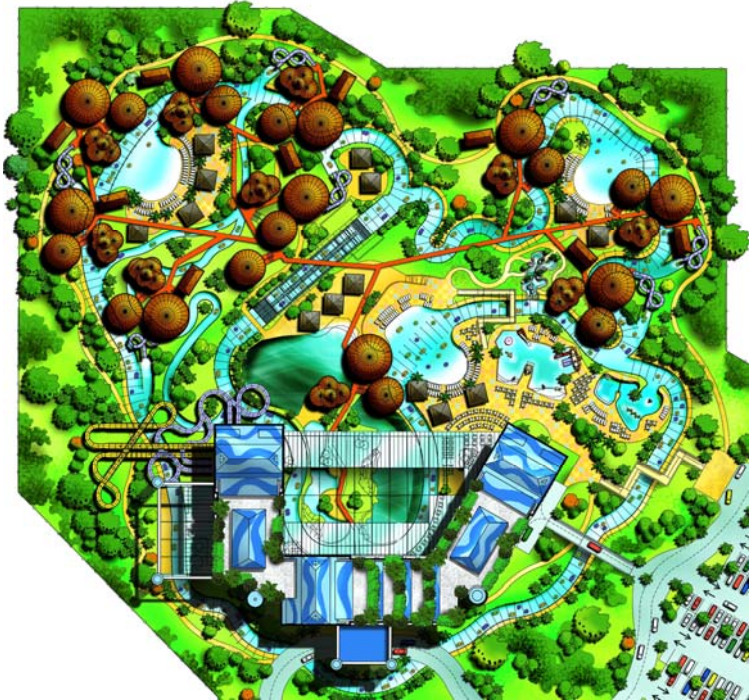
**Pirate's Island Indoor Waterpark in Kalamazoo MI** opened in October 2009 with a 14,000 sf swimming center. Features include indoor & outdoor waterslides, a lazy river, lap pool, pirate ship and kiddie pool. The project, owned by Larry Hollenbeck's Lageoc Ltd, took four years and \$4 million to complete --- mostly with cash out of his own pocket, due to financing deals that fell apart due to the economy. A connecting hotel may be built at a later time. Pirate's Island is located adjacent to Hollenbeck's SWAT Fitness Center and ice arenas on Sports Drive near N Avenue and Ninth Street. For more, go to [www.piratesisland.com](http://www.piratesisland.com) or call 269-544-5000.

**Rocking Horse Ranch Resort** plans to open its 6,000 sf SplashTown indoor waterpark in November 2009. The 120-room ranch resort is located in the Poughkeepsie-Highland area of Dutchess County, New York and attracts about 120,000 visitors annually. SplashTown features one 230-foot waterslide, a play structure, kiddie slides, dumping buckets and water

cannons. Owner Steve Turk said the project cost \$2.7 million. Turk said SplashTown is part of a 5-year plan that will include new dining services, expanded spa facilities, additional guest rooms and up to 40,000 sf of new indoor waterpark space. Steve Turk and his wife Shelley have owned the 60-year old Rocking Horse Ranch since 2001.

**The Lodge at Deadwood Mountain Resort** plans to open its 140 rooms this month, November 2009, in the historic South Dakota town where Wild Bill Hickok was shot in the back while playing poker. The resort features a 10,000 sf indoor waterpark with a zero-entry pool for toddlers, a pirate ship, water geysers, water raindrops, small waterslides for young children, a water walk and water cannons. The resort also features 13,000 sf of meeting space. The casino with 300 table games is scheduled to open next month. Ramkota Companies of Sioux Falls SD is the owner-operator of the resort. The Minerva's folks out of Sioux Falls are running the restaurant, and Mike Wordeman and sons of Sodak Gaming are running the casino. For more call 605-334-2731 or go to [www.deadwoodlodge.com](http://www.deadwoodlodge.com).

The outdoor waterpark at **Schlitterbahn Vacation Village in Kansas City KS** was one-third completed in September 2009, but developers said it would be done by year end 2009. Schlitterbahn is one of those large mixed-use resort destination projects that take several years to build out. When the \$750 million resort is completed during the next few years, it will be a massive 360 acres, filled with additional waterpark attractions, year-round dining and entertainment areas, lodging facilities and the Riverwalk shopping area. The outdoor waterpark contains an uphill water coaster, 3 tubing slides, one tubing chute, 2 tubing rivers, 13 mini-slides for kids, 3 relaxing beach areas with lounge chairs and a giant hot tub with a swim-up refreshment bar called Henry's Hideout.



Torrent River is billed as the world's largest tidal wave river --- part lazy river and part wave pool. You can ride the Raging River Chute directly from Torrent Beach to Krystal River, a lazy river attraction which is peaceful and slow moving, a good place to relax in the sunshine. The Storm Blaster (uphill water coaster), Wolfpack Tube Slide, Black Night Tube Slide and Bahnzai Pipeline Tube Slide are all high-thrill rides. Kinderhaven is a shallow pool with play sculptures for the toddlers --- a train, a frog and a turtle.

Many attractions in the outdoor waterpark are interconnected by the Transportainment River System, so guests can float from one end of the park to the other without ever leaving the

water. Always under construction, watch for more to come. For more, contact Jeff Siebert, corporate director of communications, at 830-608-8519 or go to [www.schlitterbahn.com](http://www.schlitterbahn.com).

## ***Some 2009 Projects Were Delayed***

Several hotel waterpark resort projects mentioned in our Construction Report Spring 2009 that were scheduled to open this year were delayed for a variety of reasons:

- Sheraton Paradise Bay at Fishers IN --- two land parcels of site foreclosed.
- Chula Vista Resort Expansion of Waterpark & Sports Dome --- awaiting better conditions.
- Waves of Fun IWP at BW Timber Creek in Sandwich IL --- opening April 2010.
- KeyLime Cove Phase 2 Expansion in Gurnee IL --- awaiting return of demand and lending.
- Holiday Inn & Maya Indoor Waterpark at Syracuse NY --- awaiting financing.
- Boone Crossing Hotel Waterpark Resort in Indianapolis IN --- shifted into 2010.
- Hotel Indoor-Outdoor at Gilroy Gardens in San Francisco CA --- city bought the property.

## ***Canada, Mexico & Caribbean***

In Canada and Mexico, there were no known hotels with waterparks that opened in 2009.

However, two hotel waterpark resorts opened in the Caribbean:

**Beaches Resort in the Turks & Caicos** has 453 rooms that are designed into four villages each with their own pool --- Caribbean Village, Italian Village, French Village and Seaside Village. In 2009, the resort expanded its 18,000 sf pool area by 27,000 sf. As a result, the resort now features a 45,000 sf outdoor waterpark called Pirates Island. The waterpark features a lazy river, a surf simulator, 12 waterslides (7 new plus 5 existing =12), a splash deck, a zero-entry kiddie pool and several water cannons, water cranks and sprays. Other waterpark features include a kids-only swim-up bar, ice cream machine, whirlpool, teen disco, an X-box 360 game garage, waterfall and a 50's style diner. The resort has 16 restaurants, 12 bars and a Liquid at Beaches Nightclub. For more, go to [www.beaches.com](http://www.beaches.com) or dial 1-888-BEACHES.

**Barcelo's Bavaro Resort in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic** will open a family resort next month, December 2009. The resort features 2.5 miles of white sand and coral reef that form a natural swimming pool, 180 family suites equipped with the latest in in-room entertainment technology, 13 restaurants, a 24-hour casino, tennis, kayaking, mini-golf, a theater with live nightly entertainment, regulation-size baseball and soccer fields, 9-holes of golf designed by Pete Dye and a kids-only waterpark. Barcelo owns or manages 180 properties in 17 countries. For more, go to [www.barcelo.com](http://www.barcelo.com).



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