Write an article for a teenage magazine, explaining your opinion about theme parks.

You’re squeezed into a tiny tin capsule, tightly bound with a so-called ‘safety harness’ which is squeezing the breath out of you, waiting to be hurled down a precipice with all the force that gravity can muster. The butterflies in your stomach seem turbo-charged and ready to burst out of your body at any second. This is fun? This is a thrill? This is what you have coughed up over £30 for?

Yes, actually, it probably is...

The main attraction of theme parks has to be these roller coasters - the high-velocity, so-called ‘white knuckle’ rides, specifically designed for the thrill seekers, those teenagers and adults who are old enough and tall enough to ride these ultimate machines...and I am one of them. Ever since I can remember, I have loved all the fun of the fairground: even as a toddler tootling about on one of those cutie plastic animal rides at a snail’s pace (though it felt like a Formula-1 Ferrari at the time) I enjoyed the thrill of the ride.

Of course, in the press recently, it has been the spills rather than the thrills which have hit the headlines. Who can forget the horrific images of the mangled limbs and life-changing injuries inflicted by the ‘Smiler’ ride at Alton Towers? ‘Smiler’ – there’s a bitterly ironic name if ever there was one. There were not many thrill seekers left smiling that day! The inquiry into the accident found that the owners were to blame for putting the lives and limbs of the passengers at risk because ride operators, some as young as eighteen, had overridden the automatic safety controls. So has that stopped the demand for these super-fast, and apparently super-dangerous, rides?

Not a bit.

Eager customers are still prepared to wait for up to two hours in a queue for a single ride at the likes of Thorpe Park, LEGOLAND and Drayton Manor Park. Then there are those fortunate enough to fly for the holiday (or six, in some privileged cases) of a lifetime to the USA to spend dreamy days queuing in the Florida sunshine instead of the rain of a typical English summer’s day.

Is it worth it? The cost of the flights alone is astronomical; then there are the hotels, with the even more expensive ones closer to the parks - and the price of a day’s entry charge multiplied by the six days or more that you are there. At least you won’t bleed much if there is a bone-shattering crash: you’ll have been bled dry beforehand. People must have to take out second mortgages or be in debt to Wonga for eternity to gather enough cash to cover the cost. It’s every non-millionaire parent’s nightmare, I imagine, to be bombarded with the demands of their complaining kids: “Can we go to Disneyworld this year? All my friends have been.”

I have actually been to the original Disneyland, in that far-off City of the Angels in the Golden State - Los Angeles, California. It certainly beat Alton Towers on a soggy September Saturday: an immaculately groomed park, with litter seeming to be caught in mid-air by vigilant park workers before it had chance to hit the floor; the flawless architectural recreations of Main Street USA, New Orleans Square and the space-age Tomorrowland; jaw-droppingly expensive merchandising outlets where you can purchase a genuine diamond-encrusted Cinderella tiara or a solid-gold Mickey Mouse pendant; and a Disney Show running every couple of hours around the clock with fabulously professional wannabe Hollywood singing and dancing stars. Yes, that was the trip of a lifetime. But the best part?

The best part was definitely the flight back to England.

(626 words)