

The Attraction Operator's Guide to Virtual Queuing

Banish your guests' #1 frustration



Virtual queues are a powerful tool to control the flow of guests around your attraction and reduce the frustration caused by waiting in line. **But are they right for you?**

In this guide, we'll explore:

- 1 How virtual queues work.
- 2 How much work goes into setting one up.
- 3 How to evaluate when they are and aren't a good fit for your attraction.

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Introduction

Banish your guests' #1 frustration

Over 60% of guests believe that long queues are the worst thing about visiting attractions. And we don't blame them – from the admissions gate to grabbing a bite to eat, queues have become an inevitable part of the guest experience.

Mismanaged queues cause huge amounts of frustration for guests expecting a special day out. They've booked tickets to make memories with their loved ones, not stand in line for the majority of their visit. At popular attractions, lines regularly exceed a 100-minute waiting time, meaning some guests make it on less than 8 rides a day. That's less than ideal when you consider that ride throughput is one of the biggest factors in determining your guests' satisfaction and NPS, or that long wait times create an additional barrier for guests with access or mobility requirements.

On the flip side, eliminating queues entirely isn't desirable for most parks. Anticipation makes rides even more thrilling, and removing waiting entirely could reduce the build up of excitement, and shorten multi-day visits if guests can fit more into a single day, resulting in a loss of ticketing revenue.

If you want to make queuing as pain-free as possible, it's as much about managing expectations as minimising your biggest waits. Enter virtual queuing: the most effective to make queuing as pain-free as possible.



Six reasons to invest in virtual queuing in 2023

Implemented correctly, virtual queuing enhances guest satisfaction, accessibility and the efficiency of your ride operations.



Increase guest satisfaction

Reducing wait times frees guests to explore the rest of your attraction and helping them to pack more memories into their day is a surefire way to increase your NPS.



Improve accessibility

Virtual queuing is particularly helpful for guests with disabilities, as it allows them to reserve their spot in line without having to stand for extended periods.



Support social distancing

Eliminating lines can help guests in vulnerable groups feel more comfortable visiting your attraction, who know that they can maintain social distancing while they wait.



Family friendly

Virtual queues provide extra flexibility for guests with children, who may need to take breaks while waiting for a ride.



Drive spending

That's right! Less time spent waiting in line means more time to explore your eateries and retail outlets. Use virtual queuing in conjunction with push notifications and offers to encourage guests to shop while they wait.



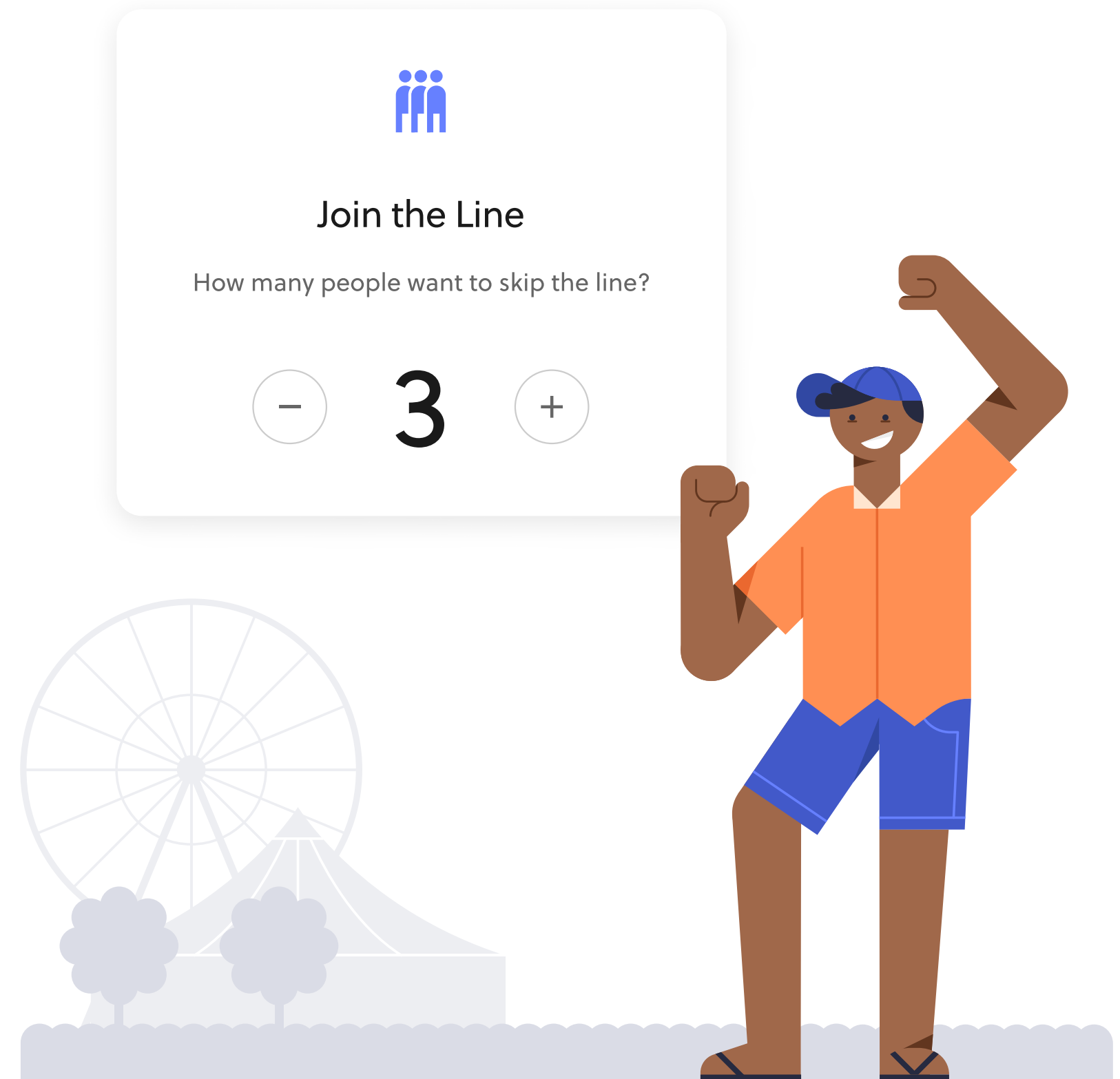
Increase efficiency

Virtual queuing reduces the need for physical queues and the associated space and infrastructure requirements. It can also help distribute crowds more evenly throughout the park, leading to a more enjoyable experience for all guests.

What are virtual queues and how do they work?

A virtual queue or virtual queue management system places guests in a digitally managed waiting line or queue, meaning they don't have to physically wait for their ride or experience. Usually, guests join the queue from their mobile devices or an interactive guest services screen and are then assigned a queue number that determines when they ride.

While they wait, they're free to explore other activities you have on offer, or you can tempt them to check out your shops and eateries with well-placed advertising via the queue mechanism.



What do I need to run a virtual queuing system?

There are four key components to a great virtual queuing system:

- 1 Virtual Queue Management System**
Used to manage reservations and replace the physical queue.
- 2 Validation Points**
One or more points within a physical queue that are used to manage access to a buffer queue and update the queuing system.
- 3 Buffer Queue**
A buffer queue ensures there's always a small pool of guests ready to ride to account for no-shows and quick turnarounds.
- 4 A Compatible Device**
Used by guests to reserve slots in the queue and keep track of their position.



How do virtual queues work?



Guests access the virtual queue

A mobile or interactive screen is used to access a native or web app that lists the available virtual queues. These devices can also connect to wearables or wristbands that are scanned by operators to create reservations on a guest's behalf.



And, secure their spot in the line

The guest joins the virtual queue and is shown their position in the virtual line along with an expected wait time (see our psychology of queuing on page 10 – we don't want any uncertain waits here!). While they wait, they are free to explore the rest of the attraction and can track their position in the queue from their mobile device or a guest services point.



Behind the scenes...

The queue management system tracks ride throughput and uses validation points placed at the ride's entrance and in the buffer queue to ensure times remain accurate.



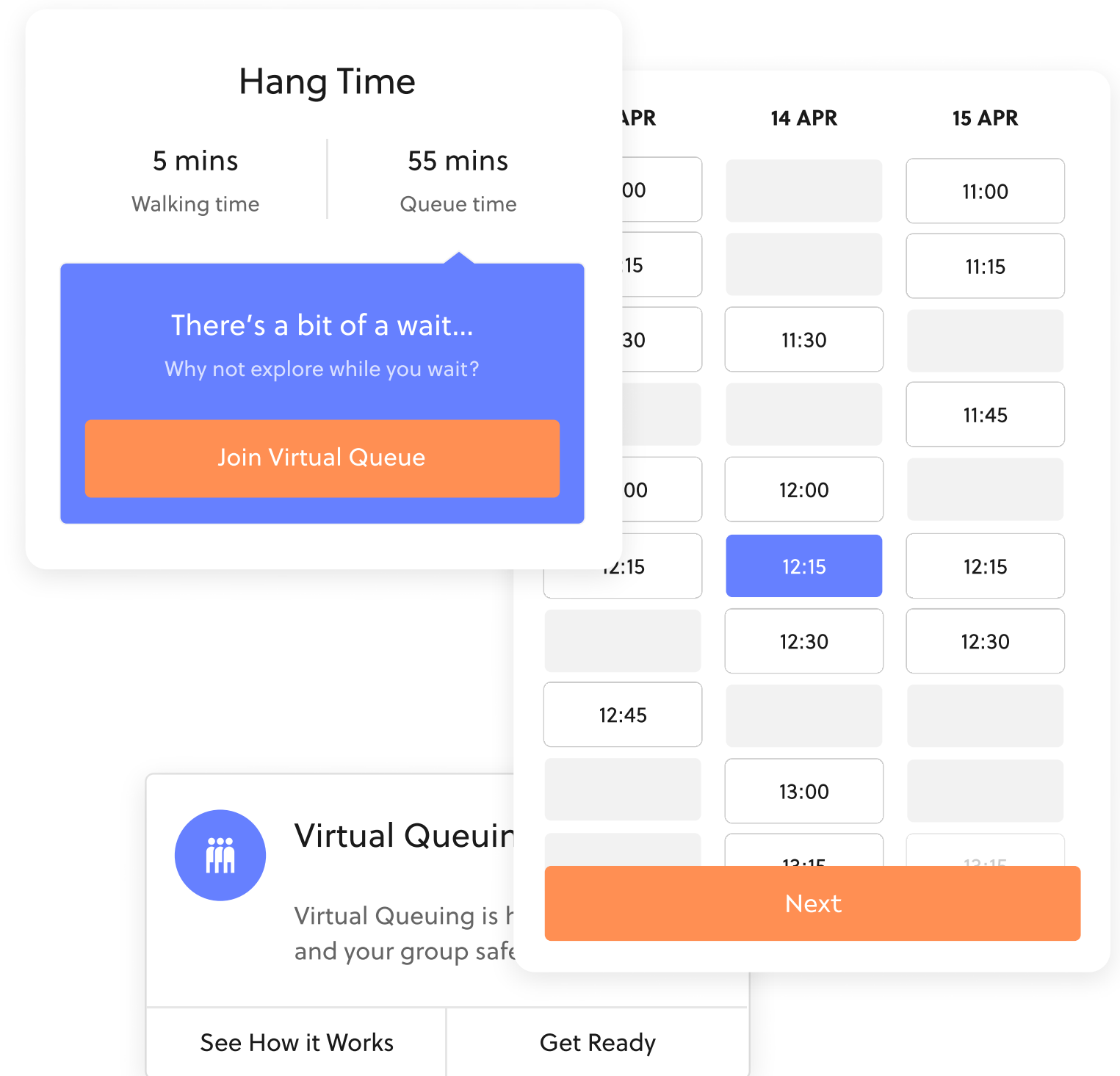
Then it's time to ride!

When guests come to the end of the virtual queue, they will be notified that it is their turn to ride, can enter the "holding area" for the ride. This is typically a very short physical queue, with the number of guests kept at a fine balance to ensure there are enough people to keep the ride at a suitable capacity, but not so busy that guests feel that they are queuing for the second time.

Types of virtual queue

Most virtual queuing systems offer several configuration options, plus the option to open and close virtual queues and adapt to operational changes (like increased throughput) on demand. In general, there are three main ways to configure your virtual queues:

- 1 A pure virtual queue**
A pure virtual queue mimics the first-in-first-out mechanics of a physical queue. In this scenario, the queue management system calculates a wait time based on the current number of reservations.
- 2 Physical queues with a virtual wait**
Consider our second option, a hybrid solution. It combines a queue management system that allows a guest to wait virtually with a physical queue, which it uses to calculate wait times.
- 3 Time slots**
A capacity-based system allows guests to reserve a specific time slot. This can help guests plan their day and reduce the amount of time they spend checking devices.





Which queue system is right for you?

As much as we'd like to have some hard and fast rules as to which system is best in which scenario, its more complicated than that. Below, we've summarised the pro's and con's of each deployment method, but we recommend speaking to a guest experience consultant to determine which option is right for your attraction.

| | Pure | Combined or Hybrid | Time Slot |
|------|--|--|---|
| Pros | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stops guests waiting physically. • Frees up guests time to explore whilst waiting. • Automatically adjusts if the attraction's throughput changes. • Automatically adjusts to operational downtime. • Is not dependant on other wait time sources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stops guests waiting physically. • Frees up guests time to explore whilst waiting. • Easy to understand. • Does not effect the existing physical queue. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stops guests waiting physically. • Frees up guests time to explore whilst waiting. • Gives guests highest accuracy. • Easy for operations to understand maximum demand for each time period offered. |
| Cons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires guest to have access to technology. • Risk of no-shows if time changes suddenly. • Harder to understand, especially if there is also a physical queue time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires guest to have access to technology. • If physical times are not correct or fluctuate, there can be operational difficulties. • Is dependent on a physical queue. • Can cause frustration if the physical queue time is less than the time remaining. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires guest to have access to technology. • Can be significantly impacted by downtime or operational inefficiencies. • Can cause frustration if all slots are booked. • Can cause guests anxiety and system strain if slots are released in large blocks. |

The psychology of queuing

As a British-born company, we know a thing or two about queuing. Everyone says it's in our DNA, after all. Here are five things proven to impact our perceptions of queues, both at attractions and in the wider world. Keep these references in mind when building your queue management strategy.

1

Unoccupied time feels longer than occupied time

Even if guests are in love with the attraction they're queuing for, if there are no distractions, the wait can make it seem torturous. Even something as simple as keeping the line moving can have a positive impact on guests – 83 percent of us say fast-moving lines [create a better experience](#).

2

Uncertain waits are longer than known, finite waits

The average person [overestimates their waiting time](#) by 36% if left to their own devices, meaning a lack of communication about the size of your lines could be warping guests' perceptions of their experiences.

Fortunately, this can be easily addressed. Sharing an estimated waiting time with eager guests, even if it changes over time, is better than providing no information. Easy-to-implement solutions like digital signage [reduce perceived wait times](#) by 35%.

3

Unexplained waits are longer than explained waits

Humans look for explanations behind all things. The absence of an explanation is frustrating.

Airline pilots know this well and will always include the reason for a delay (whether it's the airline's fault or not) instead of merely stating there is a wait. We can do the same by clearly communicating unexpected waits caused by ride engineering, POS issues and over-stretched kitchens!

4

Unfair waits are longer than fair waits

The perception of fairness arguably has the biggest impact on how we feel when we're waiting in line. We're constantly on guard to ensure no one cuts in front of us.

A quick wait can still feel unjust if a first-in, first-out system isn't adhered to or is easily circumvented in ways guests feel is unfair. If guests are treated out of sequence, it's helpful for them to be served elsewhere to avoid unnecessary frustration for other guests.

5

Anxiety makes waits feel longer

Anxiety surrounds being unfairly overtaken by others, what [Richard Larson calls "skips and slips"](#). One serpentine line removes any need for guests to make (and constantly reassess) a decision about choosing the "right line".

Common challenges with virtual queue implementation

















While virtual queuing has many benefits, it is not without its challenges. Here are the three most often voiced by our customers:

- 1 Ride selection and displacement**

Virtual queuing means guests spend less time waiting in line and have a lot more time to explore your park. You need to prepare by having plenty of alternative activities for them to explore while they wait. Otherwise, you risk having displaced guests wondering how to fill their time.
- 2 Closing rides**

If a ride closes unexpectedly, you need a way to quickly close your virtual queue and update guests already waiting. This is why it's important that your virtual queues integrate with your existing tools, like your mobile app.
- 3 No shows and expectation management**

Your virtual queuing system automatically creates a buffer queue to account for a small number of no-shows, but if the number of guests changing plans unexpectedly increases, you need a system that can quickly adapt.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Diggers 5 min walk |  0 mins | > |
|  | Zipper 8 min walk |  5 mins | > |
|  | Flying Machine 5 min walk |  15 mins | > |
|  | Cobra Virtual 5 min walk |  35 mins | > |
|  | Flying Machine 5 min walk |  40 mins | > |
|  | Crazy Mouse 15 min walk |  45 mins | > |
|  | Hang Time Virtual 5 min walk |  55 mins | > |
|  | Wooden Warrior Virtual 2 min walk |  Closed | > |

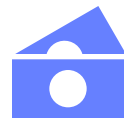


Our top four recommendations for designing your optimal queuing strategy



Limit the number of rides

It can be tempting to add virtual queues to the majority of your attractions, but we recommend only introducing virtual queues on your busiest rides. This ensures guests have plenty of other activities to fill their waiting time with and avoids displacing guests.



Help guests fill their newfound free time

Switching to a virtual wait is helpful if your guests have other activities to engage with until it's their time to ride. So use the other features in your guest experience platform to tempt them with exclusive offers for retail outlets and eateries or send a message pointing out nearby rides with low wait times that they can hop on while waiting.



Communicate clearly

Invest time and marketing resource in explaining how virtual queues work BEFORE guests arrive to avoid unnecessary confusion and distractions during guests' visit. We recommend linking to a Virtual Queue explainer page in your booking confirmation emails and promoting your virtual lines on social media.



Monitor the performance of your virtual queues

Tracking your ride throughput and average wait times is the best way to ensure your virtual queues are performing optimally. If you're using our solution, the Attractions.io control panel allows operators to view a dashboard of the current virtual queue times, generate wait time reports and track downtime.

How we can help

We built Attractions.io to banish friction from the guest experience

Creating the perfect virtual queuing solution doesn't happen overnight. We've spent the past decade building the attraction industry's only dedicated guest experience platform with integrated wait times and virtual queuing.

We combine our virtual queue management system with the Attractions.io guest experience platform so that you can actively help your visitors eliminate the number one source of friction in their visit and make the most of their additional exploration time.

From personalised offers that influence guests to head to eateries and retail outlets while they wait, to a digital map that highlights the nearest activities for their age group, we make every minute of the visit count.

To learn more, book a 15 minute call with our guest experience specialists:

[Book a discovery call](#)

