



**Shambhala, Europe's fastest and tallest rollercoaster, opened at PortAventura in May**

joint venture between two major players – The Tussauds Group (40 per cent) and Anheuser-Busch (20 per cent) – with Spanish bank LA Caixa (30 per cent) and energy company Fecsa (6.8 per cent) also holding stakes. Since then the park's ownership has changed a number of times. Universal Studios bought a share in the park in 1997, leading the park to be first called Universal's PortAventura from 1997 to 2001 and then Universal Studios PortAventura from 2001 to 2004.

The latest change in ownership, three years ago, has been the most significant, not least because it's what brought Feder over to the park from his native Italy. Despite the economic turbulence experienced across Europe, Spanish private equity firm Investindustrial saw potential in PortAventura and acquired a 50 per cent stake in the park for around €95m (£75m, US\$117m) in September 2009. The other half remains under the control of Criteria Caixaholding SAU – an investment company controlled by La Caixa.

### GOOD INVESTMENT

Shortly after securing the deal, Investindustrial announced that it would invest €80m (£63m, \$99m) over the next four years in improving PortAventura's facilities as part of a strategy to establish it as a leading European park. To drive these ambitious plans, Investindustrial hired a leader it was very familiar with – Sergio Feder. At the end of 2009, Feder had spent 16 years as the CEO of Italy's Gardaland – a theme park that Investindustrial had bought in 2005 before selling it on to Merlin in November 2006 (Investindustrial still holds a minority stake in Gardaland).

As a theme park veteran, Feder, who also holds a degree in economics, was seen as the perfect person to take PortAventura to the next level.

"I built up a great relationship with Investindustrial while at Gardaland and in 2009 they offered me a new challenge here at PortAventura," Feder recounts. He adds that while the cultural differences between running a park in Italy and Spain are minimal, there have been operational differences that he's had to adapt to.

"Gardaland is a very attractive theme



## ABOUT SERGIO FEDER

### What are your hobbies?

Skiing and horse riding

### What's your favourite food?

Mediterranean cuisine and ethnic cuisine

### What's your favourite film?

*Dances with Wolves*

### What drives you?

Self-improvement spirit and willingness to create emotions and dreams

### How would you describe yourself?

I am a dreamer, generous and very demanding with myself and others

### How would others describe you?

Reliable, loyal and very demanding

### What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

Firstly, never surrender. Secondly, behind the clouds, it's always sunny

park, but its main markets are national and regional visitors. The park has one hotel, which can more than deal with demand. PortAventura, meanwhile, has a much more international focus and is a genuine destination resort. We not only have a large theme park with six individual areas, but a waterpark and four hotels offering 2,000 rooms. We also have a conference centre, so it's a much more complete offer."

### 2008

Opening of the golf courses, designed by Greg Norman

### 2009

Opening of the hotel Gold River and PortAventura Convention Centre

### 2011

Opening of SesamoAventura

### 2012

The arrival of Shambhala: Expedition to the Himalayas.

