



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Thomas Jung

Orlando Off the Beaten Track

Orlando, 4 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: There is so much more to Orlando besides theme parks. Take a trip off the beaten path and you'll discover an artsy, outdoorsy, and delicious side to Orlando plus you'll probably save a wad of cash. From sunrise balloon flights to historic 'Do-It-Yourself' pancake locales, you'll be amazed at all the ways this city delivers memorable moments. When you're ready for a theme-park-free getaway, Orlando will deliver an unforgettable getaway.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Orlando

DAY NOTE: Check into your B&B located in downtown's Thornton Park district. Here you'll find lots of boutiques, cafes, and a handful of great restaurants, most with fabulous outdoor patios where a well-healed crowd soaks up the sunshine. After lunch and a stroll around Lake Eola (maybe even a swan boat ride across the lake) make your way to I-Drive to experience the thrill of indoor sky diving. Later, dinner and entertainment go hand in hand at Medieval Times. The day's finale is a boogie down at Wall Street where a bevy of bars and lounges rock out every night.



Hue

Sophisticated downtown eatery with a fab patio



iFly Orlando

Indoor sky diving without the jump from the plane



Waitiki Retro Tiki Lounge

Secrets of the South Pacific await



The Veranda Bed & Breakfast

Day 2 - Orlando

DAY NOTE: Balloon tours take flight at the crack of dawn so plan for an afternoon siesta later in the day. While you may feel a little sleep deprived, this sunrise experience is certainly worth it. Keep in mind that unless you book a private flight, your basket will be filled with other tourists. These early morning balloon flights usually wrap up around eleven, leaving you time to explore a little on your way back downtown to the B&B. I'd suggest heading to the little town of Celebration for lunch and a stroll. Or stop into the Gaylord Palms Hotel and hang at this magnificent resort for a few hours. This resort boasts a gigantic indoor atrium that showcases key West, the Everglades, and St. Augustine. There are also several options for lunch. For dinner, Le Coq Au Vin consistently wins Orlando's most coveted dining awards and is a local favorite. Draw the day closed with belly laughs at SAK Comedy Lab, Orlando's finest improv comedy show.



Coq Au Vin (Le)

A romantic little French place



Sak Comedy Lab

Laugh The Night Away



The Veranda Bed & Breakfast

Day 3 - Orlando

DAY NOTE: Few visitors venture beyond I-Drive, Disney area, and downtown Orlando, but those that do will find several hidden gems like Wekiwa Springs State Park. Here visitors can take a dip in the spring, always a refreshing 72 degrees, or paddle down river in a canoe and kayak. Plenty of local wildlife can be viewed from the river or along the park's hiking trails. After a full day spent in the sun, Enzo's Restaurant on the Lake is only a twenty minute drive east on 434 (take a right on 17/92). Make sure you have a reservation and try to arrive a little early to enjoy a cocktail on the dock overlooking the picturesque lake. Later you can catch an independent or foreign film at The Enzian, where the kitchen serves everything from gourmet pizzas to fresh baked cookies and delivers them right to your table in the theater.



Wekiwa Springs State Park

Hike, kayak, or simply snorkel in the warm spring



Enzo's Restaurant On The Lake

Dine with a view



Enzian Theater

Dinner and a flick



Back Booth

Music lovers night out



The Veranda Bed & Breakfast

Day 4 - Orlando

DAY NOTE: Arrive at De Leon State Park hungry and head straight to the Old Spanish Sugar Mill for DIY pancakes. On your own personal grill, you'll be whipping up fluffy pancakes accompanied by the Mill's famous toppings. Afterwards, explore the park on land and in water before heading to College Park, another of Orlando's quaint downtown neighborhoods. With a Starbucks in hand, traverse through eclectic boutiques before settling in for a variety of small plates at Taste, College Park's

Itinerary Overview

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artsy eatery. If the timing is right, you may even be able to take part in a cooking class at Truffles and Trifles next door. If not, head over to Harmoni Market for a glass of wine in a Tuscan setting.



Taste Restaurant

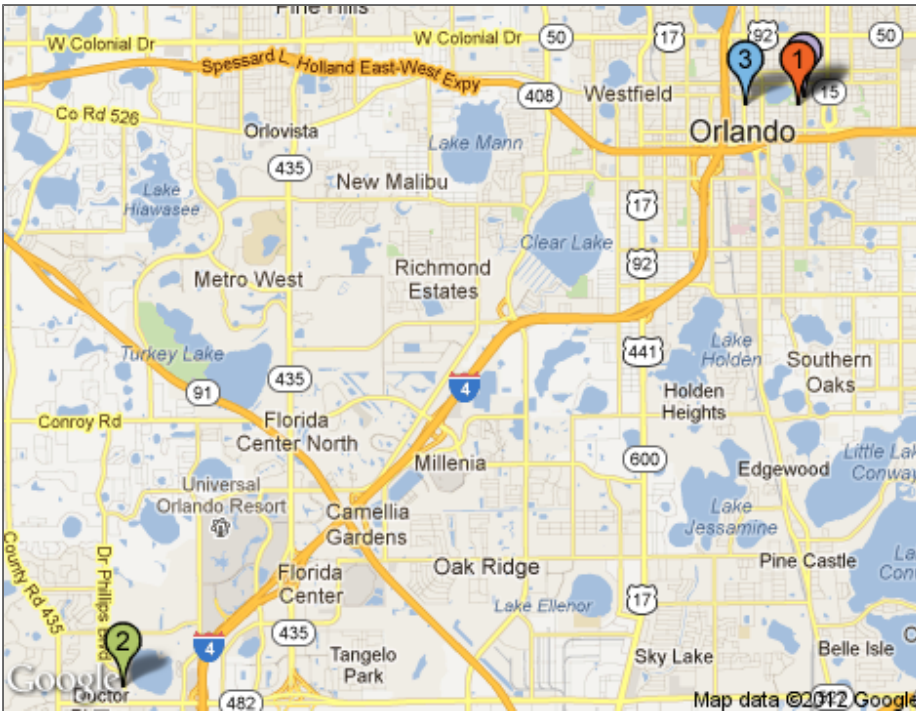
Taste food and art



De Leon Springs Hiking Trails

Beautiful hot springs

Day 1 - Orlando



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contact:

tel: 407 849 1800

fax: 407 872 3348

<http://www.huerestaurant.com>

/

location:

629 East Central Blvd
Orlando FL 32801-2916

hours:

Lunch: Monday - Saturday:
11:30am - 4:00pm, Sunday:
11:00am - 4:00pm; Dinner:
Sunday: 4:00pm - 10:00pm,
Monday - Thursday: 4:00pm
- 11:00pm, Friday - Saturday:
4:00pm - 12:00am

1 Hue

DESCRIPTION: The trendy decor with warm hues and shimmering lights adds to the unique dining experience at this upscale restaurant. The menu features an innovative mix of American cuisine with highlights, such as Seared Tuna, Wood-grilled meats and fish dishes. The happy hour definitely brings a smile to every diner's face as the rates are highly discounted. Participate in the 'Disco brunch' that's held every third Sunday of the month, where you can groove to the music and have an enormous platter to dine on. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Hue

contact:

tel: +1 407 903 1150
fax: +1 407 903 1906
<http://www.iflyorlando.com/>

location:

6805 Visitors Circle
Orlando FL 32819

2 iFly Orlando

DESCRIPTION: This is the closest you can get to skydiving while still on the ground. Inside a huge simulator that looks more like a spacecraft than a building, visitors of all ages can experience skydiving in a wind tunnel or opt for the free-fall simulator. Either way, there's an experienced staff on hand to help calm your nerves, and there's plenty of padding in case you take a fall during your free-fall! © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of SkyVenture Orlando

contact:

tel: 407 481 1199
fax: 407 999 7856
<http://www.wallstplaza.net/waitiki/>

location:

26 Wall Street Plaza
Orlando FL 32801

hours:

Daily 11a–2a

3 Waitiki Retro Tiki Lounge

DESCRIPTION: Waitiki Retro Tiki Lounge is located in the Wall Street Plaza in the heart of downtown Orlando. They are open for lunch and dinner or drinks all day long and have a daily Happy Hour from 4p to 7p. The decor sets the mood with plenty of bamboo, unique woodcarvings, teak flooring, straw thatches, artwork from contemporary tiki artists and an old-fashioned ironwood bar. There is live music from Wednesday through Saturday featuring surf-rock, lounge and reggae sounds, and hula dancers can be seen during special events. The outdoor balconies offer a great view of the surrounding area and the food and drink selections include tropical delights and plenty of specials. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Waitiki Retro Tiki Lounge

contact:

tel: 800/420-6822
fax: 407/849-0321, ext. 24
www.theverandabandb.com

location:

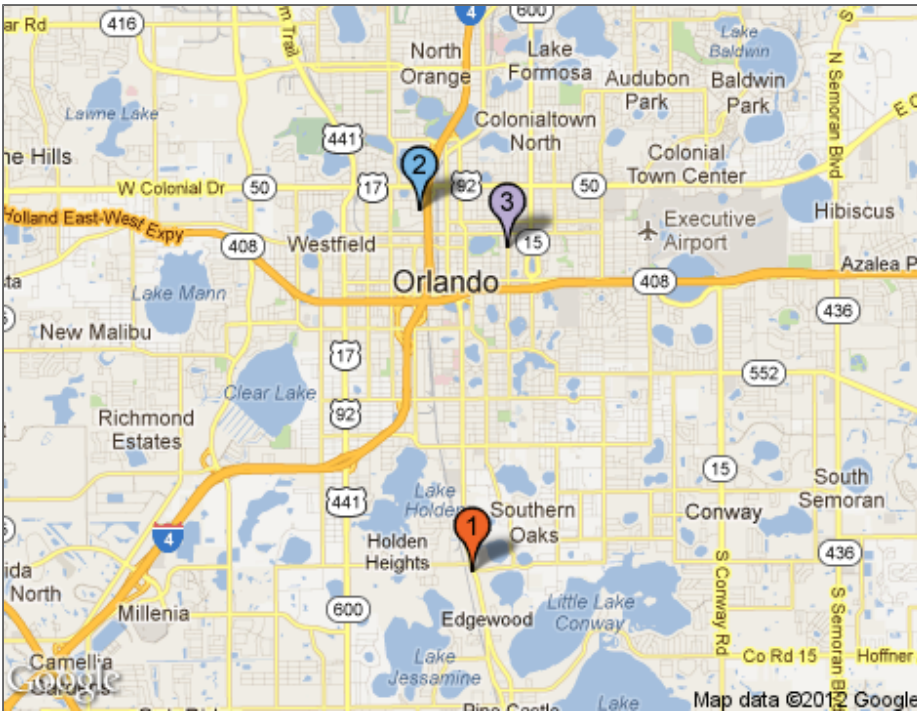
115 N. Summerlin Ave
Orlando FL 32801

4 The Veranda Bed & Breakfast

DESCRIPTION: Located in Thornton Park, this inn near scenic Lake Eola is another option if you want to stay near downtown. Its four buildings date back to the early 1900s. All units (studios to suites) include private bathrooms and entrances; some have garden tubs, balconies, kitchenettes, and four-poster beds. A few of the nicer options include the Washington Suite, which sports a four-poster bed and a Jacuzzi, and the romantic Carriage Suite, which has a four-poster bed and antique claw-foot tub. The two-bedroom, two-bathroom Keylime Cottage (\$169) sleeps four and has a full kitchen. © Frommer's



Day 2 - Orlando



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contact:

tel: 1 407 851 6980
fax: +1 407 248 0658
<http://www.lecoquavinrestaurant.com>

location:

4800 South Orange Avenue
Orlando FL 32806

hours:

Tu-Sa 5:30p-10p, Su 5p-9p

1 Coq Au Vin (Le)

DESCRIPTION: This fine French restaurant is located on a nondescript stretch of Orange Avenue better known for convenience stores than gourmet eateries. Inside, guests enter a world of romantic lighting, starched white tablecloths and excellent cuisine. You might begin with Onion Soup, topped with Gruyere cheese or an appetizer of phyllo dough stuffed with vegetables and cheese, and follow that with a grouper filet or a Black Angus steak. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Coq Au Vin (Le)

contact:

tel: 407/648-0001
fax: +1 407 648 1333
<http://www.sak.com>

location:

29 S. Orange Ave.
Orlando FL 32801

2 Sak Comedy Lab

DESCRIPTION: Locals perform at a 200-seat club (which launched the career of national improv artist Wayne Brady -- who occasionally shows up) that has performances several nights of the week. Favorites include the Duel of Fools, where two teams face off in improvised scenes based on suggestions from the audience, and Lab Rats, where students play in improv formats. Shows usually take place Tuesday and Wednesday at 9pm, Thursday at 8pm, Friday at 8 and 10pm, and Saturday at 6, 8, and 10pm. © Frommer's



contact:

tel: 800/420-6822
fax: 407/849-0321, ext. 24
www.theverandabandb.com

location:

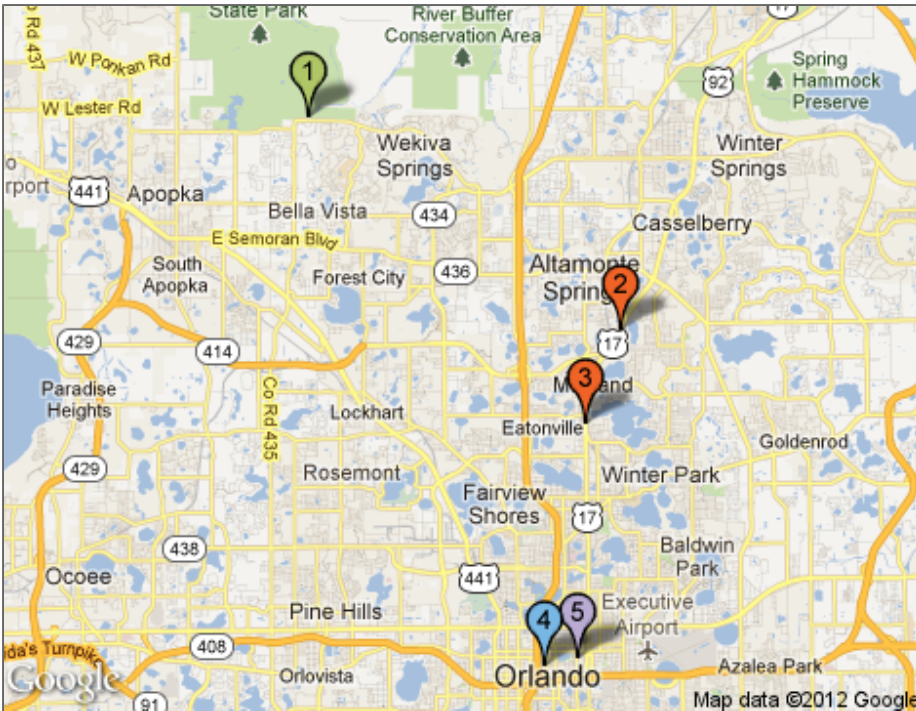
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Day 3 - Orlando



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contact:

tel: +1 407 884 2008

fax: +1 407 884 2039

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/wekiwasprings/default.cfm>

location:

1800 Wekiwa Circle
Apopka FL 32712

1 Wekiwa Springs State Park

DESCRIPTION: Florida's fresh water comes from underground springs that rush through the state's underlying limestone base, known as an aquifer. Often, those springs bubble to the surface. You can see how that works at this 7,000-acre park where the waters are crystal - clear and stay at a comfortable 72 degrees all year. At this scenic spot, the headwaters of the Wekiwa (pronounced Wahk-EYE-vah) River, you can hike, camp, fish, go canoeing and, if you're lucky, spot some wildlife.
© wcities.com



contact:

tel: 1 407 834 9872
fax: 1 407 834 6647
<http://www.enzos.com>

location:

1130 South U.S. Highway
17-92
Longwood FL 32750

hours:

M-Th, Sa 6p-10p, F 6p-10p,
11a-2:30p

2 Enzo's Restaurant On The Lake

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Reservations are a must!

DESCRIPTION: More than 25 years ago, this enchanting Italian villa on the shores of Lake Fairy was converted into an outstanding family run restaurant. The old house was divided into several dining rooms, creating an ambiance of time-honored elegance and homespun grace.

Come early to grab a glass of wine and enjoy it in their sculpture garden overlooking Lake Fairy. If you've timed it right, you might even be able to find a seat on the deck and watch the sun go down. This quiet and pretty area has been the site for many weddings and private parties. The food is simple, traditional, flavorful and homemade with only the freshest of ingredients. Start your meal with their famous Antipasti platter, a variety of house specialties. Then choose from pastas, seafood, meats, and poultry. Some dishes of note are The Dover Sole, the Spaghetti Alla Carbonara and the Penne Alla Vodka. Chances are, you won't be disappointed by anything you order here.

If you've saved room for dessert, you can enjoy conventional favorites such as tiramisu or Crème Brule, which is almost as smooth as the professional, polished service you'll be given by your server. The dining pace is slow and easy, leaving you lots of time to enjoy the cozy atmosphere. Valet parking is mandatory on busy nights and reservations are strongly recommended.

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contact:

tel: 407 629 0054
<http://www.enzian.org>

location:

1300 South Orlando Avenue
Maitland FL 32751

hours:

Show times vary; Call for
details

3 Enzian Theater

DESCRIPTION: This theater/restaurant gives Central Florida perhaps its only opportunity to dine and watch a film at the same time. While watching a movie, usually a small art film or foreign film, you can feast on such Continental fare as chicken-topped pasta or whole snapper. You'll also find a variety of snack foods on the menu, with chicken wings a favorite. The café only serves food during show times, which vary, and it also hosts an annual film festival. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: 407 999 2570
<http://www.backbooth.com/>

location:

37 West Pine Street
Orlando FL 32801

4 Back Booth

DESCRIPTION: There something for everyone at Back Booth. This place is known for its musical performances and events, which range from theme nights and karaoke nights to performances by live bands. The music played spans various genres including alternative rock, funk, soul, R & B, jazz, punk, and much more. The bar features a variety of wines, liquors and beers, including Maudite beer, a rare speciality. The



citysearch

bartenders are friendly as well as efficient. The ambience is vivacious and very conducive for making friends. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: 800/420-6822

fax: 407/849-0321, ext. 24

www.theverandabandb.com

location:

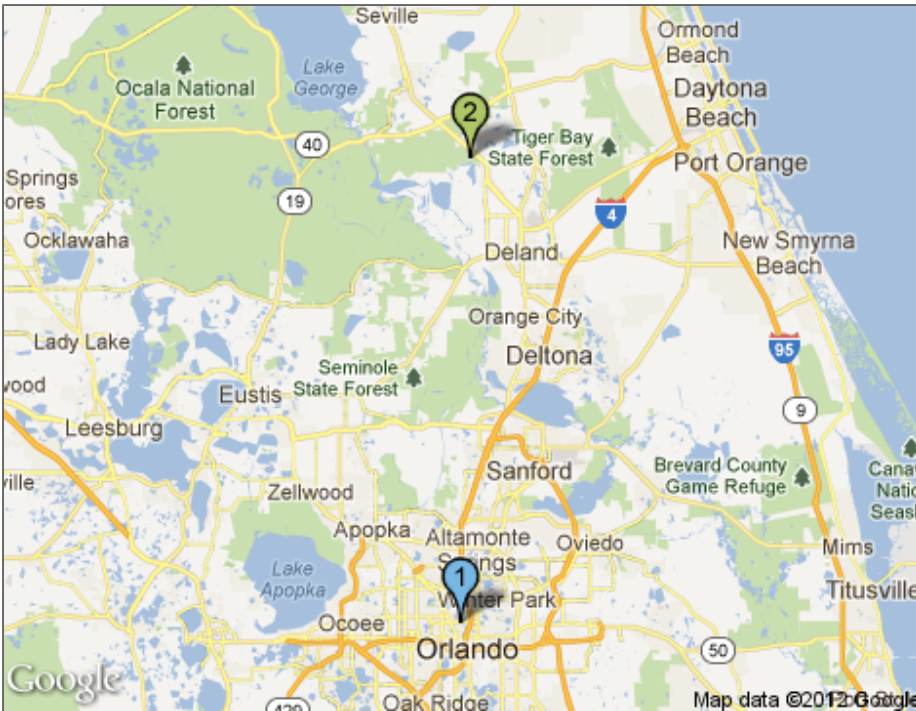
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Day 4 - Orlando



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Arrive at De Leon State Park hungry and head straight to the Old Spanish Sugar Mill for DIY pancakes. On your own personal grill, you'll be whipping up fluffy pancakes accompanied by the Mill's famous toppings. Afterwards, explore the park on land and in water before heading to College Park, another of Orlando's quaint downtown neighborhoods. With a Starbucks in hand, traverse through eclectic boutiques before settling in for a variety of small plates at Taste, College Park's artsy eatery. If the timing is right, you may even be able to take part in a cooking class at Truffles and Trifles next door. If not, head over to Harmoni Market for a glass of wine in a Tuscan setting.

contact:

tel: 407 835 0646
<http://www.tastecp.com/>

location:

717 West Smith Street in
College Park
Orlando FL 32804

hours:

M 11:30a-2:30p & 5:30p-10p,
Tu-F 11:30a-2:30p &
5:30p-2a, Sa 5:30p-2a

1 Taste Restaurant

DESCRIPTION: Spicy and juicy Grilled Chicken Swords or Jumbo Shrimp Swords are lip smacking varieties offered here. Just when you're thinking what to ask for and what not, here's a suggestion—ask for the Small Plate Menu. It's an assortment of a variety of dishes that they offer, a good way to have the most of it all. Wines and beers are stocked in plenty. Art lovers have something to watch out for too. Every Tuesday, there is an exhibition of local artists and there's complimentary wine served as well! © wcities.com



citysearch

contact:

fax: 904-985-4212

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/deleonsprings/>

location:

FL 32130

2 De Leon Springs Hiking Trails

DESCRIPTION: Beginning on the north side of the park along an old road, visitors will find two trails through diverse woodland of elm, live oak, sweet gum, and pignut hickory. As a gateway to the hiking trails, an ancient bald cypress is just a short distance off the old road. The park entrance station offers a trail map detailing the two routes, which provide over six miles of pathway where visitors can see a variety of plant life including saw palmettos and huge ferns. Visitors to the area are mostly attracted to the fabulous 72-degree springs, the large picnic and play areas, the tranquil Spring Garden, and even the pancake restaurant. Fishing, diving and paddleboating are additional recreations. A small visitor center has limited hours. Directions to Se Deon State Park: Take US Hwy 17 North from Deland for approximately six miles, following the State Park signs. Turn left onto Ponce DeLeon Blvd and you will travel approximately one mile to the entrance to DeLeon Springs State Park.



by Kristen Manieri

Orlando Snapshot

Local Info

Think of Orlando and the picture of an iconic, cheerful mouse is sure to come to mind. Disney World not only sprawls across hundreds of acres of land in Lake Buena Vista, located in Orlando's southwest, its impact on Orlando tourism has been even more sweeping. If not for the explosion of Disney World, perhaps neighboring megaparks like Universal Studios and SeaWorld may never have been born.

No doubt, most vacationers come to Orlando for the theme parks, and for good reason. There is more family fun packed into every square inch of Orlando than possibly anywhere else on the planet. From heart-dropping roller coasters to unforgettable live shows, Orlando's expansive parks are worth every penny of their admission price. Orlando offers an easy vacation for families- it's easy to get around, easy to find something to do, and easy to fly in and out of.

The standard week-long vacation is not even close to enough time to truly experience Orlando. A family could spend their entire stay within Disney World and still would only uncover a fraction of the delightful diversions available. Besides days spent inside Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Animal Kingdom, and the recently renamed Hollywood Studios (formerly MGM Studios), visitors can also book themed dinners with beloved characters, rent watercraft for

traversing Disney's inner waterways, visit two Disney water parks, and take behind-the-scene tours... and this still would only scratch Disney's surface. You wouldn't want to miss shopping and dining at Downtown Disney, as well as shows like Cirque du Soleil's La Nouba and the House of Blues's Gospel Brunch.

Those who manage to break from Disney's tender grip are quickly swallowed up at Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure. These two parks are packed with spectacular rides as well as a huge entertainment, shopping and dining complex known as CityWalk. And the fun doesn't stop there.

Yet, there is life beyond the theme parks. While it's difficult to compete with the color and gusto of Disney and its neighbors, there's actually a lot happening outside of the theme park zone. Downtown's walkable streets offer a robust dining and nightlife scene as well as some unique boutiques and a handful of theaters and museums.

When the locals grow weary of the theme parks, which they quickly do, they're more likely to be found strolling around Lake Eola Park that boasts the famed fountain and amphitheater. Here you'll find a few popular eateries hugging its shores, a place to rent swan boats, and an awesome Sunday farmer's market crowded with downtown hipsters enjoying its beer garden and live bands.

Winter Park, with its posh boutiques, million-dollar homes, and chic cafes and restaurants is also a superb spot for an afternoon of strolling, shopping and snacking. Even non-shoppers love Winter Park thanks to its museums, scenic boat tours, and well-manicured park spaces.

Wherever you spend your time during your Orlando visit, you'll likely describe Orlando locals as friendly and unpretentious. Orlando isn't a big city like New York or LA, and it knows it. Sure, Orlando people glam it up at nightclubs and can spend wads of cash like any big city slicker, but they're not a snobby bunch. They're used to sharing their space with visitors and can be amiable and obliging if you're ever in need of a local tip.

Besides theme parks, I-Drive, and a handful of quaint urban corridors, the beach is just over an hour away. Cocoa and New Smyrna are closest and both are great for families, couples, and singles. Drive an extra hour west and you'll be at the Gulf. In fact, Orlando is one of the best starting off points for any Florida-exploring vacation. The airport is a direct flight from every major city in North America and there is so much more to see within a two to three hour drive of this great city.

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