



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Thomas Jung

The Best Week in Orlando

Lake Buena Vista, Orlando, Kissimmee, 7 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: You could spend a month in Orlando and still not see and do everything. That being said, if you've got a week to tackle this magical play land, you'll want to hit the best and most exciting spots. For the first half of the week, stay at one of the Disney hotels. This will save you tons of travel time to and from the parks so that you can maximize the amount of time you can spend at Disney World. Have dinner at your hotel or take the shuttle over to Downtown Disney. There are tons of options for dining and snacking there. Plus, it's just a cool place to stroll around. Then, as you switch over to SeaWorld, Discovery Cove and Universal, you'll want to move to a hotel close to I-Drive. Like Downtown Disney, you'll find that Pointe Orlando on I-Drive offers a good concentration of restaurants, shops and bars so you can stroll around and choose the best option for your family. There's lots of parking there and it's close to many of the other I-Drive attractions. This is a non-stop week and you'll probably need a vacation after this vacation. But when you want to see all the best that Orlando has to offer, this go-go pace is worth the effort.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1

DAY NOTE: On your first day, spend as much time as possible at your resort since you probably won't be seeing much of it in the days to come. There are a handful of restaurants at the Caribbean Beach Resort or you can head over to Downtown Disney where you'll find a dozen more great eateries. I suggest Bongo Bongo's for great Cuban food and House of Blues for good old American fare. Both restaurants are a stone's throw from the grandiose La Nouba tent where you'll see an unforgettable Cirque show. Afterwards, a live band will likely be playing at House of Blue's 'Front Porch Bar'. Pull up a chair and enjoy the scene.

Day 2

DAY NOTE: Get ready for a long day starting at your choice of one of four Disney theme parks. Lots of people are flocking to Hollywood Studios (formerly MGM) to check out the new American Idol show. Each day the crowd chooses a new winner from a group of real-life contestants. Winners get a free pass to try out for the network show. Put your feet up for an hour around your resort pool before journeying over to Downtown Disney again for a colorful dinner at the Rainforest Cafe followed by a movie at the AMC Theater.

Day 3

DAY NOTE: Spend your second day at Epcot. Munch your way around the world at the International Showcase. Have dinner surrounded by sharks at the Living Seas Pavilion. Stay late to see the best fireworks show - Epcot Illuminations lights up the sky each night at 9 or 9:30pm.

Day 4 - Kissimmee, Orlando, Lake Buena Vista

DAY NOTE: You may want to spend another day at Disney or perhaps it's time for something different. In that case, check out one of Orlando's stupendous water parks either at Disney or on I-Drive. Call it an early day so you've got time to check into the Nickelodeon Hotel (make sure to check out the 'slime' schedule) and then head out to the Medieval Times Dinner Show where

you'll spend the evening eating with your hands and cheering on your honorable knight.



Medieval Times

An unusual knight out



Wet 'n Wild

Beat the Heat



Nickelodeon Family Suites Resort by Holiday Inn

Seven suite Styles

Day 5 - Orlando, Lake Buena Vista

DAY NOTE: Your day at Discovery Cove will likely be your most memorable thanks to the up-close encounters you'll experience with dolphins, ray, even white tailed deer. DC takes care of every detail, even providing guests with complementary sunscreen and their own personal snorkel. Eat and drink to your heart's delight... everything is included with admission. Get there when it opens and stay until it closes - you won't want to miss a second of your Discovery Cove Day. Top the day off with your most memorable meal at Melting Pot where mouthwatering fondues are cooked table side. Be sure to save room for dessert - several chocolate fondues await.



Discovery Cove

Swim in tranquil waters among dolphins, tropical fish, and rays



The Melting Pot

Melting cheese and more



Nickelodeon Family Suites Resort by Holiday Inn

Seven suite Styles

Day 6 - Orlando, Lake Buena Vista

DAY NOTE: You receive a free pass to SeaWorld with your admission to Discovery Cove so you might as well use it right away. Expect great shows, lots of opportunities to feed the animals, and the new Mantra ride, opening Spring '09. At night, head over to Pointe Orlando, a few miles from SeaWorld (on I-Drive) where you'll find several restaurants (such as Oceanaire and my favorite Italian spot, Maggiano's). There's also a movie theater with an IMAX, and a handful of bars including the new

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BB King eatery featuring a live, 11-person band every night. Check out the restaurants, bars, and shops of Pointe Orlando at www.pointeorlando.com. If you still have the energy, Howl at the Moon's dueling piano bar is an excellent spot to sing what's left of the night away. The live musicians provide some of the best entertainment around and constantly engage the rowdy crowd.



The Groove

Upscale, themed nightclub



SeaWorld Orlando

Dolphin shows, sea lions, and rides at Shamu's theme park



The Oceanaire Seafood Room

Fresh seafood from around the world



Howl at the Moon

Pucker up and howl



Nickelodeon Family Suites Resort by Holiday Inn

Seven suite Styles

Day 7 - Orlando

DAY NOTE: Spend your last day at Universal or Islands of Adventure (or both). If it's not too crowded, tackling both parks is totally do-able, especially if you buy an express pass. Pass through CityWalk at day's end to peruse a bevy of dinner options from seafood (Bubba Gump) to Caribbean (Jimmy Buffett's) to Jamaican (Bob Marley's). There's truly something for every taste. For \$21.95 you can opt for the Meal and a Movie deal which gets you an entree at one of several eateries plus a movie ticket at the theater at CityWalk. You might also want to purchase a party pass which will allow you to barhop your way through this nightlife Mecca. Red Coconut Club, with its Top 40 dance floor and generous pours, is my favorite when I feel like dancing. Otherwise, you'll find me at Rising Star, the coolest karaoke bar in Orlando thanks to the live band that performs with the uninhibited songbirds that take the stage.



Universal Studios Florida

Dive into movie land with spectacular rides, shows, and real-life sets.



Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville

A song with supper

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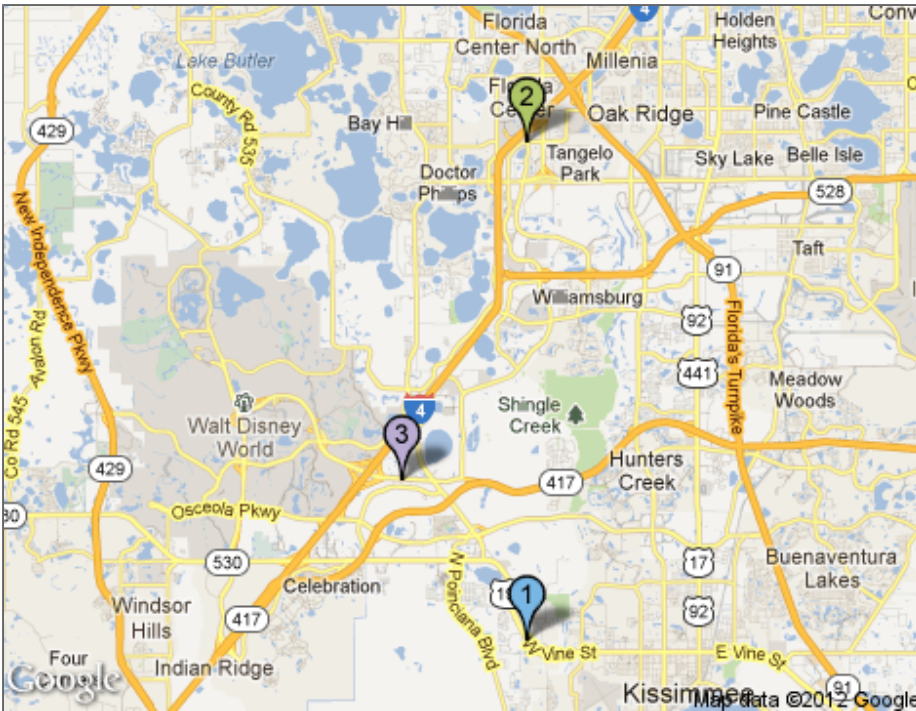
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contact:

tel: 888/935-6878

fax: +1 407 396 2167

www.medievaltimes.com

location:

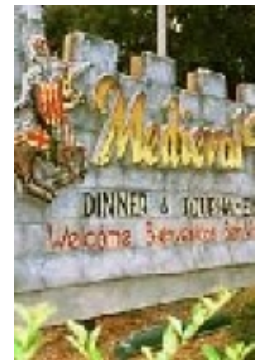
4510 W. Irlo Bronson
Memorial Hwy
Kissimmee FL 34746

hours:

Call for details

1 Medieval Times

DESCRIPTION: Orlando has one of the nine Medieval Times shows in North America, and this is the show my kids rate number one in town. Inside, guests gorge themselves on barbecued spareribs, herb-roasted chicken, soup, garlic bread, potatoes, dessert, and beverages including beer. Vegetarian offerings include a stuffed mushroom cap with roasted veggies and a hummus dip. But because this is the 11th century, you eat with your fingers from metal plates while knights mounted on Andalusian horses run around the arena, jousting and clanging to please the fair ladies. Arrive 90 minutes early for good seats and to see the Medieval Village, a re-created Middle Ages settlement. The storyline, "Knights of the Realm," adds a touch of romance between one of the knights and a princess to the action. Show times vary, but there is at least one performance nightly (7:30pm), two during peak seasons (6:30 and 8:30pm). © Frommer's



contact:

tel: 800/992-9453
fax: +1 407 363 1147
www.wetnwild.com

location:

6200 International Dr
Orlando FL 32819

hours:

Hours vary seasonally, but the park usually is open at least 10am-5pm daily, often later, weather permitting (it's one of the few water parks open year-round)

2 Wet 'n Wild

DESCRIPTION: Who knew people came in so many shapes and sizes? Stacked or stubby, terribly tan or not, all kinds come here, so there's no reason to be bashful about squeezing into a bathing suit and going out in public. The 25-acre Wet 'n Wild is America's third most popular water park (behind Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon, respectively). In 2007, **Brain Wash**, a multiperson tube ride with a 53-foot drop, areas of complete darkness, and high-tech special effects that includes video projection and special lighting was added to the lineup of thrills. **Disco H20**, an enclosed flume ride where a four-passenger raft sends you flying through the sights and sounds of the '70s, complete with mirrored lights and disco tunes blasting in the background, debuted in 2005. Other options include the **Flyer**, a six-story four-passenger toboggan run through 450 feet of banked curves; the **Surge**, which is one of the longest (580 ft. of curves) and fastest multipassenger tube rides in the Southeast; and **Black Hole**, a two-person spaceship-style raft that makes a 500-foot twisting, turning voyage through darkness (all three rides require that children 36-48 in. tall be accompanied by an adult). You can also ride the **Knee Ski**, a cable-operated half-mile knee-boarding course that's open in warm-weather months only (56-in. height minimum); **Der Stuka**, a six-story, free-fall speed slide; and **Mach 5**, which has a trio of twisting, turning flumes, among other thrillers. The park also has a large kids' area with miniversions of the big rides. If you enjoy the water, plan on spending a full day here. **Note:** In addition to the admission prices, Wet 'n Wild is part of the multiday **FlexTicket package** that includes admission to Universal Orlando (which owns this attraction), SeaWorld, and Busch Gardens in Tampa. © Frommer's



wcities

contact:

tel: 877/387-5437
fax: 407/387-1489
www.nickhotel.com

location:

14500 Continental Gateway
Lake Buena Vista FL 32821

3 Nickelodeon Family Suites Resort by Holiday Inn

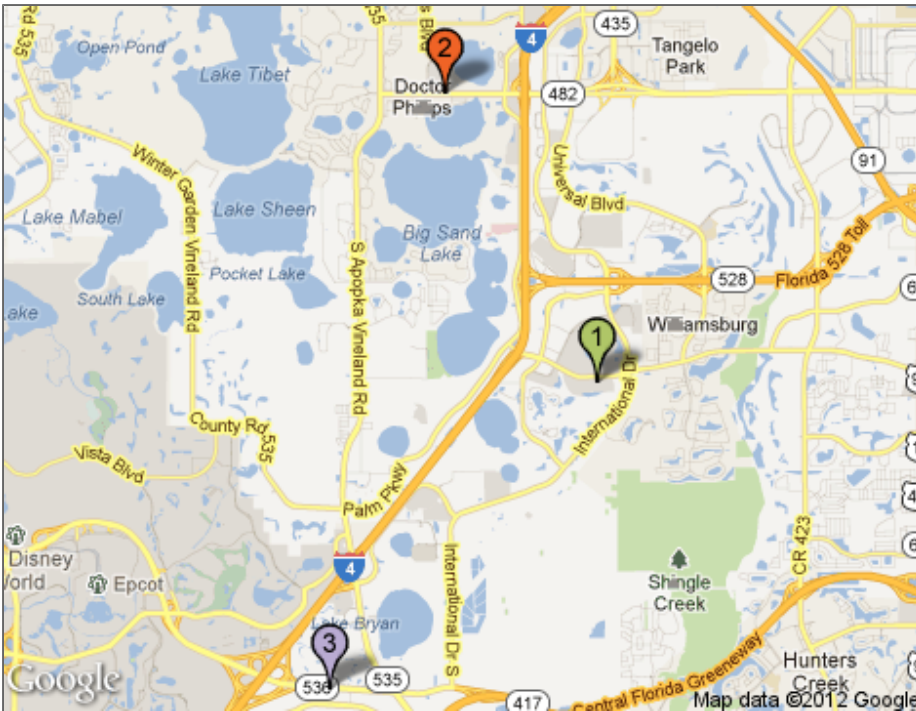
DESCRIPTION: This all-suite property, a former Holiday Inn transformed into the first ever Nickelodeon-branded resort, is one of the best properties in the Orlando area for families. Its two-bedroom Kid Suites feature a second bedroom for the kids with bunk or twin beds, kitchenettes, and a pullout sofa in the living area. Three-bedroom suites are also available and include additional space, a second bathroom, a full kitchen, upgraded amenities, and a trendy decor. One and two-bedroom suites are themed with Nickelodeon colors; characters adorn the kid's rooms. An all-new lobby and mall area, filled with restaurants, an arcade, shops, a temporary tattoo and hair-wrap station (additional fees apply), and nightly entertainment (including Studio Nick), have been added. The resort's two pool areas (with lots of lifeguards) are veritable water parks, with extensive multilevel water slides, flumes, climbing nets, and water jets. Activities are scheduled poolside (including Slime Time), and there are also a wide variety of recreational options, including a small minigolf course, playgrounds, and sand play areas. Required wristbands ensure that only resort guests can access the area. "Nick After Dark," an evening supervised



Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon Family Suites Resort by Holiday Inn

activity program for kids ages 5 to 12, allows parents to take a night off. A daily character breakfast (SpongeBob SquarePants, Dora, and the Fairly Odd Parents oversaw things when I was last there) is offered in addition to the hotel's regular breakfast buffet (at the latter, kids eat free with paying adults). The only downside is that the resort's incredible popularity translates to an incredibly crowded, often overwhelming experience -- combine this with a day at the theme parks and parents may be in need of a vacation from their vacation. Discounted rates are available for stays on off-peak nights and at select times throughout the year. **Facilities:** Restaurant; lounge; several fast-food counters; 2 water park pools; minigolf; fitness center; 2 Jacuzzis; 3 outdoor Ping-Pong tables; 2 shuffleboard courts; game room; supervised activity center for ages 4-12 (fee); kids activities; tour desk; free shuttle to Disney and non-Disney parks; minimart; coin-op washers and dryers In room: A/C, TV/ VCR w/pay movies, dataport, free high-speed Internet access, full kitchen (select suites), fridge, microwave, coffeemaker, hair dryer, iron, safe, Nintendo (in some rooms). © Frommer's

Day 5 - Orlando, Lake Buena Vista



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Your day at Discovery Cove will likely be your most memorable thanks to the up-close encounters you'll experience with dolphins, ray, even white tailed deer. DC takes care of every detail, even providing guests with complementary sunscreen and their own personal snorkel. Eat and drink to your heart's delight... everything is included with admission. Get there when it opens and stay until it closes - you won't want to miss a second of your Discovery Cove Day. Top the day off with your most memorable meal at Melting Pot where mouthwatering fondues are cooked table side. Be sure to save room for dessert - several chocolate fondues await.

contact:
tel: +1 407 370 1280
<http://www.discoverycove.com>

location:
6000 Discovery Cove Way
Orlando FL 32821

1 Discovery Cove

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The park stays open late in the summer offering a twilight rate that includes dinner.

DESCRIPTION: In July of 2000, Discovery Cove opened its gates and began providing a unique theme park experience that is nothing short of extraordinary. With a maximum of 1,000 guests per day, the park has managed to create an intimate feel – more like you're visiting a swanky resort in the Caribbean than visiting a theme park in the middle of Orlando. The admission price, though hefty, includes all of your needs... towels, wet suits, lockers, snorkels, masks, sun tan lotion, souvenir photos and parking. Meals and snacks are included as well (and not just hot dogs and hamburgers either). You'll start the day with a continental breakfast (pastries, muffins, fresh fruit, juices and coffee). You can have a hamburger for lunch if you'd like, but Discovery Cove also offers such items as grilled salmon and pasta



by Kristen Manieri

primavera. Unlimited snacks such as chips, pretzels, nachos, ice cream and smoothies are available all day. You can also enjoy as much bottled water, soda, beer, and cappuccinos as you like.

If you've booked yourselves into the Dolphin Encounter, the friendly concierge will schedule your time in the Dolphin Lagoon when you arrive. During the 30-minute encounter, you and 5-7 other guests will wade into shallow water and get up close and personal with a very sociable and playful Atlantic Bottlenose Dolphin. Your trainer will guide the dolphin through a series of activities, allowing you to touch and instruct the dolphin. You'll also be able to experience a dorsal tow ride. For dolphin lovers, the extra admission price to include this encounter is definitely worth it.

When you arrive, you'll also want to check on the feeding times at Ray Lagoon so you can make sure to schedule that into your day. You can interact with dozens of rays of all sizes, some up to four feet in diameter. It's an amazing experience to be amongst these gentle and graceful creatures. The Coral Reef is where you'll really get to test your snorkeling skills as you float along amongst the hundreds of brilliantly colored tropical fish and rays. Make sure you find the shark encounter. Don't worry... they're behind thick glass.

You'll want to make several trips down the warm Tropical River, drifting in the slight current, under waterfalls, and through an underwater cave. The river also takes you through the Aviary, where you can hop out of the water and interact with over 250 exotic birds, none of which are caged. Having a toucan land on your arm is an interesting experience. Discovery Cove's beach is a great feature as well. Along the huge expanse of white, sugary sand, you'll find hammocks, umbrellas, and cabanas for your use. When all the swimming and snorkeling leaves you exhausted, grab a beach lounger and have a nap.

To avoid disappointment, reservations are a must!

© NileGuide

contact:

tel: 1 407 903-1100

<http://www.meltingpot.com>

location:

7549 West Sand Lake Rd
Orlando FL 32819

hours:

Mon-Thu 5pm-10pm Fri
5pm-11pm Sat 4pm-11pm
Sun 4pm-10pm

2 The Melting Pot

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

It takes about 2 hours to enjoy the full 4-course fondue dining experience so plan to stick around!

DESCRIPTION: The Melting Pot is just perfect for a first date, or an alternative to the stuffy after-business dinner. Roll up your sleeves, order a glass of wine or a bottle of beer and prepare to work for your dinner. Start off with a pot of cheese fondue mixed to perfection right at your table. Next opt for one of their delicious salads or move onto the main course. The protein offerings are vast including salmon, filet, chicken, shrimp, pork tenderloin and so much more. Each entree is presented with a slew of dipping sauces allowing each guest to create their own combinations to amp up the flavor. Sizzling oil cooks proteins to perfection, and for the health conscious, the restaurant



citysearch

offers a just-as-tasty boiling broth. If you can find room after an extravagant meal, make sure to try the chocolate fondue. There's nothing like hot melted chocolate on fresh fruits to cap off a wonderful meal!

© NileGuide

contact:

tel: 877/387-5437

fax: 407/387-1489

www.nickhotel.com

location:

14500 Continental Gateway

Lake Buena Vista FL 32821

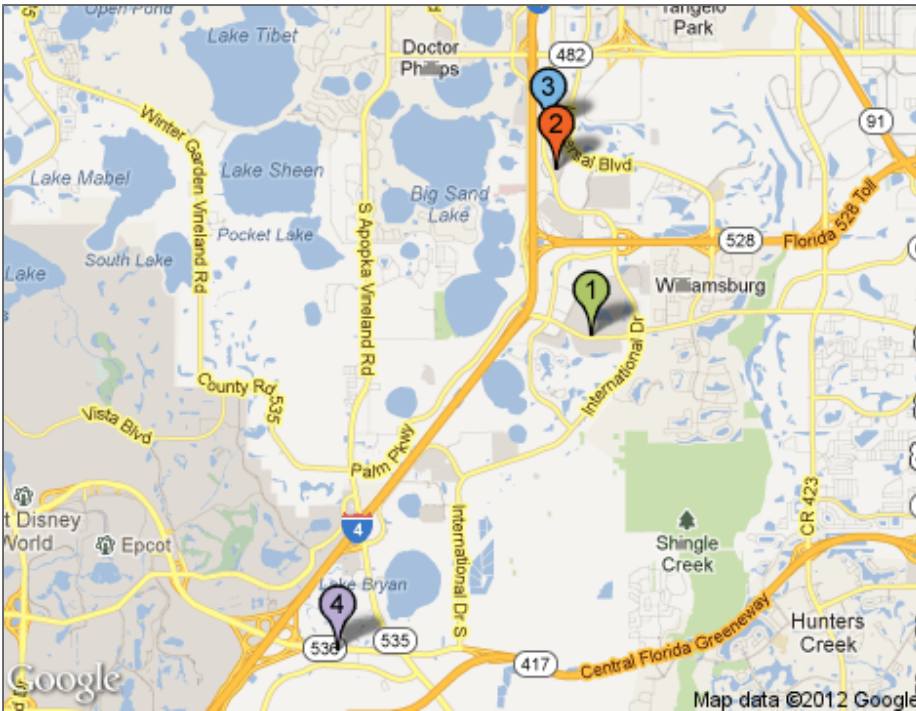
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Photo courtesy of Nickelodeon Family Suites Resort by Holiday Inn

Day 6 - Orlando, Lake Buena Vista



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: You receive a free pass to SeaWorld with your admission to Discovery Cove so you might as well use it right away. Expect great shows, lots of opportunities to feed the animals, and the new Mantra ride, opening Spring '09. At night, head over to Pointe Orlando, a few miles from SeaWorld (on I-Drive) where you'll find several restaurants (such as Oceanaire and my favorite Italian spot, Maggiano's). There's also a movie theater with an IMAX, and a handful of bars including the new BB King eatery featuring a live, 11-person band every night. Check out the restaurants, bars, and shops of Pointe Orlando at www.pointeorlando.com. If you still have the energy, Howl at the Moon's dueling piano bar is an excellent spot to sing what's left of the night away. The live musicians provide some of the best entertainment around and constantly engage the rowdy crowd.

contact:
tel: +1 407 351 3600
<http://www.seaworld.com/>

location:
7007 Sea World Drive
Orlando FL 32821

1 SeaWorld Orlando

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Lots of places to have a picnic if you want to bring in your own lunch

DESCRIPTION: One of the first theme parks to open in Orlando, SeaWorld has been operating here for more than 30 years. The 200 acres of attractions and animal shows make this a perennial favorite with Florida visitors. Many new attractions and rides have been added to the original fun including a laser-fireworks-water extravaganza and high-tech thrill rides. © wcities.com



by Kristen Manieri

contact:
tel: 1 407 363-4801
<http://www.theoceanaire.com>

location:
9101 International Drive
Orlando FL 32819

hours:
Dinner: Sunday - Thursday:
5:00pm -10:00pm Friday -
Saturday: 5:00pm -11:00pm

2 The Oceanaire Seafood Room

DESCRIPTION: From the moment you enter the Oceanaire on International Drive you feel a sense of place and time akin to a classic 1930s ocean liner. No detail is left to chance. From cocktails in the lounge, to the raw oyster bar, to a main course of ultra-fresh fish, a rendezvous at the Oceanaire is the perfect occasion to indulge your unfettered senses. The seafood is flown in daily from around the world. They source only top-of-the-catch fish from the world's most reputable suppliers. Since the menu is based entirely on market availability, selections change by the day - in some cases, even by the hour. Choose your fancy prepared to your liking: simply grilled or broiled, sauteed, steamed or even fried. Served with the famous fresh-baked sourdough bread, and offered with a wine list as deep as the sea, it's no wonder people come here to be spoiled. © NileGuide



citysearch

contact:
tel: 407 354 5999
fax: 407 354 5992
http://www.howlatthemoon.com/orlando_tonight.html

location:
8815 International Drive
Orlando FL 32819

hours:
M-Th 7p-2a, F 5p-2a, Sa
6p-2a, Su 7p-2a

3 Howl at the Moon

DESCRIPTION: After creating waves in Cincinnati, this nightclub has been doing the same in Orlando. A regular haunt for locals since its inception, it's the tunes played on the two centerstage pianos that keep guests highly entertained. A 'Showtime' special is announced every hour, in which employees and guests alike dance to the tunes of popular television shows and commercial jingles. Take your pick from the very innovative drinks menu - while the Sour Apple Martini will make you "pucker up and howl", the Electric Lemonade is "the most ELECTRIFYING cocktail in nightlife entertainment". So come on down and get ready to howl! © wcities.com



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tel: 877/387-5437
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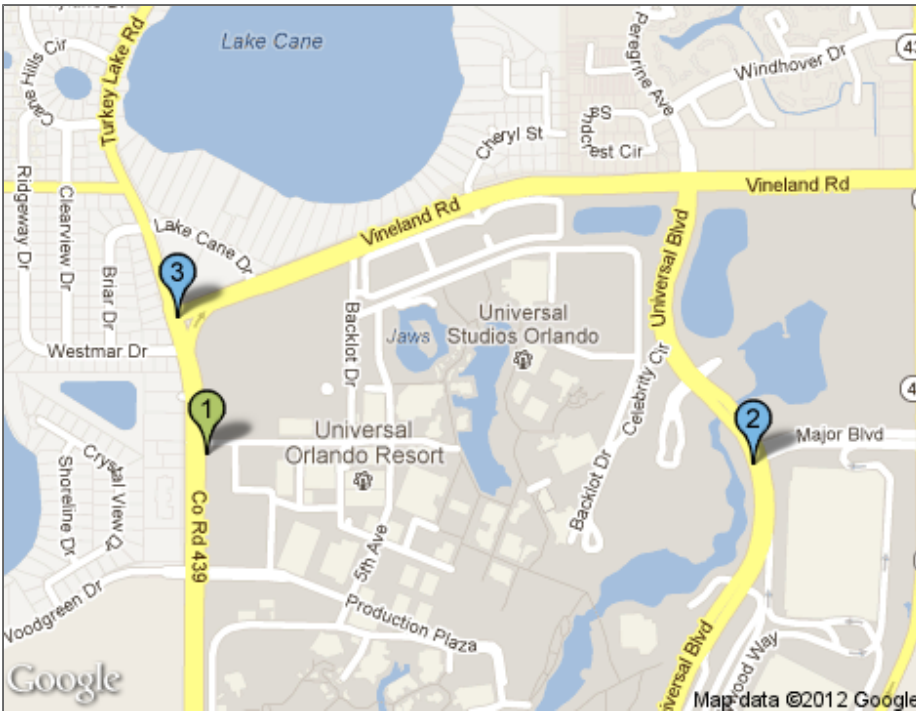
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contact:

tel: +1 407 363 8000

<http://www.universalorlando.com>

location:

1000 Universal Studios Plaza
Orlando FL 32809

1 Universal Studios Florida

DESCRIPTION: The world's favorite films and film stars come to life here, and 40 amazing and amusing rides, shows and attractions await. A virtual interactive Terminator 2:3-D adventure has its own set of thrills, as does an encounter with Jaws, a trip Back to the Future, and a voyage beyond the stars in an E.T. Adventure. Special VIP tours are available by pre-arrangement. © wcities.com



by Kristen Manieri

contact:

tel: 407 224 2155
<http://margaritavilleorlando.com/>

location:

6000 Universal Boulevard
Orlando FL 32819

hours:

Daily 11a-11p

2 Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville

DESCRIPTION: It's a long way to Key West, but you can make the trip without ever leaving Central Florida with a stop at this restaurant that evokes the spirit of the Keys where singer Jimmy Buffet got his start. Themed to resemble a snazzy version of favored Key West haunts, the restaurant offers such Keys and Caribbean favorites as conch fritters, jambalaya and that all-time favorite key lime pie. There's a full bar here and, truth be known, that's the destination of most of those who stop in here. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:

tel: 407 224 2165
fax: 407 224 8290
<http://www.universalorlando.com/citywalk/entertainment.html>

location:

6000 Universal Boulevard
Orlando FL 32819

hours:

Daily 9p-2a

3 The Groove

DESCRIPTION: Part of what is now an impressive array of nightlife opportunities at Universal Studios, this bar gets groovin' with five themed rooms designed to appeal to the widest possible variety of partygoers. Dance areas represent various historic musical eras ranging from a vaudeville stage to a roaring 20s dancehall, a 1960s rock 'n roll haven, a disco and a high-tech futuristic scene. Specialty drinks are offered in each area, and live bands are often on the bill. With these and several quiet areas tucked away in this big complex, this spot can appeal to everyone, from those who want to party to those who just want to kick back for a quiet drink and keep their options open. © wcities.com



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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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