

Top 10 Hidden Gems

Orlando, 3 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: These Orlando hidden gems are easily missed amongst mega giants like Disney and Universal, but they are no less visit worthy. Wander slightly off Orlando's well beaten path and you'll find places that have, until now, remained our best kept secrets.



My List

contact:

tel: (407) 770-1607,(407)

894-1981

http://www.farrisandfosters.co

m/

location:

4875 New Broad Street Orlando FL 32814



Farris & Foster's Fine Chocolates

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Remember, the first pound of chocolate you create to take home is included in the price. Anything after that is extra and it's easy to go over, so weigh your creations often.

DESCRIPTION: Besides being a great place to buy gourmet chocolate, this working chocolate factory in Baldwin Park offers nightly chocolate parties that give visitors the opportunity to to take over the factory to create and sample decadent chocolate treats. Upon your arrival, guests are outfitted with an apron and

chef's hat and then a friendly and gregarious guide gives an overview of supplies, ideas for types of chocolates to make, and a quick lesson in chocolate making. Guests are then set loose in the factory to create the pound of chocolate they'll be taking away with them.

Make such treats as truffles, peanut butter cups, and chocolate dipped strawberries, while dipping anything in chocolate: pretzels, biscotti,marshmallows, cookies, and rice crispy squares. Each station is given its own sampling plate for you to nibble at as you go. Farris and Foster's also does a couple's date night at 9pm on Friday and Saturday evenings - which makes for a superb after-dinner dessert experience. Try Baldwin Parks Colibri Mexican Cuisine. © NileGuide



editor

contact:

tel: (407) 924-3375 http://www.adventuresinflorid a.com/

location:

2912 East Marks Street Orlando, Florida 32803 FL 32803



Adventures In Florida

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The monthly Full Moon Paddle is awesome

DESCRIPTION: From short jaunts in local lakes to week-long expeditions through the Everglades, Adventures in Florida has the staff, the gear, and the know-how to provide the exact kayak adventure you seek. Local day trips include places such as Wekiwa Springs and the Econlockatchee River. Equipment and instruction are provided.

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by Kristen Manieri

contact:

tel: +1 321 558 2878 http://www.plazacinemacafe.c om/

location:

155 South Orange Avenue Orlando FL 32801

hours:



Plaza Cinema Cafe

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Parking is free when you show your ticket stub (up to three hours)

DESCRIPTION: Plaza Cinema Café is downtown Orlando's first movie complex in many decades. It is located in the heart



Photo courtesy of Plaza Cinema Cafe



Su to Sa from 12:30 PM to 09:45 PM

of downtown and is more than your average movie theater. It boasts large, comfy chairs with connected small tables and drink holders to put every thing on. There are 12 screens showing the latest movies, and two are 21 and older only. Plaza Cinema Café has two wine bars that also serve beer and overlook Orange Avenue below, while the snacks offered are more than the typical popcorn and candy. Choose from a number of American favorites including appetizers, entrees and desserts. It is also scheduled to host a number of events for special occasions. - Diane Dilov-Schultheis © wcities.com

contact:

tel: (407) 481-8485 http://www.eoinn.com

location:

227 N Eola Dr Orlando FL 32801



Eo Inn & Urban Spa

DESCRIPTION: The EO Inn & Urban Spa, a small boutique property with only 17 deluxe suites, is a hidden gem tucked inside downtown Orlando's poshest neighbored, Thornton Park. Overlooking Lake Eola and located minutes from a myriad of fabulous downtown eateries, EO Inn also boasts a decadent spa where guests are perfectly pampered. One of the inn's best features is its rooftop terrace featuring a bubbling jacuzzi and private sundeck.

It's the perfect setting for conducting business in style or hosting visits from out-of-town guests. Numerous options for relaxation include, lakeside walks, outdoor theater, concerts, fine dining, sporting events, world-class attractions or a visit to our new Spa.

The elegant, understated interiors feature many personal touches. All rooms are "smart-wired", with the latest technology necessary to conduct business on a 24-hour basis. Select rooms offer lake views, while others overlook the lushly landscaped grounds of Lake Eola park and the downtown skyline. Amenities include a rooftop terrace with whirlpool, our new day spa facility, and a nationally renowned bakery-cafe, Panera Bread. The EO Inn is more than a place to stay. It's a tranquil retreat... a haven away from home.



Hotels.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



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,



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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.

© NileGuide

contact:

tel: 407-862-1500 http://www.wekivaisland.com/

location:

1014 Miami Springs Rd. Orlando FL 32779



Wekiva Island

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

check the website ahead of time to see if there are any cool events planned

DESCRIPTION: Wekiva River is an outdoor oasis with tons of perks. Rent kayaks or canoes to head out on the pristine Wekiva River, play volleyball or horseshoes, join in on a guided excursion, or simply kick back and sip a beer while you take in the picturesque scene. Riverside cabanas, decked out with cozy couches and Adirondack chairs, are available for rent. Live music is scheduled most weekend evening.

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by Kristen Manieri

contact:

tel: +1 407 566 2526 http://www.thecelebrationtown tavern.com/

location:

721 Front Street Celebration FL 34747

hours:

Mo to Sa from 11:00 AM to 10:00 PM,Su from 01:00 PM to 10:00 PM



Celebration Town Tavern

DESCRIPTION: Find this friendly tavern in the heart of the Celebration area just a little south and west of Orlando. Step inside and feel like you are far away from central Florida in an authentic New England tavern. Celebration Town Tavern is both a restaurant and tavern offering a family-friendly, welcoming atmosphere in nautical surroundings. Choose from menu selections such as sandwiches, burgers, appetizers, soups (clam chowder), salads and fresh tasty specials and seafood items like Maine lobster roll, Massachusetts's clams, the meatloaf stacker and fish 'n' chips. Choose from indoor, lounge or outside seating. Drink selections consist of beer, wine and specialty drinks from the fully stocked bar. - Diane Dilov-Schultheis © wcities.com



editor



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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 likeUniversal Studios andSeaWorld 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 behindthe-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 likeCirque 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 aroundLake 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 andNew 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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History

Until the 1970's, Central Florida was known mainly for agriculture. A hots spot for the cattle and citrus industry, the area consisted of hundreds of acres of farmland surrounding a tiny downtown.

All that changed in 1971 when Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom was born. In 1973, SeaWorld came on the scene and in 1990,

Universal flung open its gates. These three theme parks helped put Orlando on the map as the premier vacation destination for families. Nearly four decades later, Orlando now boasts over a hundred attractions, 5,300 restaurants and 112,000 hotel rooms.

© NileGuide

Hotel Insights

There are more than 1120,000 hotel rooms and suites in Orlando just waiting to provide you with everything from a comfy bed to your own personal butler... depending on your price range. Hundreds of efficiency condos, villas, palatial resorts, boutique inns and high-rise hotels provide ample hospitality for every type of traveler on any sort of budget.

Walt Disney World

Disney offers a wide range of room options which makes it easy for all families to stay close to the number one reason most people visit Orlando in the first place... the Disney theme parks. You can camp at the Fort Wilderness Campground or really luxe it up at the ultra-opulentDisney's Coronado Springs Resort.

Of course, you don't have to stay at a Disney resort to get close to the parks. Located inside Disney but technically not a 'Disney' hotel, theHilton in the Walt Disney World Resort is just a five-minute walk from Downtown Disney. Nearby, theFairfield Inn Orlando Lake Buena Vista in the Marriott Village is an Official Walt Disney World Good Neighbor hotel.

Kissimmee

Kissimmee hotels tend to by much cheaper than Disney hotels and are conveniently located close to Disney World and a bevy of other tourist attractions and dinner shows. The Comfort Suites Kissimmee has two nice pools and Old Town, an easy attraction to hit on a relaxing day, is right next door.

International Drive

I-Drive caters to budget-minded families as well as budget-busting executives attending conferences at the nearby Orange County Convention Center. Those with money to burn will love the JW Marriott Orlando Grande Lakes and the Rosen Centre Hotel. Rather spend your cash at the theme parks? Check out Embassy Suites Orlando



Orlando Snapshot continued

International Drive Convention Center where you'll get a lot of space for not a lot money.

Downtown

Downtown you'll find a handful of quaint urban inns such as the EO Inn and The Veranda Bed and Breakfast. Of course, there are also a couple of chain hotels such as Marriott Orlando Downtown. The downtown favorite is definitely the Grand Bohemian, an ultra-chic Kessler property, that is the hotel of choice for visiting NBA players hoping to successfully challenge the Orlando Magic.

© NileGuide

Restaurants Insights

Orlando is delcious! At first glance, Orlando might appear to be a fairly homogeneous foodie town... but don't let its fast food facade fool you. Beyond its golden arches and cheap and cheerful chain restaurants, there lies a fair amount of edible sophistication found in unique and independent eateries all over the Orlando area. From hot dog stands with two dozen different tube steaks to chic downtown diners with artful bites, Orlando's restaurant landscape truly has something for every picky palate.

Walt Disney World

The sprawling Walt Disney World complex is an eating extravaganza owing to the dozens of eateries it's tucked into hotels, theme parks, and entertainment districts throughout the 7,100 acres it occupies in Lake Buena Vista. Memorable meals that bring kiddies face to face with their favorite characters are plentiful (Cinderella's Royal Table) as are more intimate 'adult' spots likeTodd English's Blue Zoo and Victoria and Albert's.

There are several delectable restaurants housed inside some of Disney's favorite hotels such as Jiko at the Animal Kingdom Lodge and California Grill inside the Contemporary Resort. You'll definitely want to make a reservation if you plan to eat at any of the sit-down restaurants inside any of the four theme parks. Rainforest Café, for example, is a fabulous choice for dinner when visiting Animal Kingdom as it'll be the ideal pit stop as you depart the park after a long day of animal encounters. Coral Reef

inside Epcot's Living Seas Pavilion is also a trendy pick.

Disney's Boardwalk andDowntown Disney, two entertainment districts located inside the complex but outside the theme parks, also offer a handful of great eateries each. Flying Fish Café on the Boardwalk and House of Blues at Downtown Disney are definitely crowd favorites. Whatever you choose – fancy or unfussy – Disney dining options are seemingly endless.

Universal Studios

You're not likely to find much other than quick eats inside Universal Studios or Islands of Adventure... but never fear... that's why CityWalk was created. This 30 acre mega-plex of bars, boutiques, and restaurants caters to every appetite day or night. Restaurants here all sport groovy themes likeNBA City for sports fans,Hard Rock Cafe andBob Marley:A Tribute to Freedom for music fans, and Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. for movie fans. Make sure to sample the Volcano Nachos atJimmy Buffet's Margaritaville and the Bloddy Mary wings atPat O'Brien's.

Downtown Orlando

It's worth the trek away from the tourist areas to visit Downtown Orlando, even if you only plan on grabbing a quick bite. Downtown Orlando is almost entirely chain restaurant-free which means the two dozen+ restaurants that dot the landscape aroundLake Eola Park are all unique and exciting each in their own right. In Thornton Park, on the east side of Lake Eola, you'll find award-winning favorites likeHue andDexter's.

On the opposite side of the park,Wall Street Plaza houses a handful of good spots(The Globe's fusion menu is delish) best enjoyed before this party-zone comes to life each night around 10pm. Just beyond Wall Street you'll findChurch Street Station, home to popular haunts likeCeviche and theDessert Lady. All located within an easy five or ten minute walk from each other, park your car anywhere around Lake Eola Park and ask a local to point you to their favorite downtown eatery....it won't disappoint.

Winter Park

North Orlando has a lot of fantastic dining destinations but most notable is Park Avenue in Winter Park. This posh, bricklined street is where you'll find chic eateries that pride themselves on catering to a well-heeled crowd. Amidst the more luxe locations likeLuma on Park and310 Park South, you'll also find a handful of more humble haunts such asBriar Patch andBosphorous Turkish Cuisine. Much like downtown, you just need to park the car and ask a local where to eat- you can't go wrong on Park Avenue.

© NileGuide

Nightlife Insights

If you're looking for amusement in Orlando, the fun doesn't stop when the sun goes down. From sipping martinis at swanky nightclubs, to listening to live bands at world-class venues, to spectacular fireworks shows, Orlando offers non-stop activity for those visitors still raring to go in the evening.

Bars and Nightclubs

There are four areas in Orlando that house a great selection of bars and nightclubs making it ideal to park your car at one and enjoy an assortment of various watering holes. Starting from the north, there are a couple dozen hot spots located in downtown Orlando that locals love. Upscale chill-out haunts includeCeviche(atChurch Street Station) andEmber.

Clubby types will love places likeTabu and the bars ofWall Street Plaza will sure to please. And for casual, beer-on-a-patio type of bars, both310 Lakeside andEola Wine Company offer an easy vibe. There are about 7,000 parking spots on streets and in garages all charging around\$10-\$15. Look for valet services too which charge around\$20. There is absolutely no overnight parking in downtown Orlando so make sure someone can be the DD.

Your next two stops are International Drive where you'll find favorites likeHowl at the Moon, and Universal's CityWalk for dance clubs like Red Coconut Lounge and karaoke bars likeRising Star. Parking rates vary on I-Drive and will be about\$6 at CityWalk(evening rate). Lastly, you've got Downtown Disney which is home toHouse of Blues, and the bars ofPleasure Island. Parking at Downtown Disney is free.

Live Music

On any night of the week, you can listen to big-name bands rock out in huge venues likeHard Rock Live or acoustic guitar



Orlando Snapshot continued

players gently strumming away on patios at places like310 Park South. Martini bars, such as theBosendorfer Lounge usually have live acts seven nights a week.

Amusement Parks

Unquestionably, one of the best places to be at night is still inside the theme parks which never cease to amaze visitors with spectacular fireworks shows seven nights a week. Favorites include the IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth show atEpcot, Fantasmic atHollywood Studios, and the Wishes Nighttime Spectacular atMagic Kingdom.

Performing Arts

Beyond spectacular shows such as Cirque du Soleil- La Nouba and The Blue Man Group, Orlando also offers fabulous movie theaters (read all about them here), live comedy at Sak Comedy Lab, live theater at places like the Theater Downtown, and an ever-chaing selection of Broadway, ballet, and instrumental performances at the Bob Carr Center for Performing Arts.

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Things to Do Insights

There is so much to do in Orlando. In fact, visitors are challenged less by finding things to do and more by narrowing down the hundreds of choices to a handful of activities manageable in a week or two. On initial visits, nearly every vacationer opts for at least a few days atWalt Disney World. Its magical theme parks and entertainment districts likeDowntown Disney never

cease to amaze. NearbyUniversal Studios andSeaWorld are pretty darn awesome too.

Beyond the theme parks and tourist attractions on I-Drive, Orlando has become an epicenter of amusement thanks to family-friendly hotspots like theOrlando Science Center and Kissimmee'sOld Town. Orlando's beauty is exemplified at Harry P. Leu Gardens and downtown'sLake Eola Park. Its culture oozes through at theOrlando Museum of Art andAlbion Polasek MuseumSculpture Garden and. Its sense of adventure is unmistakable thanks toOrange Blossom Balloons andBoggy Creek Airboat& Swamp Buggy Rides.

Everything you could every hope to do is within a 90-minute drive of this all-inclusive city. Spend the day in the sand at Cocoa Beach, bargain hunt at the outlet malls, lounge at your resort pool, golf, waterski, or swim with a dolphin. It's simply impossible to run out of things to do in Orlando.

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Fun Facts

- 1. There are so many awesome attractions in Orlando that it is estimated that it would take the average traveler 67 full days to experience every one.
- Each year, 150,000 gallons of slime and 10,000 cream pies are dumped on guests atThe Nickelodeon Family Suites.
- 3. Orlando is home to the first water park ever...Wet'n Wild opened in 1977 and it's still one of the only water parks that stays open 365 days a year.

- 4. You'll find the biggest collection of Tiffany glass anywhere in the world at the Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art in Winter Park.
- 5.Walt Disney World Resort is so huge that you could fit two Manhattans or one San Francisco in it.
- 6.. Trainers atSeaWorld Orlando feed Shamu 230 lbs of food every day... wow, what a whale!
- 7. If you ate breakfast, lunch and dinner at a different Orlando restaurant every day, it would still take you five years to eat at all 5.300 of them.
- 8. The famous lines"I am not a crook" were spoken by Richard Nixon on Nov. 17, 1973 at the Disney's Contemporary Resort.
- 9. Marriott chose Orlando to be the city where they built the world's largest Marriott, a 2,000-room mega-resort called the Orlando World Center Marriott Resort and Convention Center.
- 10. The oldest and biggest bald cypress tree in the world grows in Central Florida"The Senator" is more than 138 ft tall.
- 11. Lots of famous faces started off in Orlando... Rob Thomas and Mandy Moore grew up in Orlando; JC Chasez and Joey Fatone used to work at Universal Orlando; and Howie Dorough of the Backstreet Boys was born in Orlando.
- 12.Blue Man Group uses the equivalent of 56,000 rolls of paper during the show each night. Don't worry... they recycle.
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