



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Thomas Jung

# Orlando's Heart Pounding Experiences

## Lakeland, Orlando, 3 Days

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Orlando vacations aren't just about catching some extra zzzz's, perfecting your tan, and wandering through theme parks. There are a ton of heart-pounding experiences to be had in the City Beautiful. These thrilling moments might get your pulse racing and your palms sweating... but you'll never, ever forget them.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Orlando



### **iFly Orlando**

Indoor sky diving without the jump from the plane



### **Monkey Trunks**

A high rope and zipline park



### **Richard Petty Driving Experience**

Drive your dreams

## Day 2 - Lakeland, Orlando



### **Bi-plane Flight at Fantasy of Flight**

Specialty Plane Tour



### **Walt Disney World Speedway**

Need for Speed



### **Revolution The Off-Road Experience**

Chills and Thrills!

## Day 3 - Orlando



### **Bob's Balloon**

Unsurpassed Views



### **Florida Airboat Adventure at Night**

Night Cruise

# Day 1 - Orlando

QUICK NOTE

**contact:**

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

**location:**

6805 Visitors Circle  
Orlando FL 32819

## 1 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) 355-9299  
<http://www.monkeytrunks.com>

**location:**

11706 South John Young  
Parkway  
Orlando FL 32837

## Monkey Trunks

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Be ready to work those muscles and make sure to wear closed toe shoes

**DESCRIPTION:** Monkey Trunks is a vertical adventure park featuring two high-flying courses filled with aerial walkways, bridges, ladders, zip lines and more. Described as an "up-and-down-and-all-around environment", this outdoor aerial park consists of three levels that tower fifty feet above the ground. Admission includes two hours of heart-stopping fun with features like 600-foot zip lines and a forty-foot mega swing that's not for the faint of heart.  
© NileGuide



editor

**contact:**

tel: +1 407 939 0130  
fax: +1 407 939 0137  
<http://www.1800bepetty.com>

**location:**

3450 North World Drive  
Orlando FL 32830

**hours:**

Call for details

## 2 Richard Petty Driving Experience

**DESCRIPTION:** If car racing is on your agenda, this is the place to be. Founded by ex-Nascar champ, Richard Petty along with his Australian friend Barry Graham, Richard Petty Driving Experience (RPDE), designed to simulate Nascar racing provides high end sports entertainment. With 20 locations in the US, RPDE is the first choice for many who would love to hit high speeds - the safe way. RPDE has many individual and group programs. With 4 choices of Ride-along, Rookie Experience, Kings Experience and Experience of a Lifetime, it covers all skill levels. Do reserve in advance! © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Richard Petty Driving Experience

# Day 2 - Lakeland, Orlando

QUICK NOTE

**contact:**

<http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Orlando/Bi-plane-Flight-at-Fantasy-of-Flight/d663-2686FANTASYBI>

**location:**

Lakeland Florida 32801

1

## Bi-plane Flight at Fantasy of Flight

**DESCRIPTION:** At Fantasy of Flight near Orlando you can feel the rush of flying in an open cockpit with the wind in your face just as they did in the Golden Era of Flight. This is a unique opportunity to fly in a rare New Standard D-25 over the lush fields and orange groves of Central Florida's Lake Country. Begin your Bi-plane Flight at Fantasy of Flight hearing a few barnstorming tales, donning your helmet, goggles and white flying scarf, while your pilot takes off into the sky for a 15 minute scenic flight in a rare New Standard D-25 over Central Florida's Lake Country. Carrying 4 passengers in a large front open cockpit, the New Standard D-25 was instrumental in introducing tens of thousands of people to their first airplane ride, back when aviation was in its infancy. Maneuvers include lazy-eights, steep and shallow 360 degree turns, and maybe even a few "whoopy-do's" while flying over the lush fields and orange groves in Central Florida's Lake Country. Fantasy of Flight near Orlando, located west of Walt Disney World, is Florida's premier aircraft and flight attraction set in a stunning 1940's era "airport" layout. Featuring unique exhibits, behind the scenes tours and "Fun with Flight" - a hands on interactive area for kids of all ages. Test your flying skills on virtual reality hang glider and hot-air balloon simulators, or climb aboard a Corsair fighter simulator and challenge other flyers. Experience the history of aviation at Fantasy of Flight from early flight through to World War II, including a walk through on an authentic B-17 bomber. A collection of over 40 beautifully restored aircraft are on display in two art-deco hangars. Featured in the collection are planes used in the movies Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, The Great Waldo Pepper and most recently Flyboys. © Viator



viator

**contact:**

tel: +1 407 939 6244  
<http://disneyworld.disney.go.com>

**location:**

West Buena Vista Drive  
Orlando FL 32830

2

## Walt Disney World Speedway

**DESCRIPTION:** If you're a lover of speed and are looking for some thrills, head to the Walt Disney World Speedway. This 1 mile tri-oval racing facility is located inside Walt Disney World and is currently playing host to the extremely popular 'Richard Petty Driving Experience'. If the checkered flag is your final aim, then the Walt Disney World Speedway should be your destination! © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Walt Disney World Speedway

**contact:**  
tel: +1 352 400 1322  
<http://www.revolutionoffroad.com/>

**location:**  
4000 State Road 33  
Clermont FL 34714

### 3 Revolution The Off-Road Experience

**DESCRIPTION:** Its the ultimate adrenaline rush for those always on the look out for adventures. Revolution The Off-Road Experience is where driving takes a back seat and the thrills are the front runners. Whiz past in a 4x4, or jump over rocky terrains in an ATV; whichever gives you the kicks, the combination of driving them all is simply a heady feeling altogether. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Revolution The Off-Road Experience

**contact:**  
tel: +1 407 466 6380  
<http://www.bobsballoons.com/>

**location:**  
425 Fairvilla Road  
Orlando FL 32808

## 1 Bob's Balloon

**DESCRIPTION:** Bob's Balloon offers peaceful and exhilarating hot-air balloon rides all over the central Florida region and has more than 100 customary takeoff and land locations to choose from. Areas viewable from high above during the trips include Davenport, Orlando, Walt Disney World, Kissimmee and the surrounding natural areas in Polk, Orange, Lake and Osceola counties. Flights include witnessing the amazing inflation of the massive balloon, a one-hour flight ranging in heights from treetop to 1,000 feet up, and then a champagne brunch upon landing—plus a trip back to the start location. Bob's Balloon offers its passengers unforgettable sites and memories of the Orlando area. - Diane Dilov-Schultheis © wcities.com



photo courtesy of bobs balloons

**contact:**  
<http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Orlando/Florida-Airboat-Adventure-at-Night/d663-5039NAB>

**location:**  
Orlando Florida 32802

## 2 Florida Airboat Adventure at Night

**DESCRIPTION:** The ever popular Florida Airboat Adventure at Night is for those in search of adventure and thrills. Your captain will wear a miners cap that will help seek out the most revered reptiles seeking out their prey. This tour is your best chance of seeing the most alligators within the one hour ride. Search for the red eyes of the Florida Alligators gliding into the dark swamp on this Florida Airboat Adventure at Night. The 17 seater airboats are all regularly inspected and certified with life vests, safety equipment, hearing protection and radios on board.

**One of the Top Attractions of the Year in The Orlando Business Journal 2002-2007 © Viator**



viator

# 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 mega-parks 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.

© NileGuide

## History

Until the 1970's, Central Florida was known mainly for agriculture. A hot 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-opulent Disney'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, the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort is just a five-minute walk from Downtown Disney. Nearby, the Fairfield Inn Orlando Lake Buena Vista in the Marriott Village is an Official Walt Disney World Good Neighbor hotel.

### Kissimmee

Kissimmee hotels tend to be 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 of 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 delicious! 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 like Todd 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 and Downtown 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 like NBA City for sports fans, Hard Rock Cafe and Bob Marley: A Tribute to Freedom for music fans, and Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. for movie fans. Make sure to sample the Volcano Nachos at Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville and the Bloody Mary wings at Pat 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 around Lake 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 like Hue and Dexter'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 find Church Street Station, home to popular haunts like Ceviche and the Dessert 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, brick-lined street is where you'll find chic eateries

that pride themselves on catering to a well-heeled crowd. Amidst the more luxe locations like Luma on Park and 310 Park South, you'll also find a handful of more humble haunts such as Briar Patch and Bosphorous 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 include Ceviche (at Church Street Station) and Ember.

Clubby types will love places like Tabu and the bars of Wall Street Plaza will sure to please. And for casual, beer-on-a-patio type of bars, both 310 Lakeside and Eola 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 like Howl at the Moon, and Universal's CityWalk for dance clubs like Red Coconut Lounge and karaoke bars like Rising 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 to House of Blues, and the bars of Pleasure 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 like Hard Rock Live or acoustic guitar

## Orlando Snapshot continued

players gently strumming away on patios at places like 310 Park South. Martini bars, such as the Bosendorfer 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 at Epcot, Fantasmic at Hollywood Studios, and the Wishes Nighttime Spectacular at Magic 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-changing selection of Broadway, ballet, and instrumental performances at the Bob Carr Center for Performing Arts.

©

## 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 at Walt Disney World. Its magical theme parks and entertainment districts like Downtown Disney never

cease to amaze. Nearby Universal Studios and SeaWorld 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 the Orlando Science Center and Kissimmee's Old Town. Orlando's beauty is exemplified at Harry P. Leu Gardens and downtown's Lake Eola Park. Its culture oozes through at the Orlando Museum of Art and Albion Polasek Museum Sculpture Garden and. Its sense of adventure is unmistakable thanks to Orange Blossom Balloons and Boggy Creek Airboat & Swamp Buggy Rides.

Everything you could ever 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, water-ski, 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.
2. Each year, 150,000 gallons of slime and 10,000 cream pies are dumped on guests at The 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 at SeaWorld 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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