



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Thomas Jung

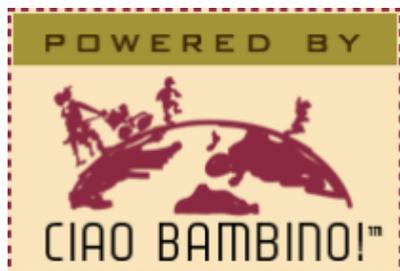
Top Kid-Friendly Attractions in Orlando

Orlando, 4 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Guide written by Kara Mayer Robinson and Jen of Two Kids and a Map.

It doesn't really matter if you're a fan of the mouse or not-Orlando is a no-brainer when it comes to pleasing the whole family. This kid-centric city makes little ones so happy that it brings smiles to everyone on board, making family trips run super-smooth.

There are endless activity options for kids in and around Orlando. You may feel a bit rushed, but it is entirely possible to visit two Disney parks in one day. Allow plenty of time for the shuttle to take you to each park. If you will be in Orlando for more than four days, purchase the four day pass and visit one park each day..

Note: Be sure to read the Day Notes for the kid-friendly details on recommended attractions.

Ciao Bambino provides tips and advice around all things related to traveling with kids and is a guide to the best kid friendly hotels.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Orlando

DAY NOTE: Disneyworld A trip to Orlando wouldn't be complete without a visit to Disneyworld, but there's no law saying you absolutely have to hit the Magic Kingdom. Maybe you've been there already or maybe characters aren't your thing. No worries- these days there are plenty of alternative theme parks to choose from and tailoring your visits to your interests is a smart way to enjoy your vacation even more. Epcot Epcot's an oldie-but-goodie that often appeals to school-age kids who've developed an interest in the world at large. Disney's Hollywood Studios is another option that appeals to kids (and adults) of all ages.



International Drive

Theme Park Hub

Day 2

DAY NOTE: Be sure to bring your animal lovers to Animal Kingdom for plenty of close encounters with the wild kind. Water junkies should head straight for Typhoon Lagoon and Blizzard Beach for oodles of water slides (hello, Slush Gusher!) and hot-weather soothers.

Day 3 - Orlando

DAY NOTE: Downtown Disney: Moviegoers will want to catch a flick at Downtown Disney, the host of 24 (!) movie theatres. Shoppers also have good reason to flock here. But we have yet another reason to hit this branch of Disneyworld-the food. If you haven't been introduced to the cuisine of Wolfgang Puck or Gloria Estefan, here's your chance. And what's better than doing it at a low cost and in a kid-friendly environment? Top off a meal at Wolfgang Puck's or Bongo's Cuban Café with a delectable sundae at the Ghirardelli Soda Fountain, a San Francisco-based chocolate company that has an outpost right here in Orlando. Besides the food, shops and theaters, Downtown Disney is a winner for Lego-lovers. In addition to a fully stocked store with billions of Legos that kids can play with for hours on end, you'll get a kick out of the Lego sculptures, including the life-sized family (dog included) and the sea serpent that weaves in and out of a lake. Downtown Orlando: Did you know there's an actual downtown in Orlando that most tourists have no idea exists? Spend an afternoon touring the real Orlando, a few miles east on Interstate 4 (aka I-4). Start with a stroll around Lake Eola (take a float in a swan boat while you're there), then head up to Winter Park, a gorgeous, tree-lined village that has lots of green space, gourmet coffee shops and locally-owned boutiques. Grab a cup o' joe, stroll into one of the town's five museums and, if you time

it right, catch one of its seasonal festivals. Map out your day at www.ci.winter-park.fl.us and www.cityoforlando.net.



Orlando Science Center

Hands-On Exhibits



Lake Eola Park

Swans, strolling and a Sunday farmer's market



Downtown Orlando

City's Hub

Day 4 - Orlando



Universal Studios Florida

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



Islands of Adventure

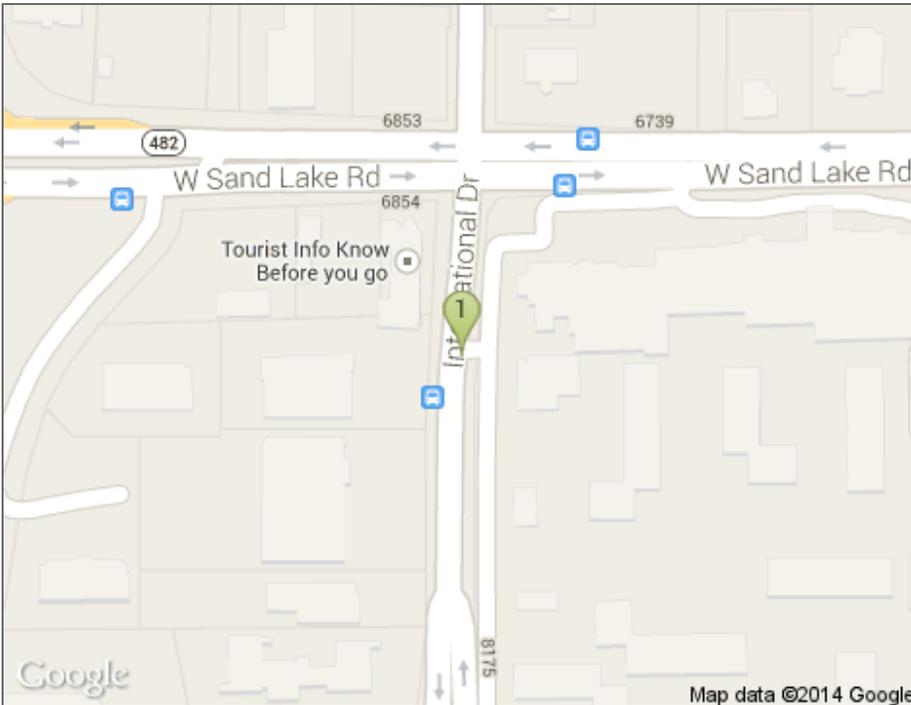
Unbelievable roller coasters and character encounters



SeaWorld Orlando

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

Day 1 - Orlando



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contact:

tel: +1 407 248 9590
fax: +1 407 248 9594
<http://www.internationaldriveorlando.com/>

location:

International Drive
Orlando FL 32819

1 International Drive

DESCRIPTION: Home to SeaWorld Orlando, Discovery Cove, Wet 'n Wild water park, Islands of Adventure, and Universal Studios Florida, International Drive is a theme park lover's paradise. Also a popular shopping destination, you can find 485+ shops ranging from designer boutiques to bargain outlet malls. At Orlando Premium Outlets, you will find designer outlets such as Armani Exchange, Salvatore Ferragamo, Dior, and BCBG Max Azria. Visit the Festival Bay Mall at International Drive to catch a movie, play a round of mini golf, shop, and dine at the many restaurants onsite. Servicing International Drive is the air-conditioned I-Ride Trolley Service to help get you from place to place. Operating daily, the cost is USD1 per ride for adults, 25 cents for seniors, and free for kids under 12 accompanied by an adult. © wcities.com

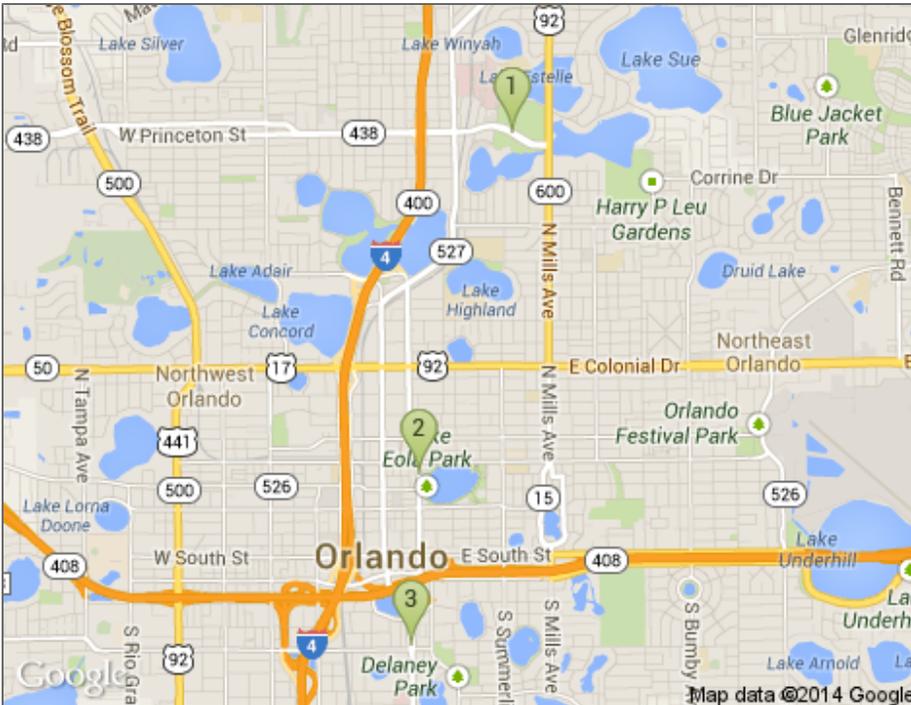


International Drive

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contact:

tel: 888/672-4386

fax: +1 407 514 2277

<http://www.osc.org>

location:

777 E. Princeton St

Orlando FL 32803

hours:

Sun-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat

10am-9pm

1 Orlando Science Center

DESCRIPTION: The Orlando Science Center is four floors of fascinating fun. The innovative center, the largest of its kind in the Southeast, provides 10 exhibit halls that allow visitors to explore everything from Florida swamps to the arid plains of Mars to the human body. One of the big attractions is the **Dr. Phillips CineDome**, a 310-seat theater that presents large-format films, planetarium shows, and laser-light extravaganzas. Just a small sampling of what you can expect includes exhibits such as **KidsTown**, where little folks wander in exhibits representing a miniature version of the big world



Photo courtesy of Orlando Science Center

around them. In one section, there's a pint-size community that includes a construction site, park, and wellness center. **Dr. Dare's Laboratory** is a "classroom of tomorrow" that includes interactive computer displays, and **NatureWorks** uses replicated Florida ecosystems to teach kids about the environment. Dino Digs, TechWorks, Xperience Factory, and Cool Science are some of the other exhibits that await you. Look for the Super Service Center, a Construction Site just for kids, and the Kids Kitchen all coming soon. Allow 3 to 4 hours, more if you have an inquiring mind © Frommer's

contact:
tel: +1 407 246 2827
http://www.cityoforlando.net/fpr/net/t_ParkRec.aspx

location:
1 N. Rosalind Ave.
Orlando FL 32801

2 Lake Eola Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Work off your vacation treats with a .9 mile stroll around the lake - it's the perfect workout

DESCRIPTION: A couple of hours can easily and peacefully drift away while strolling around Lake Eola Park, taking in the floating fountain and watching the white and black swans peacefully paddling across the lake. Established in 1888, the park's 43 acres of land are continuously enhanced with vibrant flowers, perfectly manicured grounds, and charming gazebos. The walking path circling the lake is 0.9 miles in length, perfect for enjoying a healthy stroll or vigorous jog. Shop at the Sunday Eola Market featuring fresh produce, artisan items, and a beer garden with live music. Swan rides are available for rent most days, and there is a restaurant tucked right inside the park called Eric's on Eola. There are about a dozen more restaurants within a short walking distance. © NileGuide



editor

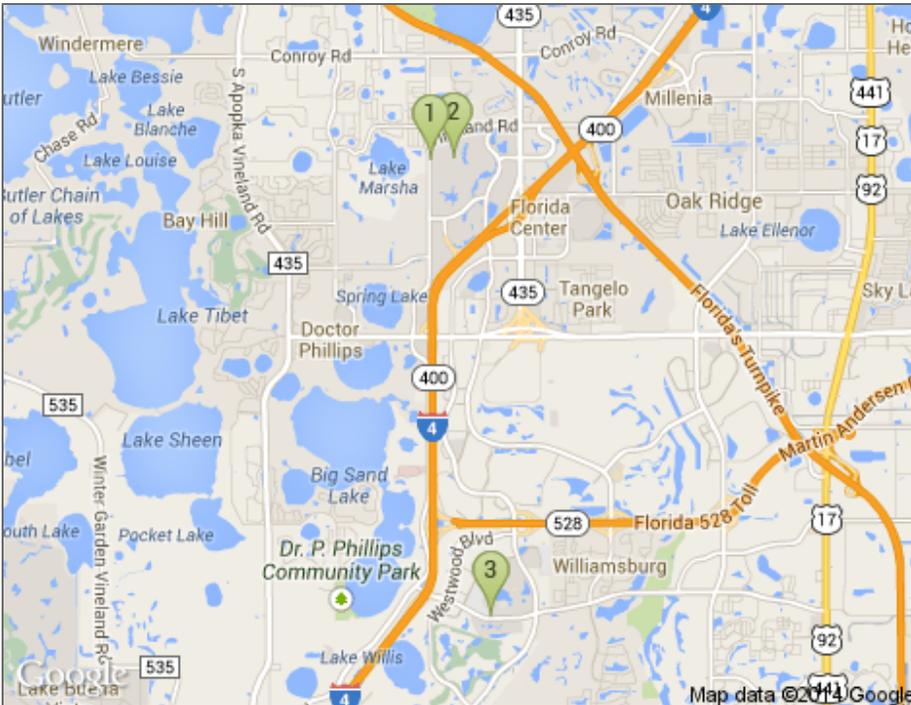
contact:
tel: +1 407 363 5872

location:
South Orange Avenue
Orlando FL 32801

3 Downtown Orlando

DESCRIPTION: Downtown Orlando is the main commercial and entertainment hub of the city. Easily accessible from any route, this area has lush parks and gardens, schools, sports and recreational areas, hospitals, art and cultural center and financial institutions in its vicinity. From high-priced boutiques, shopping malls to the bargainable local shops, the residents have loads of choices to splurge. The chain of popular restaurants located here make this an ideal haunt for any food lover. All in all, a place that caters to the different needs of the locals and the visitors. © wcities.com

Day 4 - Orlando



QUICK NOTE

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: +1 407 839 3900

http://www.universalorlando.com/Amusement_Parks/Islands_of_Adventure/islands_of_adventure.aspx

location:

1000 Universal Studios Plaza
Orlando FL 32819

2 Islands of Adventure

DESCRIPTION: This thrill-a-minute innovative theme park is every adventure lover's fantasy come alive. Fasten your seat belts and be ready to plunge from heights, experience a shark attack or set your adrenaline pumping with action-packed earthquakes and tornadoes. To savor the once-in-a-lifetime experience, try their pulse pounding roller coasters, psychological thrill rides or nerve-wrecking challenges where you get to attempt stunts. Greet your favorite comic characters, legends and super heroes in the motion based 3-D action rides or try your luck in the fun-filled video arcade. Watch dinosaurs in their natural habitat and Spider man in action, when he takes on his enemies in the ultimate battle. This far from average theme park is certainly not for the weak-hearted! © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Islands of Adventure

contact:

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

location:

7007 Sea World Drive
Orlando FL 32821

3 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

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-scenes 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.

© NileGuide

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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