

PRIDE TRAVELERS



THEME PARKS

Gay Orlando Destination Guide

Theme parks, where to stay, meal plans, transport, and advisor-only insider picks for Orlando.

Prepared by System Generated · April 19, 2026

Welcome to Orlando! Whether this is your first time or your fifth, there's always something new to discover. We put this guide together so you arrive with a plan — which parks fit your family, where to stay, how to eat well, and the little details that make the difference between a great trip and a magical one.

VIDEO · NOT INCLUDED IN PDF

This video is not available in the printed version. Open the online guide to watch it.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=mexLVqZ4WCY>

ADVISOR TIP

A quick tip before you read on: Orlando dates matter more than Orlando weather. A cooler week in late January with short lines beats a warm week in spring break with 3-hour waits. If you have flexibility, trust us on the dates — we'll point you to the sweet spots below.

At a glance

WEATHER

BEST TIME

**Late January –
early February, or
September**

AVG HIGH

**82°F (28°C) year-
round average**

AVG LOW

**60°F (16°C) winter
overnight lows**

RAINY SEASON

**June – September,
brief afternoon
storms**

Before you fly

A few things to have on hand before your trip. US domestic travelers only need a government-issued photo ID; international travelers need a valid passport and may need an ESTA or visa depending on nationality.

DOCUMENTS NEEDED

- ☐ Passport or government-issued photo ID
- ☐ Park tickets (digital or printed)
- ☐ Hotel confirmation
- ☐ Travel insurance policy document
- ☐ ESTA or visa (international travelers only)
- ☐ Vaccination or health records (if required by your airline)

Choosing your parks

The first question to answer: Disney, Universal, or both? They're very different experiences, and which one fits depends on who's traveling with you.

Walt Disney World

Four theme parks, two water parks, and its own transportation network — it's like a small city built around storytelling. Magic Kingdom is the classic Disney you picture; EPCOT is food, drink, and world cultures; Hollywood Studios is home to Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge and Toy Story Land; Animal Kingdom blends real safaris with Pandora from Avatar.

Best for: families with young children, grandparents and grandkids, first-timers, and anyone who wants the full immersive Disney experience.

We suggest: 4–5 days, with two days at Magic Kingdom if you have kids under 8.

SeaWorld Orlando

A roller-coaster lover's park — Mako, Manta, and Ice Breaker are three of the best in the country. SeaWorld has also transformed its animal-welfare

Universal Orlando

Two parks plus Volcano Bay water park, all walkable from each other. Islands of Adventure is ride-heavy; Universal Studios leans into movies and live shows. The Wizarding World of Harry Potter spans both parks — you'll want park-to-park tickets to ride the Hogwarts Express between them.

Best for: tweens, teens, adults, thrill-seekers, and Harry Potter fans.

We suggest: 2–3 days. Staying on Universal property unlocks early park entry to the Wizarding World — one of our favorite tips.

What's new

Universal's Epic Universe opened in 2025 — a third park with Super Nintendo World, Dark Universe, and a major Harry Potter expansion. It's absolutely worth

programs in recent years and is now a leader in marine rescue.

Best for: a one-day add-on if your family has coaster fans, or as a flexible day you can slot in if another park has bad weather.

building into your itinerary if you're coming to Universal.

Beyond the parks, Kennedy Space Center (about an hour east) is a memorable full day, and Crystal River (90 minutes west) lets you swim with wild manatees from November through March.

IMPORTANT

One big piece of advice: don't try to do Disney and Universal in the same day. The drive alone will eat 90+ minutes each way, and you'll feel rushed at both. Block at least two consecutive days at whichever resort you're visiting.

What's included in a base park ticket

It helps to know what your ticket actually covers. Here's the standard breakdown for a one-park-per-day Disney or Universal base ticket:

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Entry to one theme park per day
- ✓ All rides and attractions open during park hours
- ✓ Live shows, parades, and fireworks
- ✓ Character meet-and-greets (standard queues)
- ✓ Use of free park transportation within each resort

NOT INCLUDED

- ✗ Park-to-park access on the same day (costs extra)
- ✗ Lightning Lane / Express Pass skip-the-line
- ✗ Parking (around \$30/day if you drive)
- ✗ Food and beverages
- ✗ Special events (Halloween / Christmas after-hours parties)
- ✗ Water parks and mini-golf courses

Where to stay

Where you stay shapes your whole trip. Here are the four main options — each has real tradeoffs, and we're happy to talk through which fits best for your family.

On Disney property

Disney-owned resorts include free transportation, early park entry (30 minutes before opening), and MagicBands for easy entry and purchases. Three tiers:

- **Value resorts**— All-Star, Pop Century, Art of Animation. Playful theming, great for families on a budget. Around \$160–220 per night.
- **Moderate resorts**— Port Orleans, Caribbean Beach, Coronado Springs. More space, better restaurants, bigger pools. \$280–380 per night.
- **Deluxe resorts**— Grand Floridian, Polynesian, Contemporary. Walking or monorail distance to Magic Kingdom, full-service dining. \$700+ per night.

International Drive hotels

I-Drive is a strip of hotels and restaurants between the major resorts. Lots of options, plenty of dining in walking distance, and shuttles to every park. You'll trade some of the on-property magic for a lower price tag.

Best for: travelers who want to park-hop between Disney and Universal, or save on lodging without renting a car.

Where to eat

Orlando has some of the most creative dining in the country right now. A few of our favorites, from splurge to casual:

Special occasion

Victoria & Albert's at the Grand Floridian — a AAA Five Diamond, multi-course experience.

Always a hit

The Boathouse at Disney Springs — lakeside dining, great for bigger groups and mixed ages.

Quick and delicious

Satu'li Canteen in Animal Kingdom — Pandora-themed bowls, one of

On Universal property

Universal's top-tier hotels include something Disney doesn't: unlimited Express Pass for skipping ride lines. If wait times would stress you out, this is a real game-changer.

- **Premier tier**— Portofino Bay, Hard Rock, Royal Pacific. Unlimited Express Pass included. \$450+ per night.
- **Preferred tier**— Sapphire Falls, Aventura. Early park entry, no Express Pass. \$280–380 per night.
- **Value tier**— Cabana Bay, Endless Summer. Early park entry, great for families. \$160–250 per night.

Vacation homes

Private homes with 4–8 bedrooms and pools, in communities like Reunion, ChampionsGate, and Windsor Hills — about 20–30 minutes from the parks. Full kitchens mean you can cook some meals and save significantly.

Best for: large groups, multi-generation trips, or stays longer than a week.

Reservations 60 days out, dress code enforced.

Space 220 at EPCOT — dinner aboard a simulated space station, floor-to-ceiling views of Earth.

Be Our Guest inside Magic Kingdom — dinner in Beast's castle, still one of the most atmospheric meals at Disney.

the best quick-service meals in any Disney park.

Leaky Cauldron at Universal — British pub food right inside Diagon Alley. Try the butterbeer.

ADVISOR TIP

If you want to dine at any of the signature Disney restaurants, book exactly 60 days before your arrival date — some tables fill within minutes. We're happy to book these reservations for you if you let us know your top picks.

The lay of the land

Here's a look at the area to help you get your bearings — the theme parks are clustered in the southwest corner of the city, with International Drive connecting them:

MAP • NOT INCLUDED IN PDF

An interactive map appears here in the online guide.

Getting around

Staying at Disney

Disney's internal transportation (buses, monorail, Skyliner, and boats) connects every park and resort for free. You won't need a rental car for a Disney-only trip.

Staying at Universal

Free shuttle buses connect all Universal parks, 10 minutes between them. If you plan to visit Disney for a day or two, rideshares run about \$25–35 each way.

Splitting your time

Renting a car is the easiest option if you're doing both resorts or want flexibility for Kennedy Space Center or the beaches. Parking at each park is about \$30 per day.

From the airport (MCO)

Mears Connect shuttle runs around \$21 per adult one-way. Private car services are faster and start at about \$90 one-way for up to four people.

What to pack

PACKING LIST

- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes, already broken in (expect 8–12 miles a day)
- ☐ A refillable water bottle — free refills are everywhere
- ☐ Sunscreen and after-sun lotion (Florida sun is no joke)
- ☐ A light rain poncho, especially in summer
- ☐ A portable phone charger (the park apps drain batteries fast)
- ☐ Swimsuits for hotel pools and water parks
- ☐ Light layers for cooler evenings November through March
- ☐ A small backpack for snacks, ponchos, and souvenirs

Tipping in Orlando

Tipping is customary in the US, and Orlando hospitality workers often rely on it. Here's a quick reference:

TIPPING GUIDE

Table-service restaurants	18–20%
Bartenders	\$1–2 per drink, or 15–20%
Housekeeping	\$3–5 per night, left daily
Bellhops / porters	\$1–2 per bag
Shuttle and town car drivers	15–20% of the fare
Tour guides	15–20%

Questions we hear often

Do we need park reservations?

For most ticket types, no — Disney has simplified things. A few special passes still require reservations. Universal has never needed them. If your ticket is unusual, we'll flag it and handle the booking for you.

Is skip-the-line worth paying for?

Often yes, especially in summer and during holiday weeks. At Disney, Lightning Lane Multi Pass runs about \$15–35 per person per day. At Universal, Express Pass is included free with Premier hotel stays — otherwise it can be pricey but saves hours. We'll help you decide whether it makes sense for your dates.

Can we bring our own food into the parks?

Yes! Both Disney and Universal allow outside snacks, sandwiches, and water bottles. No coolers larger than 8.5"x6"x6", no glass containers, and no alcohol.

What about hurricane season?

June through November is hurricane season, with August through October being the most active. Parks rarely close — and when they do, it's usually for less than 24 hours. We recommend travel insurance with a Cancel For Any Reason upgrade; ask us about options.

Is Orlando stroller-friendly?

Very. Every park rents single and double strollers, and most major attractions accommodate them up to the entrance. A tip: Uber doesn't provide car seats, so either bring your own or arrange a dedicated car seat service ahead of time.

How many days should we plan?

For Disney alone, 5–7 nights. For Universal alone, 3–4 nights. For both, 7–10 nights gives you room to breathe. We build itineraries around the rhythm of your family, not a checklist — let us know who's traveling and we'll suggest the right length.

Pre-arrival checklist

A few weeks before your trip, run through this list so nothing falls through the cracks:

- ☐ Download the My Disney Experience and/or Universal Orlando apps

- ☐ Link your park tickets and hotel reservations inside the app
- ☐ Book dining reservations 60 days before arrival
- ☐ Buy Lightning Lane / Express Pass if needed
- ☐ Order or renew any passports for international travelers
- ☐ Review your travel insurance policy
- ☐ Pre-pay for airport parking or arrange a shuttle
- ☐ Print or save digital copies of all confirmations

Ready to start planning?

We can handle everything from park tickets to dining to dialing in the right hotel for your family's pace. A 20-minute call is usually all it takes to turn this guide into a real itinerary:

Start Planning Today →