

THE ULTIMATE LUXURY ORLANDO HOLIDAY PLANNER

Essential Guide 2026

Airport · Transport · Rental Cars · Tolls & SunPass · Free Disney Transport
Skip-the-Line Systems · Theme Park Planners . NASA & Rocket Launches · Shopping Guide · Emergency Contacts· Where to Stay

This guide is the essential companion to your Orlando Holiday Planner — covering everything you need to know about arriving, getting around, saving time at every park, theme park planners . where to stay . watching rockets launch from Cape Canaveral, and making the most of Orlando's world-class shopping.

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A — Orlando International Airport (MCO)

Orlando International Airport (MCO) is the primary gateway for visitors to Central Florida. It handles over 58 million passengers annually — making it the busiest airport in Florida and one of the busiest in the United States. Located just 6 miles from downtown Orlando, it sits approximately 20–25 minutes from the major theme park corridors in normal traffic. Understanding the layout before you land makes the whole arrival experience significantly smoother.

Terminal Layout

MCO is built around two main complexes. The North Terminal Complex contains Terminals A and B — these share a single main building divided into two sides, connected by a central atrium, food court, and automated people mover (APM) trains. Terminal C is the newer, separate South Terminal Complex, connected to the North Terminal Complex by a free shuttle bus and the Terminal Link automated train, both running 24 hours a day.

Terminal	General Overview
Terminal A — North	Domestic and some international carriers. Features The Club MCO lounge. Connected to airsides via APM trains.
Terminal B — North	Domestic and international carriers including several major US airlines. Home to multiple airline lounges. Connected to airsides via APM trains.
Terminal C — South	The newest terminal, serving many long-haul international routes as well as domestic carriers. Features the Plaza Premium Lounge and the Palm Court dining and retail area. A free shuttle bus and the Terminal Link APM connect Terminal C to Terminals A and B, running 24 hours.

Important: Always Check Your Terminal Before You Travel

Airline terminal assignments at MCO change periodically. Before travel, check the official MCO airlines page at flymco.com/airlines to confirm exactly which terminal your specific airline and flight number uses. Terminal C is a significant distance from Terminals A and B — knowing which terminal you are using before you arrive makes a real difference to your arrival and departure experience.

Step-by-Step: Arriving at MCO

1. Land and follow signs to the Automated People Mover (APM). This driverless train is mandatory — there are no walking connections between your departure gate concourse and the main terminal building. Ride it to reach baggage claim and ground transport.
2. International arrivals: follow Customs and Border Protection (CBP) signs. If you have registered with the CBP One app or Mobile Passport Control before travel, use the dedicated fast lanes — they move significantly quicker than the standard queue.

3. Baggage claim is on Level 2 of the main terminal (with some carousel overflow to Level 1). Carousels are clearly labelled by flight number on digital screens.
4. Ground transportation is on Level 1: rental car counters, taxis, rideshare pickup zones, hotel shuttles, and resort transfers all depart from here.
5. Terminal C arrivals: ride the free Terminal C–B Shuttle Bus or the Terminal Link APM to access the main terminal, rental cars, and all ground transportation. The walk via the parking garage takes around 10 minutes.

Key Airport Information

Airport address	1 Jeff Fuqua Blvd, Orlando, FL 32827
Airport info line	+1 (407) 825-2001
Official website	flymco.com / orlandoairports.net
Distance to Disney	~20–25 minutes in normal traffic
Distance to Universal	~25–30 minutes
Distance to Encore / Reunion	~25–35 minutes via I-4 / US-192
Brightline high-speed train	Terminal C → Miami / Fort Lauderdale. Ideal for combining Orlando with a few nights in South Florida.
Free Wi-Fi	Available throughout all terminals
MCO app	Free — real-time security wait times, gate maps, ground transport info. Download before travel.
Disney Store at MCO	Official Disney store in the main terminal — good for themed clothing before park days begin.

★ MCO Pro Tips

- Download the MCO app before you fly. It shows live security wait times at all three checkpoints — these can vary enormously. Terminal C usually has the shortest queues.
- On departure, allow generous time for security. During summer school holidays and the Christmas fortnight, queues can be extremely long. For international flights, three hours is a sensible minimum in peak periods.
- TSA PreCheck, CLEAR, and Global Entry lanes are available at all three security checkpoints and save considerable time.
- The Brightline train station inside Terminal C connects directly to Miami and Fort Lauderdale in under 4 hours. An excellent option if you want to end your holiday with a couple of nights in South Florida before flying home from MCO or MIA.
- Buy some Disney-branded clothing at the airport store on arrival day, before your first park visit — saves carrying it around the parks.

B — Getting from the Airport to Your Villa

MCO is excellently connected to the Orlando theme park corridor. For villa guests at Encore Resort and Reunion Resort, the journey takes approximately 25–35 minutes in normal traffic, though this can extend to 45–60 minutes on busy arrival afternoons. The I-4 motorway corridor is one of the most congested roads in Florida during peak hours.

Option	Details
Rental Car (Recommended)	The best option for a villa-based holiday. Complete flexibility — no dependency on shuttle schedules. Collect from Level 1 of the main terminal. See Section C for full details. Add the free Visitor Toll Pass from the kiosk beside the rental counters before leaving the airport.
Uber / Lyft	Fast, reliable, and good value for one-way transfers. Pick-up from designated rideshare zones on Level 1 (Terminals A & B) or Level 2 (Terminal C). Typical cost to Encore Resort or Reunion Resort: $40–65 depending on demand and traffic. Use the app to book before collecting bags.
Taxi	Available at the Level 1 taxi rank outside both terminal buildings. Metered fares; typical cost to Encore/Reunion area: $55–75 including tip. No pre-booking required but less price-predictable than rideshare apps on surge days.
MEARS Connect / MEARS Express	Shared shuttle service that replaced the old Disney Magical Express. Stops at multiple resorts — cheaper than taxi but considerably slower. Book at mearstransportation.com. Standard = multiple stops; Express = fewer stops, faster.
Private Transfer	Pre-booked executive vehicle, driver waiting on arrival with name board. Guaranteed price, professional service. Cost typically $90–130. Ideal for large groups or those arriving late at night.
Resort Shuttles	Both Encore Resort and Reunion Resort may offer complimentary or low-cost shuttle services to/from MCO for villa guests.

Our Recommendation for Villa Guests

Book your rental car in advance and collect it at the airport on arrival. Add the free Visitor Toll Pass from the Level 1 kiosk before you drive out of the airport (see Section D). You will then have complete independence for your entire holiday — and Orlando really does require a car to get the most out of it. Both Encore and Reunion are in areas not well served by public transport, and a car gives you the freedom to do grocery shops, restaurant evenings, and Kennedy Space Center day trips entirely on your own schedule.

C — Rental Cars at MCO

Orlando International Airport is the largest rental car market in the world by volume. Every major international rental company has a counter at Level 1 of the main terminal, with their vehicles in the directly accessible rental car garage. The process is generally efficient — particularly if you enrol in a company loyalty programme that allows you to bypass the counter entirely and go straight to your chosen vehicle.

The Companies at MCO

Company	What to Know
Enterprise	Consistently top-rated for customer service. Excellent fleet of large SUVs and people carriers. Robust loyalty programme with airline mile partnership options. Their premium vehicles include Range Rovers, Mustangs, and Cadillacs. Best for families who want reliability and a strong larger-vehicle selection.
Alamo	Budget-friendly and enormously popular with families. Widest range of minivans and 7–9 seat SUVs at Orlando. Self-service kiosks and Skip the Counter option — go straight to your car without queuing at a desk. Best for large groups and those wanting maximum space at competitive cost.
National	Preferred by frequent and business travellers. Fast, streamlined pickup — Emerald Club members choose their own vehicle from the aisle. Mid-to-luxury fleet including BMWs, Audis, and Alfa Romeos. Best for those who value speed and vehicle choice.
Hertz	Global recognition with an extensive vehicle range. Express Return kiosks make drop-off fast. Parent company to Dollar and Thrifty (both at MCO) for additional budget options. Best for travellers who want a widely recognised brand.
Avis	Modern fleet, solid advance-booking discounts. Note: cancellation and no-show fees are high if you pay upfront. Best for those who have confirmed dates and want a reliable mid-range option.
Budget	Economy pricing with a practical fleet. Fastbreak programme allows counter bypass. No formal tiered loyalty programme. Best for cost-conscious travellers on shorter stays.
Dollar / Thrifty	Economy brands under the Hertz umbrella. Good for straightforward, no-frills rentals at lower cost. Counters alongside Hertz on Level 1.
Sixt	Located on Level P1 of the rental car garage (one floor below others). Modern premium fleet. Strollers also available for hire. Good for luxury vehicles at competitive prices.

Essential Rental Car Tips

- Book online well in advance — ideally 4–6 weeks before travel. Orlando is the world's busiest rental car city. Large SUVs and minivans for school holiday weeks sell out months ahead.
- Choose your car size carefully. For a villa holiday with a family, a 7-seater SUV or large minivan is the right call. You will be loading airport luggage, supermarket shopping, beach bags, park bags, and prams every day.
- **Toll Warning:** Do NOT accept the rental company's toll programme.

This is the single most important rental car tip. Companies offer SunPass, E-PASS, or Toll-by-Plate programmes that charge daily administration fees of $15–25 per day on top of actual toll costs. A 14-day hire could add $210–350 in fees alone. Use the free Visitor Toll Pass instead — see Section D.

- Check your credit card's rental car excess cover before buying CDW (Collision Damage Waiver) from the rental company. Many UK credit cards cover rental car excess as a free benefit, potentially saving $15–25 per day. Call your card provider to confirm before travel.
- Enrol in the company's loyalty programme before you travel. Takes 5 minutes online. At Alamo, National, Enterprise, and Hertz, this enables Skip the Counter — you go directly to the garage and choose your car without any queuing at a desk.
- Pre-book child seats. Rear-facing, forward-facing, and booster seats are available at all companies, but they are frequently fully reserved at busy times. Book them at the same time as the car.
- Florida law requires all children under age 5 to be secured in a federally approved child restraint device. Children aged 5 must be buckled.
- Photograph all existing bodywork damage before driving away from the lot. Email or message yourself the photos so they are timestamped. Log any damage with the company before leaving.

Rental Car Company Phone Numbers at MCO

Enterprise	1-855-266-9289
Alamo	1-844-357-5138
National	1-844-393-9989
Hertz	1-800-654-3131
Avis	1-800-633-3469
Budget	1-800-527-0700
Dollar	1-800-800-4000
Thrifty	1-800-847-4389
Sixt	1-888-749-8227

D — Florida Tolls, SunPass & the Visitor Toll Pass

Florida has an extensive toll road network and, driving in the Orlando area, you will encounter tolls every single day — on the way to Disney, Universal, the Space Coast, and the airport. The good news is that the Florida toll system is clean and efficient, and there are excellent options to make it entirely painless. The critical thing to understand before you drive anywhere is this: never simply accept the rental car company's toll programme.

How Florida Tolls Work

Almost all Florida toll roads have converted to fully electronic, cashless collection. There are no toll booths to stop at and no cash required. As you drive under a gantry, cameras photograph your number plate and/or read an electronic transponder (a small device on your windscreen). Payment is deducted automatically from your linked account. The key issue is how much you pay — and the difference between methods is significant.

Method	What Happens & Cost
SunPass / Visitor Toll Pass transponder	Lowest toll rate. Charged instantly and automatically. No stopping.
Toll-by-Plate (no transponder)	Photo of your number plate is taken. Invoice mailed to registered vehicle owner. Higher rate than transponder — plus a $2.50 monthly administration invoice charge.
Rental company toll programme	Uses Toll-by-Plate on your behalf but adds their own daily admin fee of $15–25 on top of actual tolls. Can add $200+ to a two-week hire.

> ⚠ **The Most Important Toll Tip**
>
> Do NOT activate the toll programme offered by your rental car company at the pickup counter. Daily admin fees of $15–25 are charged on top of the actual toll cost, regardless of whether you use any toll roads that day. A family's two-week hire can incur $300+ in needless rental company toll fees. Use the Visitor Toll Pass (free, available at MCO) or buy a SunPass Mini (~$5) instead.

Option 1 — The Visitor Toll Pass (Free for Airport Visitors)

The Visitor Toll Pass is a free temporary transponder available exclusively to visitors flying into or out of Orlando International Airport. It was created specifically to allow visitors to pay the lowest possible toll rate — the same as any Florida resident with a SunPass — with no hidden fees, no daily charges, and no extra costs. The vast majority of Orlando visitors have never heard of it. This is a shame, because it is genuinely the best toll option available to international visitors driving a rental car.

Question	Answer
What does it cost?	The Visitor Toll Pass is free to obtain and use. You pay only the actual toll charges incurred during your trip, always at the lowest rate — no admin fees, no daily charges, no markups. Costs are deducted from a prepaid account you set up via the app.
Where do you get it?	Kiosks in the rental car areas of Terminals A and B, and inside Terminal C at Orlando International Airport. The pass is a physical hang tag that you collect from the kiosk. Available 24 hours a day.
How do you activate it?	Download the Visitor Toll Pass app (visitortollpass.com) and register before or during your visit to the kiosk. Link a payment card to cover your toll charges.
How do you use it?	Hang the tag from your rear-view mirror. Drive normally on all toll roads — you pass through all SunPass lanes without slowing or stopping. The app tracks each toll deducted in real time.
Where do you return it?	Drop the tag into a return drop box at MCO before your departure flight. Drop boxes are available in Terminals A, B, and C so you can return it from whichever terminal you are departing from.
Where does it work?	All toll roads, bridges, and expressways across the whole of Florida.
App & website	visitortollpass.com

Option 2 — SunPass (Florida's Own Transponder)

SunPass is Florida's own prepaid toll programme — the permanent, long-term option. It is available from thousands of retail locations across Florida, including Publix supermarkets, Walgreens, and CVS Pharmacy. Two versions are available:

Type	Details
SunPass Mini (sticker transponder)	Approx. $4.99 + tax. Sticks permanently to your windscreen just below the rear-view mirror. Cannot be moved between vehicles. Requires a minimum $10 prepaid balance to activate. Available at Publix, Walgreens, CVS, and 3,100+ Florida retail locations. Best for a single vehicle stay.
SunPass PRO (removable transponder)	Approx. $14.95 + tax. Mounts with a suction cup — fully removable and transferable between vehicles. Works across Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and all 17+ E-ZPass states. The better option if you are hiring different vehicles or plan to drive beyond Florida. Available at the same retail locations.

Both versions save an average of 25% on every toll compared to Toll-by-Plate. Load funds via the SunPass app, at sunpass.com, or in cash at any Publix, CVS, or Walgreens. Setting up Easy Pay with a linked credit card means your account tops up automatically — you never need to think about it.

SunPass customer service: 1-888-TOLL-FLA (1-888-865-5352). Website: sunpass.com

Key Toll Tips for Your Specific Trip

- Register your rental car's licence plate number on your SunPass account the moment you collect the car. This ensures all tolls are charged to your SunPass at the lowest rate, not to the rental company's expensive system.
- The main toll roads you will use from Encore/Reunion to the parks: SR-429 and US-192 to Disney; SR-417 (Central Florida Greeneway) to Universal and the airport; SR-528 (Beachline Expressway) to Kennedy Space Center. A typical day visiting Disney from Encore will incur $3–6 in transponder tolls. Via a rental company toll programme, the same journey costs $18–30+.
- Florida Statute requires drivers to pay all tolls on toll roads. Failure to pay is a moving violation. If you accidentally pass through a toll gantry without a valid transponder, contact SunPass promptly at sunpass.com to pay before a fine is issued.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **AVOID I-4 BETWEEN DISNEY & UNIVERSAL**

The SR-429 Western Beltway is the route locals use between Reunion / Encore and the Universal area — and it bypasses I-4 entirely. I-4 between Disney and Universal is one of the most consistently congested stretches of road in Florida during park opening and closing hours. The 429 north to US-192 is almost always significantly faster during those windows. It has tolls, but they are modest — and with a Visitor Toll Pass or SunPass, you'll barely notice them.

- Almost no toll roads in the Orlando area accept cash anymore. Do not assume you can pay at the gantry — you cannot. A valid transponder or Visitor Toll Pass is essential.
- The SunPass Toll Calculator at sunpass.com/tolls lets you calculate the exact toll cost of any journey in Florida before you travel.

E — Free Disney Transport: The Complete Network

Walt Disney World operates one of the largest private transportation networks on earth — and every part of it is free. You do not need to be staying at a Disney hotel to use buses, monorails, boats, or the Skyliner gondola system. The fleet includes 420+ buses, three monorail lines, 36 boats, and a 4.2-mile aerial gondola system. Transport generally begins 45 minutes before park opening and runs until approximately one hour after park closing.

The only Disney transport that costs money is the Minnie Van premium rideshare service, booked through the Lyft app.

Disney Bus Network

Buses are the backbone of the system. Disney operates one of the largest bus fleets in Florida — a city-sized network serving every corner of the resort. The buses use a point-to-point model rather than set routes: each bus goes directly between a resort hotel and one specific destination (theme park, water park, or Disney Springs). No transfers needed in most cases.

- Serves all Disney Resort hotels, all four theme parks, both water parks, and Disney Springs.
- Newer buses have air conditioning, USB charging ports, and Wi-Fi.
- Strollers must be folded before boarding. All buses have wheelchair-accessible ramps at the rear.
- Bus arrivals can be checked in real time on the My Disney Experience app. Digital display boards at each bus stop also show estimated arrival times.
- Park-to-park buses for Park Hoppers: park hopping is permitted once you have entered your first park for the day, and buses between parks run throughout the morning once parks are fully open. If you need to hop parks early, the monorail (Magic Kingdom ↔ EPCOT), the Skyliner (EPCOT ↔ Hollywood Studios), and the Friendship Boats (EPCOT ↔ Hollywood Studios) can be faster than buses on busy mornings in any case.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **PARK HOPPING — USE THE RIGHT TRANSPORT**

Park hopping is available from the moment you enter your first park for the day — buses between parks run throughout the morning once parks are fully open. That said, on busy mornings the monorail (Magic Kingdom ↔ EPCOT), the Skyliner (EPCOT ↔ Hollywood Studios ↔ Caribbean Beach), and the Friendship Boats (EPCOT ↔ Hollywood Studios along Crescent Lake) are often faster and more scenic than waiting for a bus. If you are park-hopping early in the day, these are the routes to use. Check the My Disney Experience app for current bus frequency on your visit day.

- Villa guests at Encore and Reunion drive to Disney parks, then use the free internal transport network within Disney property once there.

Disney Skyliner — Aerial Gondola System

The Skyliner is Disney's aerial gondola network, opened in 2019. It has become one of the most popular ways to travel between parks and resorts — partly because it's efficient, and partly because the views across the Disney property are extraordinary, especially at sunset. 300 cabins travel along cables connecting EPCOT, Hollywood Studios, and four resort hotels. Entirely free to use.

Route	Details
Caribbean Beach Hub → EPCOT (International Gateway)	Main line from the Caribbean Beach Resort hub directly to the International Gateway entrance of EPCOT — the back entrance, right beside the France and UK pavilions in World Showcase. Art of Animation and Pop Century resorts connect to this hub via a branch line.
Caribbean Beach Hub → Hollywood Studios	Separate line from the Caribbean Beach hub to Hollywood Studios' main entrance.
Caribbean Beach Hub → Riviera Resort → EPCOT	Third line serving Disney's Riviera Resort, with onward connection to EPCOT.

Important: the Skyliner does not operate during lightning storms, which are frequent in Florida afternoons between June and September. A bus replacement service operates whenever Skyliner is closed. Check the My Disney Experience app for real-time status.

Disney Monorail System

The Walt Disney World Monorail is one of the great icons of the resort — the 'highway in the sky' that opened with the park in 1971 and has transported over 22 million guests per year ever since. Three separate lines operate across the Magic Kingdom area and EPCOT. It is free for everyone.

Line	Route & Notes
Resort Monorail	The classic loop: Transportation & Ticket Center (TTC) ↔ Disney's Polynesian Village Resort ↔ Magic Kingdom ↔ Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa ↔ Disney's Contemporary Resort ↔ TTC. The famous 'Monorail Crawl' route, stopping at three of Disney's finest resort hotels.
Express Monorail	Direct service between Magic Kingdom and the Transportation & Ticket Center only. The fastest way from the main car park to Magic Kingdom's front gate.
EPCOT Monorail	Runs between the Transportation & Ticket Center and EPCOT. Connects Magic Kingdom-area parking to EPCOT.

The Resort Monorail operates 30 minutes before Magic Kingdom opens until one hour after it closes. The EPCOT Monorail begins 30 minutes before EPCOT opens and continues until 2 hours after EPCOT closes.

Disney Boats & Water Taxis

Disney operates 36 vessels across its man-made waterways. The boats are among the most atmospheric ways to travel within the resort.

- Magic Kingdom Ferry: enormous 600-passenger ferries cross Seven Seas Lagoon from the Transportation & Ticket Center to Magic Kingdom's dock. Running continuously. Arriving at Magic Kingdom by ferry — seeing Cinderella Castle appear across the water — is one of the great theme park arrival experiences in the world.
- Friendship Boats: connect EPCOT's International Gateway to Disney's Hollywood Studios and the surrounding BoardWalk-area resort hotels via Crescent Lake. A scenic, relaxing 15-minute journey between two parks.
- Water Taxis: serve Disney Springs and nearby resort hotels (Port Orleans, Old Key West, Saratoga Springs) on a continuous circuit. A lovely way to end a Disney Springs evening.
- Weather note: water transport does not operate during lightning. An alternative mode (bus or monorail) will always be provided.

Minnie Vans — Disney's Premium Rideshare

Minnie Vans are Disney's own premium on-property rideshare, operated by Disney cast members and booked through the Lyft app. Vehicles are decorated with Minnie Mouse's signature red and white polka dot design. Minnie Vans can drop guests at specific locations within Walt Disney World that standard rideshare services cannot access — including the Magic Kingdom monorail loading area, which saves significant time compared to being dropped at the Transportation & Ticket Center. Up to 6 guests per vehicle, with child car seats available. Minnie Vans are a paid service — not free like buses, monorail, and boats. Check the Lyft app for current availability and pricing.

Free Disney Transport — Key Tips

- Always use the My Disney Experience app to check bus arrival times and transport status before leaving your hotel room. It shows live estimated arrival for every mode of transport.
- Allow 60–90 minutes for any Disney journey involving connections, particularly during the busy morning park-opening rush and the evening park-closing surge.
- Taking the ferry to Magic Kingdom (rather than the monorail) is a slower but infinitely more magical arrival. The view of Cinderella Castle growing larger as you cross the lagoon is genuinely one of the great theme park moments anywhere in the world.
- Park-hopping tip: from Hollywood Studios to EPCOT, the Friendship Boat via Crescent Lake is a 15-minute scenic journey far more pleasant than walking or waiting for a bus.
- For villa guests driving to Disney: standard parking is approximately $30–35 per day depending on season, and is valid across all four parks on that same day. Resort hotel guests park free.

F — Skip-the-Line Systems: All Parks Explained

Every major Orlando theme park has a paid system for reducing or eliminating queue times. Mastering these systems is one of the highest-return investments you can make in your Orlando trip. Used well, they can save 3–5 hours of queuing per park day, allowing you to experience far more in the time available. Below is the definitive explanation of every system across Disney, Universal, and SeaWorld.

Disney World: Lightning Lane

Disney's queue-skipping system, called Lightning Lane, replaced the original free FastPass+ in 2024. It operates on three tiers, each offering progressively more convenience and priority at a higher price point.

The Three Lightning Lane Products

Pass Type	How It Works
Lightning Lane Multi Pass (LLMP)	The everyday queue-reduction pass. Purchased per person per day — typically $18–35 depending on date and park. Pre-book up to 3 ride time slots in advance: 1 from Tier 1 and 2 from Tier 2 (or all 3 from Tier 2 at Animal Kingdom, which has no tiers). After using each slot, book the next available one. Covers the majority of major rides. Does not include the very highest-demand 'Single Pass' attractions.
Lightning Lane Single Pass (LLSP)	Purchased separately per attraction and per person. Covers only the top-tier, highest-demand rides not included in Multi Pass: TRON Lightcycle / Run (Magic Kingdom), Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind (EPCOT), Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance (Hollywood Studios), and Avatar: Flight of Passage (Animal Kingdom). Cost approximately $15–22 per person per ride. These sell out within minutes on busy days — often within seconds of the booking window opening at 7:00am Eastern.
Lightning Lane Premier Pass (LLPP)	One-time Lightning Lane entry to each available Lightning Lane attraction in one park, for one day. No pre-booking of time slots required — walk up to the Lightning Lane entrance at any participating attraction, show your pass, and enter. Priced at approximately $130–450+ per person depending on demand and date. Limited daily availability. Best value on the very busiest days of the year when standby waits are at their worst.

When Can You Book? (Critical)

Guest Type	Booking Rules
Disney Resort hotel guests	Can pre-book Lightning Lane up to 7 days before check-in for the entire length of stay. Booking window opens at 7:00am Eastern time. This is a significant advantage — the best time slots for the most popular rides are often gone within minutes.

Guest Type	Booking Rules
Off-site guests (including villa guests)	Can book 3 days before each visit date. Booking window opens at 7:00am Eastern. On the busiest days, premium Tier 1 LLMP slots may already be limited by the time off-site guests can book. Using Lightning Lane Single Pass for the top rides is often essential for villa-based guests.

The Tier System (Magic Kingdom, EPCOT, Hollywood Studios)

Multi Pass attractions are divided into Tiers 1 and 2. Your initial 3 pre-selections must include no more than 1 Tier 1 attraction. After your initial slots are used, you can book any available attraction regardless of tier.

Park	Tier 1 Attractions
Magic Kingdom — Single Pass	Seven Dwarfs Mine Train and TRON Lightcycle / Run. Both require a separate Lightning Lane Single Pass purchase and are not included in Multi Pass.
Magic Kingdom — Multi Pass Tier 1	Peter Pan's Flight and other high-demand rides (check current listings in My Disney Experience app).
EPCOT — Single Pass	Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind.
EPCOT — Multi Pass Tier 1	Frozen Ever After, Remy's Ratatouille Adventure, Test Track.
Hollywood Studios — Single Pass	Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance.
Hollywood Studios — Multi Pass Tier 1	Slinky Dog Dash, Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway.
Animal Kingdom	No tier system. All attractions treated equally in Multi Pass. Avatar: Flight of Passage is Single Pass.

Universal Orlando: Express Pass

Universal's system is considerably simpler than Disney's. There are no tiers, no pre-booking requirements, and no apps needed beyond your ticket. Purchase the pass, walk to the Express entrance of any participating attraction, show your pass, and join a dedicated shorter queue. That's it.

Option	Details
Universal Express Pass (single use)	One ride per participating attraction. Purchased per person per day. Available online in advance or at the parks on the day. Good for quieter days when you only need one go on each ride.
Universal Express Pass Unlimited	Unlimited rides per participating attraction, all day. The better value on busy days. Priced dynamically — cheaper on quieter days, more expensive during peak periods and school holidays.

Option	Details
Free with Premier hotel stays	Guests staying at Universal's three Premier on-site hotels (Royal Pacific Resort, Portofino Bay Hotel, Hard Rock Hotel) receive complimentary Express Pass Unlimited for both Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure. This is widely considered the best hotel perk in the entire theme park industry.
Epic Universe — SEPARATE pass required	Critical: the complimentary hotel Express Pass does NOT cover Epic Universe. A separate Epic Universe Express Pass must be purchased and costs approximately $130+ per person per day. This is not included with any hotel stay as of 2026.
Attractions without Express Pass	A small number of attractions do not participate in Express Pass, notably Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure at Islands of Adventure (which uses a virtual queue or standby on certain days). Check the app on the day.

Universal Express Pass — Our Assessment

Express Pass is the most straightforward skip-the-line system in Orlando. No booking, no time windows, no app management. You walk to any Express entrance, show your pass, and ride. On busy days at Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure, it is essentially essential — Hagrid's and Veloci Coaster regularly reach 90-minute standby waits. For Epic Universe, the system is similarly simple but the pass must be purchased separately.

SeaWorld Orlando: Quick Queue

SeaWorld's Quick Queue is the most affordable and most relaxed skip-the-line system in Orlando. There are no tiers, no time windows, no pre-booking, and no app required. Purchase a Quick Queue pass, walk to the Quick Queue entrance of any participating ride, show your pass to the attendant, and join the much shorter queue. Unlimited re-rides are the default — you can ride the same coaster as many times as you like throughout the day.

Option	Details
Quick Queue Unlimited	Unlimited priority access to all participating rides throughout the day, including Mako, Manta, Kraken, Ice Breaker, Infinity Falls, and Journey to Atlantis. Note: standard Quick Queue Unlimited does not include Penguin Trek or Expedition Odyssey — those require the PLUS version. Pricing varies by season and date; check seaworld.com/orlando for current prices before visiting. Best purchased online in advance.
Quick Queue Unlimited PLUS	Everything in Unlimited, plus one-time priority access to the three newest high-demand attractions: Pipeline: The Surf Coaster (min height 54"), Penguin Trek (min height 42"), and Expedition Odyssey (min height 39"). Also includes guaranteed reserved seating for all major SeaWorld shows — Orca Encounter, Dolphin Adventures, and others. The most

Option	Details
	comprehensive option for a full day. Pricing varies seasonally — check seaworld.com/orlando.
Year-Round Quick Queue	365 days of unlimited Quick Queue access. Only worthwhile for those visiting SeaWorld multiple times in a year.
How to use it	No advance booking required. At each participating ride, go to the Quick Queue entrance, show your pass (on phone or printed), and join the shorter queue. For reserved show seating, arrive 30 minutes before show start time.
Is it worth it?	On summer weekends, school holiday periods, and any busy day: yes, strongly. Mako, Kraken, and Manta regularly reach 45–75 minute standby waits. Quick Queue Unlimited effectively eliminates all of this. SeaWorld's Quick Queue is also by far the cheapest skip-the-line option in Orlando — exceptional value compared to Disney or Universal.

Discovery Cove: No System Needed

Discovery Cove has no skip-the-line system because none is required. Daily capacity is strictly capped at approximately 1,300 guests — the park never becomes crowded. The only queue consideration is the dolphin swim time slot allocation, which is done on first-come, first-served basis at check-in on arrival. Arriving at or before 7:15am gives you the widest choice of swim times. All other experiences throughout the day — Grand Reef snorkelling, Wind-Away River, the Aviary, Serenity Bay — are accessible at any time with no waiting.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **DISCOVERY COVE — THREE THINGS ALMOST NOBODY KNOWS**

First: book the earliest possible dolphin swim time. If you arrive by 7:15am your interaction will be done before most guests have even collected their snorkel gear — the rest of the day is entirely yours. Second: you are allowed to bring your own fins and snorkel mask. The gear provided is functional but basic; your own well-fitting fins make the Grand Reef snorkelling dramatically better. Third: complimentary alcoholic drinks are served later in the morning — confirm the exact time when you check in on arrival, as it varies by season.

Cross-Park Comparison at a Glance

Park	How It Works	Our Assessment
Disney — Lightning Lane	Advance booking required. Time slots. Three tiers. Requires the My Disney Experience app.	Most complex but most powerful system. Advance preparation is essential.
Universal — Express Pass	No booking required. Walk up to any Express entrance, show pass, ride. Simple.	Complimentary with Premier hotel stays for Studios & IOA. Epic Universe is separate.

SeaWorld — Quick Queue	No booking required. Show pass at entrance, join shorter queue. Simplest system.	Lowest cost of the three. Unlimited re-rides standard. Excellent value on busy days.
Discovery Cove	No system. Arrive early for dolphin swim time allocation.	Capacity-controlled park — never overcrowded. Arrive at 7:15am for best dolphin time slots.

G — Kennedy Space Center & Watching a Rocket Launch

Cape Canaveral is approximately 60 miles east of Orlando — around 45–60 minutes via the SR-528 Beachline Expressway, a toll road well worth using. Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex is a full-day destination in its own right, and when a rocket launch is scheduled, the combination of the exhibits and a live launch becomes one of the genuinely extraordinary experiences available from an Orlando base. With SpaceX, ULA, and NASA using the Space Coast's launch pads on an almost weekly basis, the probability of a launch occurring during a two-week Orlando stay is meaningfully high.

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex

Address	Space Commerce Way, Merritt Island, FL 32953
Distance	Approximately 60 miles east of Orlando. Take SR-528 East (Beachline Expressway) from the I-4 corridor — approximately 45–60 minutes.
Phone	(855) 433-4210
Website	kennedyspacecenter.com
Opening hours	Currently 9am to 5pm (hours confirmed in the 2026 published schedule). Hours can vary by season and on launch days — always confirm at kennedyspacecenter.com before visiting.
Admission	Pricing varies by date and ticket type. Multi-day tickets are available and offer good value if you plan to visit more than once. Always check current admission prices at kennedyspacecenter.com — prices can be higher on launch days and for premium packages.
Parking	Free with admission.
What's included	Admission covers all exhibits, shows, and the standard bus tour through NASA's operational areas. Launch viewing may be included with admission for smaller launches, or requires an additional paid package for major missions.

The Visitor Complex: Highlights

- Space Shuttle Atlantis — The centrepiece of the entire complex. The actual Space Shuttle Atlantis is suspended mid-flight, payload bay doors open, robotic arm extended, as if frozen in orbit 200 feet overhead. Surrounded by an astonishing exhibition telling the full story of the shuttle programme. This is one of the great museum experiences in the United States. Allow at least 2 hours.
- Saturn V Center (Apollo/Saturn V Center) — A complete, fully restored Saturn V moon rocket — 363 feet long, 6.5 million pounds of thrust. One of only three surviving in the world and displayed in a building purpose-built around it. Accessible via the main bus tour. An experience that makes the scale of the Apollo programme viscerally real.

- Rocket Garden — An outdoor garden of 12 actual rockets from the Mercury, Gemini, and early Atlas/Titan programme. Photographs beautifully in the Florida light.
- Heroes & Legends — The US Astronaut Hall of Fame and a tribute to the astronaut corps, including interactive exhibits.
- IMAX Theatres — Two giant-screen IMAX theatres show space exploration documentaries throughout the day. Excellent for children.
- Bus Tour — Takes you inside NASA's operational areas to see the Vehicle Assembly Building (one of the largest buildings on earth by volume), the crawler-transporter roads, the Saturn V Center, and the launch pad approach road. Allow 2–3 hours. Essential — do not miss it.

Watching a Live Rocket Launch

This is an experience that people remember for the rest of their lives. A rocket launch is not just a visual event — it is a physical one. The sound wave from the engines arrives seconds after liftoff and you feel it in your chest, your stomach, and your feet. The sight of a rocket accelerating through the Florida sky on a pillar of fire is extraordinary.

How to Know When a Launch Is Happening

- Sign up for launch email alerts at kennedyspacecenter.com — the only source of officially confirmed launch dates and times at the Visitor Complex.
- For the full launch schedule across all operators (SpaceX, ULA, NASA, Rocket Lab, Blue Origin), use the Space Coast Launches app or visitspacecoast.com/launches. These track every mission from Cape Canaveral, not just those with KSC tickets.
- SpaceX Falcon 9 launches from Cape Canaveral at very high frequency — sometimes two or three per week. These are not rare events. Seeing a Falcon 9 during a two-week Orlando stay is genuinely probable if you monitor the schedule.
- Artemis II — NASA's first crewed mission around the Moon since Apollo 17 in 1972 — is scheduled for no earlier than April 2026. This is a once-in-a-generation event. If it launches during your visit, it will be the most memorable day of your trip. Check the schedule and buy viewing packages as early as possible.

Launch Viewing Options

Viewing Option	Details
Included with admission (main complex viewing)	For launches during visitor complex operating hours, viewing from the main grounds is included in standard admission. You see the rocket clear the tree line from the Atlantis North Lawn or Rocket Garden, with live commentary from space experts. Good experience; not the closest possible viewpoint.
Launch Transportation Ticket (LTT) — recommended	Purchased in addition to admission. A bus takes you inside NASA's gates to the Saturn V Center at Banana Creek — approximately 3.9 miles from the launch pad. Bleacher seating, expert commentary, the Saturn V rocket overhead. An exceptional experience. Limited tickets — book online as early as possible once a launch date is announced.

Viewing Option	Details
The Gantry at LC-39 (closest public viewing)	For Atlas V and certain other launches, a special ticket provides access to the LC-39 Observation Gantry — just 2.3 miles from the launch pad. The closest any member of the public has ever been able to watch a rocket launch. Available for specific rocket types only due to safety restrictions. Very limited availability.
Feel the Heat Package (major missions)	Premium package for Artemis and crewed launches. Includes admission, round-trip bus to Banana Creek, bleacher seating, live commentary, a second-attempt guarantee, and commemorative items. Approximately $250 per person. Sells out fast for major missions.
Free public viewing nearby	Several free or very low cost viewing locations exist around the Space Coast: Jetty Park (Port Canaveral), Kennedy Point Park (Titusville, US-1), Cocoa Beach Pier, Alan Shepard Park, and the SR-528 Causeway bridge over the Banana River. Playalinda Beach inside Canaveral National Seashore is 4.8 miles from Pad 40 — the closest free viewing location for Falcon 9 launches.

Essential Launch Day Tips

- Book all tickets online in advance and download the barcodes. Mobile reception inside KSC and on the approach roads is often poor on launch days.
- Arrive at least 2 hours before the launch window. Traffic on SR-528 and the local roads around Merritt Island can be severe on high-profile launch days. For Artemis launches, allow 3 hours and book overnight accommodation on the Space Coast if possible.
- Launches can be 'scrubbed' (cancelled) at any time due to weather, technical issues, or range scheduling conflicts — including after you have already boarded the bus. Launch Transportation Tickets cover a second attempt. Feel the Heat packages include a full return visit.
- Binoculars significantly enhance the experience from Banana Creek, the main complex, or any free public viewing site.
- Night launches are spectacular — the sky turns orange for miles around — but require flexibility around return travel time to Orlando.
- The actual launch sequence lasts 2–3 minutes. The experience — including build-up, countdown, launch, watching the rocket arc across the sky, and waiting for the sonic boom — extends to 20–45 minutes. After the launch, allow extra time for the traffic queue to disperse before attempting to leave.

Planning Your Kennedy Space Center Day Trip

Drive east from Orlando on SR-528 (Beachline Expressway) — your SunPass or Visitor Toll Pass covers this road. Allow 45–60 minutes each way. Visit independently of any launch for a full day of the exhibits and bus tour (9am–5pm). The combination of Space Shuttle Atlantis, the Saturn V, and the bus tour is outstanding and justifies the trip in its own right. If you can align your visit with a confirmed rocket launch, combining the two gives you one of the greatest day trips available anywhere in Florida. Consider stopping for dinner in Cocoa Beach on the return journey.

H — 2026 Events & Festivals Calendar

Orlando's theme parks run a near-continuous calendar of seasonal festivals, special events, and ticketed evening parties throughout the year. 2026 is an exceptionally strong year — Disney is celebrating America's 250th birthday, Universal's Harry Potter world turns 25, Epic Universe has just opened, and every park has introduced significant new entertainment. This section covers every confirmed event across Disney World, Universal Orlando, and SeaWorld Orlando in date order, so you can align your visit with the events that matter most to you.

Important: Confirmed vs. Expected Dates

Where Disney, Universal, or SeaWorld have officially published event dates, those dates are confirmed. A small number of events — particularly Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party and Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party at Disney — had not yet had their specific 2026 dates released at the time of publication. These are noted clearly below. Dates for separately ticketed events should always be checked and booked in advance at the official park websites: disneyworld.com, universalorlando.com, and seaworld.com/orlando.

January 2026

Event	Details & Dates
EPCOT International Festival of the Arts	16 January – 23 February 2026 (confirmed). EPCOT's celebration of visual art, culinary art, and performing arts — the shortest but most atmospheric of EPCOT's four annual festivals. Featured: Disney on Broadway Concert Series (nightly at America Gardens Theatre with show-stopping performances from Beauty and the Beast, The Lion King, Aladdin, and more); Figment's Scavenger Hunt through World Showcase; chalk art galleries; live artist demonstrations; and Food Studios serving uniquely artistic dishes. Included with EPCOT park admission — no additional ticket required. This festival runs daily throughout its dates, not just on weekends.
SeaWorld Seven Seas Food Festival	30 January – 17 May 2026 (confirmed). SeaWorld Orlando's flagship culinary festival, now running its most expansive season ever — two weeks longer than in previous years. Over 200 globally inspired dishes from 25+ international food and beverage marketplaces around the park. New for 2026: rotating monthly menus introduce fresh limited-time dishes throughout the event so no two visits taste the same. Live concerts every Saturday at Bayside Stadium, with additional performances on select Fridays and Sundays. All concerts are included with park admission.
SeaWorld Seven Seas Concert Series — January	31 January 2026: Flo Rida (confirmed). Full-length live concert at Bayside Stadium, included with park admission.

February 2026

Event	Details & Dates
EPCOT International Festival of the Arts (continued)	Through 23 February 2026. See January entry above.
Universal Rock the Universe	23–24 January 2026 (confirmed). Florida's biggest Christian music festival returns to Universal Studios Florida. A separately ticketed event featuring a weekend of faith, music, and full park access with lower crowds. Popular with large youth groups.
Universal Mardi Gras: International Flavors of Carnaval	7 February – 4 April 2026 (confirmed). Universal's spectacular Mardi Gras celebration is included with regular park admission. Nightly parade through Universal Studios Florida with enormous Kern Studios floats (the same company that has built New Orleans Mardi Gras floats since 1947), bead throwing, street performers, and international food offerings. Live concerts on select nights from major artists — 2026 headliners already confirmed include RuPaul, Bebe Rexha, Zedd, Barenaked Ladies, Ziggy Marley, Tyler Hubbard, and more. New Orleans cuisine and global street food in Mardi Gras food booths around the park. This is one of the best value events at Universal — a major production included in the ticket price.
SeaWorld Seven Seas Concert Series — February	1 Feb: Saliva · 7 Feb: Bow Wow · 14 Feb: The Click Five · 15 Feb: Warrant · 20 Feb: Jefferson Starship · 21 Feb: Omar Courtz · 22 Feb: Pop 2000 Tour (Chris Kirkpatrick of NSYNC, O-Town, Ryan Cabrera, LFO) · 27 Feb: Ying Yang Twins & Paul Wall · 28 Feb: Gene Simmons. All confirmed, included with park admission at Bayside Stadium 7pm.

March 2026

Event	Details & Dates
EPCOT International Flower & Garden Festival	4 March – 1 June 2026 (confirmed). EPCOT's beloved springtime festival transforms the park with an extraordinary display of flowering topiaries, manicured gardens, and living sculptures of Disney characters. Highlights: dozens of Disney character topiaries (including new additions inspired by recent films); Butterfly House near the Imagination Pavilion; Rosewalk Play Garden by the lagoon; the Garden Rocks Concert Series at America Gardens Theatre on weekends; Outdoor Kitchens serving fresh spring cuisine and garden-inspired dishes throughout World Showcase. 2026 topiaries include characters from Wish, Alice in Wonderland, and classic Disney. Included with EPCOT park admission.
Universal Mardi Gras (continued)	Through 4 April 2026. See February entry.
Universal Butterbeer Season	1 March – 31 May 2026 (confirmed). A special celebration across all three Wizarding World of Harry Potter areas — Hogsmeade at Islands of Adventure, Diagon Alley at Universal Studios Florida, and Ministry of Magic at Epic Universe. Marking the 25th anniversary of the first Harry Potter film. Limited-edition Butterbeer flavours and varieties, exclusive

Event	Details & Dates
	themed merchandise, and special HP-anniversary experiences throughout Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley. Included with regular park admission.
SeaWorld Seven Seas Concert Series — March	7 Mar: Connor Price · 15 Mar: Tiffany, Bow Wow Wow & Animotion (80s Night) · 21 Mar: All-4-One · 22 Mar: Soulja Boy & Baby Bash · 28 Mar: Fitz and the Tantrums. All confirmed, Bayside Stadium 7pm, included with admission.
SeaWorld St. Patrick's Day Celebration	17 March 2026 (confirmed). Irish-inspired food, drink, and live entertainment as part of the Seven Seas Food Festival experience. Included with park admission.

April 2026

Event	Details & Dates
EPCOT Flower & Garden Festival (continued)	Through 1 June 2026. See March entry.
Universal Mardi Gras (continued)	Through 4 April 2026.
Universal Butterbeer Season (continued)	Through 31 May 2026. See March entry.
SeaWorld Seven Seas Concert Series — April	4 Apr: Brett Young · 10 Apr: Chris Janson. Further dates to be confirmed — check seaworld.com/orlando/events for latest additions.
SeaWorld Cinco de Mayo Celebration	Late April – early May 2026 (confirmed). Mexican cuisine, festive music, and cultural entertainment as part of the Seven Seas Food Festival. Exact dates TBC — check seaworld.com.

May 2026

Event	Details & Dates
EPCOT Flower & Garden Festival (continued)	Through 1 June 2026.
Universal Butterbeer Season (continued)	Through 31 May 2026. Final weeks of the HP 25th anniversary special celebration.
Disney Cool Kids' Summer begins	26 May 2026 (confirmed). Disney's family-focused summer campaign launches on Memorial Day weekend and runs through 8 September 2026. New and limited-time experiences across all four parks (see June–September entries for details).

Event	Details & Dates
Soarin' Across America opens at EPCOT	By Memorial Day 2026 (confirmed). A brand new limited-time version of the beloved Soarin' attraction, replacing Soarin' Around the World for the summer season. In celebration of America's 250th anniversary, this flight film takes guests on a cinematic aerial journey across the United States. Disney has confirmed it opens by Memorial Day; it is a temporary engagement running through summer 2026.
SeaWorld Seven Seas Concert Series — May	9 May: Grupo Manía · 16 May: Proyecto Uno · 17 May: Elvis Crespo. Final concerts of the Seven Seas season, all confirmed at Bayside Stadium 7pm.
SeaWorld Viva La Música	Early–mid May 2026 (confirmed as part of Seven Seas Festival). A Latin music and cuisine celebration — new for 2026 as part of the Seven Seas Food Festival lineup. Check seaworld.com for specific dates.
SeaWorld Military Appreciation Month	May 2026 (confirmed). A new addition for 2026 — the entire month of May dedicated to honouring active-duty military and veterans with special pricing, tributes, and experiences. Specific details at seaworld.com.

June 2026

Event	Details & Dates
EPCOT Flower & Garden Festival — final days	Through 1 June 2026.
Disney Cool Kids' Summer (in progress)	26 May – 8 September 2026. Active summer programme. New experiences include: Jessie's Roundup at the Diamond Horseshoe in Magic Kingdom (Toy Story characters in the first live show at that venue in over 20 years); GoofyCore at CommuniCore Hall at EPCOT (interactive games, dance parties, Goofy-led activities); Bluey & Bingo at Conservation Station in Animal Kingdom (character meet-and-dance experience with Australian animals); Disney Jr. Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Live! at Hollywood Studios (new stage show). Characters available across all four parks during the resort guest 30-minute early entry window.
SeaWorld Electric Ocean	22 May – 30 August 2026 (confirmed). SeaWorld's flagship summer nighttime spectacular returns with all-new offerings for 2026. Features Club SeaGlow (bioluminescent glow party), new live shows, a special World Ocean's Day celebration, and the all-new Ignite finale — a combined drone and fireworks spectacular described as record-breaking in scale. Electric Ocean runs on select dates throughout the summer; check seaworld.com for the full schedule.
Both Disney Water Parks open simultaneously	Both Typhoon Lagoon and Blizzard Beach are scheduled to operate together through summer 2026 — for the first time in years, both parks will be open at the same time. Disney Resort hotel guests receive free water park admission on their check-in day during this window. Check disneyworld.com for confirmed dates closer to travel.

July 2026

Event	Details & Dates
Disney Cool Kids' Summer (in progress)	26 May – 8 September 2026. Peak summer period. Full programme as described in June entry. America's Independence Day (4 July) will be marked with special park entertainment and extended hours.
Disney 4th of July Celebration	4 July 2026. America's Independence Day is celebrated across all Walt Disney World parks with special patriotic entertainment, extended evening shows, and a star-spangled Soarin' Across America — part of Disney Celebrates America, the company-wide commemoration of the USA's 250th birthday.
SeaWorld Electric Ocean (in progress)	22 May – 30 August 2026. Peak summer programme — see June entry.
SeaWorld Bands, Brew & BBQ	July 2026 (confirmed; exact dates TBC). SeaWorld's summer music and food event returns with live concerts, craft beers, and barbecue cuisine, plus all-new chef-led food demonstrations and a new entertainment lineup for 2026.
SeaWorld Independence Day 4th of July Spectacular	4 July 2026 (confirmed). Special patriotic fireworks, themed entertainment, and festivities at SeaWorld Orlando. Included with park admission.

August 2026

Event	Details & Dates
Disney Cool Kids' Summer — final weeks	26 May – 8 September 2026. Final stretch of the summer programme.
SeaWorld Electric Ocean — final weeks	Through 30 August 2026.
Disney EPCOT Food & Wine Festival	Late August 2026 – mid November 2026 (estimated start: 27 August 2026; exact dates TBC pending Disney announcement). EPCOT's most popular festival — and one of the best food and beverage experiences at any theme park in the world. Global Marketplace booths serve dishes and drinks from dozens of countries around the World Showcase and beyond. Eat to the Beat Concert Series runs nightly at America Gardens Theatre. Festival Passport for stamp-collecting. Festival merchandise, cooking demonstrations, and special dining events. Included with EPCOT park admission. Disney typically announces the official start date in late spring; check disneyworld.com for confirmation.
Universal Back to Hogwarts	1 August – 1 September 2026 (confirmed). A special celebration across all three Wizarding World areas marking the traditional September 1st return to Hogwarts. Limited-time Harry Potter-themed activities, merchandise, and experiences. Part of the HP 25th anniversary year. Included with park admission.

Event	Details & Dates
Universal Halloween Horror Nights 35 begins	28 August 2026 (confirmed). The 35th anniversary of Universal's Halloween Horror Nights — confirmed as the earliest start in the event's history. Runs on select nights from 28 August through 1 November 2026. A separately ticketed after-hours event at Universal Studios Florida. Typically features 10 all-new haunted houses, immersive scare zones throughout the park, live entertainment, and themed food and drinks. The 2025 event featured Terrifier, Five Nights at Freddy's, WWE horror, Fallout, and more. 2026 house themes have not yet been announced, but an It-themed house is rumoured. This is one of the premier Halloween events in the United States and tickets sell out. Book early at universalorlando.com.
Disney Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party begins	Expected: August 2026 – 31 October 2026. Disney has confirmed the event will return in 2026 on select nights. As of publication, specific dates and ticket prices have not yet been released — Disney typically announces MNSSHP dates in April or May. Book as soon as tickets go on sale; the event has sold out every single date for the last two years. The party runs 7pm–midnight, with entry from 4pm. Includes: Mickey's Boo-to-You Halloween Parade; Disney's Not-So-Spooky Spectacular fireworks with projections; Hocus Pocus Villain Spelltacular stage show (confirmed returning); trick-or-treat trails throughout the park; Halloween character meet-and-greets; ride overlays. Adults may wear costumes — the only time guests over 14 may do so at Magic Kingdom. Separately ticketed; does not require standard park admission.
SeaWorld Halloween Spooktacular begins	29 August – 1 November 2026 (confirmed). SeaWorld's family-friendly daytime Halloween event. Trick-or-treating with reusable bag purchase, Sesame Street Halloween Parade, character meet-and-greets, fall-themed activities and food, and new for 2026: an all-new pumpkin carving festival with Spookley the Square Pumpkin. Included with park admission.

September 2026

Event	Details & Dates
Disney Cool Kids' Summer — final days	Through 8 September 2026.
Disney EPCOT Food & Wine Festival (in progress)	Continues through mid-November. Full Food & Wine programme running. Best weekday attendance to avoid peak weekend crowds.
Universal Halloween Horror Nights 35 (in progress)	Select nights throughout September. Runs Wednesday–Sunday typically, plus additional dates closer to Halloween. Peak attendance weekends can have very long waits; weeknights are significantly less crowded. Express Pass for HHN is available but separate from the standard Universal Express Pass — check universalorlando.com.
Universal Dark Arts at Hogwarts Castle	Select fall nights, September–October 2026 (confirmed; exact dates TBC). The spectacular nighttime projection show on the Hogwarts Castle facade at Islands of Adventure, with Death Eaters roaming the streets of

Event	Details & Dates
	Diagon Alley at Studios. One of the most visually stunning events at any Orlando park. Included with park admission on select evenings.
SeaWorld Howl-O-Scream begins	11 September – 31 October 2026 (confirmed). SeaWorld's separately ticketed adult Halloween event — deliberately launched later than Universal's HHN to stagger the Halloween calendar. Features haunted houses, scare zones, themed bars, and full coaster access at night. All-new houses and scare zones for 2026. Not included with standard park admission; a separate ticket is required. For adults and older teens — this is not a family-friendly event.
SeaWorld Halloween Spooktacular (in progress)	Through 1 November 2026. Family-friendly daytime Halloween programme continues. See August entry.
Universal Back to Hogwarts — final days	Through 1 September 2026.

October 2026

Event	Details & Dates
Disney EPCOT Food & Wine Festival (in progress)	Continues through mid-November. Peak autumn atmosphere with cooler temperatures and full festival programme.
Disney Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party (in progress)	Select nights through 31 October 2026. Halloween night itself is always one of the most popular dates — book well in advance.
Universal Halloween Horror Nights 35 (in progress)	Select nights through 1 November 2026. The final weeks leading up to Halloween are the busiest of the entire event season. October weekends sell out. Book tickets early.
Universal Dark Arts at Hogwarts Castle (in progress)	Continues on select fall nights through October. See September entry.
SeaWorld Howl-O-Scream (in progress)	Select nights through 31 October 2026. Halloween night (Saturday 31 October) is the final and most atmospheric night of the event.
SeaWorld Halloween Spooktacular (in progress)	Through 1 November 2026.

November 2026

Event	Details & Dates
Disney EPCOT Food & Wine Festival — final weeks	Through approximately mid-November 2026. Exact closing date TBC — Disney has not confirmed the 2026 end date. Estimated close: 22 November 2026.
Disney EPCOT Festival of the Holidays	27 November – 30 December 2026 (estimated; Disney has not yet confirmed exact 2026 dates — these are strongly supported by historical precedent). EPCOT's winter festival celebrating holiday traditions from cultures around the world. Highlights: Holiday Kitchens serving seasonal dishes representing different countries; Holiday Storytellers at each World Showcase pavilion sharing local holiday traditions; Joyful! gospel and jazz concert series; Candlelight Processional — a magnificent orchestral and choral retelling of the Christmas story with celebrity narrators, three times nightly at America Gardens Theatre (among the most popular events at any Disney park; book Candlelight Dining Package for guaranteed reserved seating). Included with EPCOT admission.
Disney Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party begins	Expected: approximately 6 November 2026 through 22 December 2026. Specific dates had not yet been released at publication — Disney typically announces MVMCP dates in June or July. Based on historical patterns (Thu/Fri/Sun pattern, ~25 party nights), expect the party to begin in early November and run multiple nights per week through the week before Christmas. Separately ticketed event at Magic Kingdom (7pm–midnight, entry from 4pm). Includes: Mickey's Most Merriest Celebration stage show at Cinderella Castle; Minnie's Wonderful Christmastime Fireworks (exclusive to the party); Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Parade with snowfall on Main Street USA; free cookies and hot chocolate throughout the park; rare character meet-and-greets in holiday costumes. 2025 ticket prices ranged from approximately $170–235 per person depending on date.
Universal Holidays at Universal Orlando	14 November 2026 – 3 January 2027 (confirmed). Universal's holiday celebration covers all parks and is included with regular admission. Features: Christmas in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter across Hogsmeade, Diagon Alley, and Ministry of Magic at Epic Universe (festive decorations, carols, special wand experiences); Grinchmas Who-liday Spectacular in Seuss Landing at Islands of Adventure (theatrical retelling of How the Grinch Stole Christmas with the Grinch himself); Universal's Holiday Parade featuring Macy's (massive balloon floats through Studios Florida); special holiday dining at all on-site hotels; New Year's Eve festivities at parks and CityWalk (details TBC).
SeaWorld Christmas Celebration begins	6 November 2026 – 3 January 2027 (confirmed). SeaWorld Orlando transforms into a winter wonderland with over 3 million lights, 40+ Christmas-inspired food and drink offerings, and an extensive programme of entertainment. Highlights: O Wondrous Night (live nativity show with life-size puppets and live animals — one of the most popular Christmas shows in Florida); Winter Wonderland on Ice (award-winning ice skating spectacular); Mrs. Claus' Magic Kitchen show; Sea of Trees (dancing light forest over the lagoon); Sesame Street Christmas Parade; Rudolph's Christmas Town character meet-and-greets with Santa. New for 2026: an all-new drone show. Snow flurries along the waterfront on select nights. Included with park admission. Fireworks nightly at park close through 31 December.

December 2026

Event	Details & Dates
Disney EPCOT Festival of the Holidays (in progress)	Through 30 December 2026 (estimated). Full programme including Candlelight Processional. Peak holiday atmosphere — arguably the most magical time of year at EPCOT. Crowds are high the week of Christmas; book dining well in advance.
Disney Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party — final dates	Expected through approximately 22 December 2026. Christmas week itself typically does not have party nights due to high general park crowds. Check disneyworld.com once dates are released.
Universal Holidays at Universal Orlando (in progress)	Through 3 January 2027. Christmas week and New Year's Eve are peak attendance periods at Universal. If visiting during this window, consider Express Pass or arrive early.
SeaWorld Christmas Celebration (in progress)	Through 3 January 2027. Christmas Day (25 December) and New Year's Eve (31 December) are two of the most popular nights. Fireworks on New Year's Eve with ocean-inspired festivities.

2026 Events Quick Reference — All Parks

Date	Event	Ticket Type
Jan 16 – Feb 23	EPCOT Festival of the Arts	Included with EPCOT admission
Jan 23–24	Universal Rock the Universe	Separately ticketed
Jan 30 – May 17	SeaWorld Seven Seas Food Festival (incl. concerts)	Included with SeaWorld admission
Feb 7 – Apr 4	Universal Mardi Gras: International Flavors of Carnaval	Included with Universal admission
Mar 1 – May 31	Universal Butterbeer Season (HP 25th anniversary)	Included with Universal admission
Mar 4 – Jun 1	EPCOT International Flower & Garden Festival	Included with EPCOT admission
May 26 – Sep 8*	Disney Cool Kids' Summer (all 4 parks) — *confirm dates at disneyworld.com	Included with park admission
May/Jun (by Memorial Day)	Soarin' Across America opens at EPCOT	Included with EPCOT admission
May 22 – Aug 30	SeaWorld Electric Ocean (nighttime spectacular)	Included with SeaWorld admission
Aug 1 – Sep 1	Universal Back to Hogwarts (HP 25th anniversary)	Included with Universal admission

Date	Event	Ticket Type
Late Aug – mid Nov (est.)	EPCOT International Food & Wine Festival	Included with EPCOT admission
Aug 28 – Nov 1	Universal Halloween Horror Nights 35	Separately ticketed (after hours)
Aug 29 – Nov 1	SeaWorld Halloween Spooktacular (family, daytime)	Included with SeaWorld admission
Aug–Oct (dates TBC)	Disney Mickey's Not-So-Scary Halloween Party	Separately ticketed (after hours)
Sep 11 – Oct 31	SeaWorld Howl-O-Scream (adult, after dark)	Separately ticketed
Fall nights (dates TBC)	Universal Dark Arts at Hogwarts Castle	Included with Universal admission
~Nov 6 – ~Dec 22 (est.)	Disney Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party	Separately ticketed (after hours)
Nov 14, 2026 – Jan 3, 2027	Universal Holidays at Universal Orlando	Included with Universal admission
~Nov 27 – Dec 30 (est.)	EPCOT International Festival of the Holidays	Included with EPCOT admission
Nov 6, 2026 – Jan 3, 2027	SeaWorld Christmas Celebration	Included with SeaWorld admission

Planning Around Events — Key Tips

- EPCOT's four annual festivals now cover almost the entire year. If you are at Walt Disney World for any stretch between January and December, EPCOT will have a festival running. The Food & Wine Festival (autumn) is consistently the most popular and the most culinarily ambitious.
- Universal's Mardi Gras (February–April) is the most underrated event in Orlando. A spectacular nightly parade with genuine Kern Studios floats, major live concerts, and world-class food — all free with regular admission. Visiting Universal in late February or March is excellent value.
- Halloween season (August–October) means all three parks are running major Halloween events simultaneously. Universal's HHN and SeaWorld's Howl-O-Scream are separate-ticket adult events; Disney's MNSSHP and SeaWorld's Spooktacular are more family-friendly. If you have teenagers or adults in your party who love horror, budget for HHN tickets — it is world-class.
- The week before Christmas is one of the busiest periods across all Orlando parks. If visiting in December, earlier in the month (first two weeks) tends to have noticeably lower crowds than Christmas week.
- For separately ticketed events (MNSSHP, MVMCP, HHN), the park typically closes to day guests 1–2 hours before the event begins. If you want both a full day in the

park AND the party, you need two separate tickets for that day — plan and budget accordingly.

- Disney's MNSSHP and MVMCP tickets should be purchased as soon as they go on sale (typically April–May for Halloween, June–July for Christmas). Every date has sold out in recent years.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **ORLANDO'S REAL PEAK WEEK IS NOT CHRISTMAS — IT'S NEW YEAR**

The single most crowded week in all of Orlando is not Christmas week itself — it is the window between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Every major park operates at or near capacity every single day in this period. If you want Orlando in December, the first two weeks of the month are dramatically calmer and the Christmas decorations are fully in place by then. If your dates fall in that final week, the Disney Private VIP Tour is not merely a luxury — it is the only practical way to enjoy a park day rather than spend it standing in queues.

I — Shopping Guide: Malls, Outlets & Designer Finds

Orlando is one of the great shopping destinations in the United States — and for British and European visitors in particular, the combination of no UK VAT on purchases, competitive dollar exchange rates, and the sheer range of brands available makes it exceptional. Budget at least one full day for shopping, and consider one dedicated shopping evening at Disney Springs or CityWalk.

The Mall at Millenia — Orlando's Premier Luxury Mall

The Mall at Millenia is Orlando's definitive luxury shopping destination — a world-class collection of high-end European and American designer brands under one roof. Over 150 stores across 1.1 million square feet, anchored by Bloomingdale's, Neiman Marcus, and Macy's. The mall attracts significant international tourist traffic specifically for its concentration of brands not found elsewhere in Central Florida.

Key Brands at Millenia

Hermès · Chanel · Louis Vuitton · Gucci · Tiffany & Co. · Rolex · Cartier · Prada · Moncler · Valentino · Versace · Balenciaga · Armani · Burberry · Jimmy Choo · Apple · Bose · Bloomingdale's · Neiman Marcus · Macy's · The Capital Grille (dining)

Free personal styling service: reserve a private suite with champagne and a professional stylist (minimum $1,000 spend; call 407-399-8025). Complimentary hotel delivery for purchases (call 407-363-3555). Valet parking available.

Address	4200 Conroy Rd, Orlando, FL 32839 (just off I-4 Exit 78)
Hours	Mon–Fri: 11am–9pm · Sat: 10am–9pm · Sun: 11am–7pm
Distance from Encore/Reunion	~20–25 minutes north via I-4
Parking	Free self-parking; valet available
Website	mallatmillenia.com

The Florida Mall — Orlando's Largest Shopping Centre

With over 1.8 million square feet and more than 250 stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues, The Florida Mall is Central Florida's largest shopping destination. Located close to both the airport and the Disney corridor, it is the most family-friendly of the major malls — with an Apple store, American Girl, and a wide range of mid-range to premium brands.

Key brands	Apple · Zara · H&M · Sephora · Victoria's Secret · American Girl · Coach · Uniqlo · Tesla · Macy's · Dillard's · JCPenney
Address	8001 S Orange Blossom Trail, Orlando, FL 32809
Hours	Mon–Sat: 10am–9pm · Sun: 11am–7pm
Distance from MCO	~15 minutes. From Encore/Reunion: ~20–25 minutes.
Parking	Free

Orlando International Premium Outlets — International Drive

Located on International Drive, this is one of Florida's most visited outlet centres and a major destination for international visitors. Over 180 stores offer discounts of up to 65% on a wide selection of global brands — with a strong emphasis on sportswear, fashion, and accessories. The location on I-Drive places it 10 minutes from Universal and SeaWorld.

Key brands	Nike · Adidas · Coach · Calvin Klein · Michael Kors · Polo Ralph Lauren · Levi's · Kate Spade · Gap · Tommy Hilfiger · Under Armour · Lacoste
Address	4951 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819
Hours	Mon–Sat: 10am–9pm · Sun: 10am–9pm (seasonal variations)
Savings tip	Download the free Simon Outlets app before visiting — it contains digital coupons, brand directories, and exclusive promotions that can add 10–20% off already discounted prices.
Parking	Free. Can get very busy on weekends — arrive early.
Website	premiumoutlets.com/outlet/orlando-international

Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets — Near Walt Disney World

The more upscale and relaxed of Orlando's two Premium Outlet centres, located on Vineland Avenue just minutes from Walt Disney World's front gates. The luxury brand presence is stronger here than at the I-Drive location, and the shopping environment is noticeably more comfortable — better layout, cleaner facilities, shaded walkways, and multilingual staff. For villa guests at Encore and Reunion, this is the closest major outlet.

Key brands	Gucci · Burberry · Versace · BOSS · Armani · Jimmy Choo · Saks Fifth Avenue OFF 5TH · Tory Burch · Kate Spade · Nike · Under Armour · Disney Character Warehouse
Disney Character Warehouse	A dedicated Disney outlet store selling park merchandise — clothing, toys, homeware, and accessories — at up to 70% below theme park retail prices. Unmissable for families.
Address	8200 Vineland Ave, Orlando, FL 32821

Hours	Mon–Sat: 10am–9pm · Sun: 10am–8pm
Distance from Disney	Under 5 minutes from Disney Springs / Animal Kingdom hotel corridor.
Distance from Encore/Reunion	Approximately 5–10 minutes — the closest major outlet to both resorts.
International visitor services	Currency exchange, luggage storage, multilingual staff assistance.
Parking	Free
Website	premiumoutlets.com/outlet/orlando-vineland

Disney Springs — Shopping, Dining & Entertainment

Disney Springs is Walt Disney World's retail, dining, and entertainment district on the eastern side of the resort. Admission is free, parking is free, and it requires no theme park ticket. It is not an outlet centre — it is a curated waterfront complex of approximately 100 shops, 50 restaurants, and multiple entertainment venues. World of Disney is the world's largest Disney retail store: everything from character clothing to homeware, collectibles, limited editions, and Disney Springs-exclusive merchandise.

Notable retailers	World of Disney · UNIQLO · Lego · Tommy Bahama · Kate Spade · Free People · Anthropologie · Alex and Ani · The Art of Disney
Notable dining	The BOATHOUSE (upscale seafood) · STK Orlando · Wine Bar George · Erin McKenna's Bakery · Wolfgang Puck Bar & Grill
Hours	Shops generally 10am–11pm. Restaurants later. Hours vary by venue.
Distance from Encore/Reunion	~20–25 minutes
Admission	Free. Free parking in multi-level garages.

Shopping Tips

- Pack a large, foldable bag or bring an empty suitcase specifically for Orlando shopping. Both Premium Outlet centres and Millenia sell items you will want to bring home in quantity. Consider buying a cheap holdall at Target or Walmart early in your trip.
- Florida sales tax is approximately 6.5–7% and is added at the till (it is not included in displayed prices). This is significantly less than UK VAT at 20%.
- Download the Simon Outlets app before visiting either Premium Outlet — it contains brand-specific coupons and current promotions. Many brands offer an additional 10–20% off in-store on top of already reduced outlet prices.
- The Disney Character Warehouse at Vineland Premium Outlets is exceptional value for families. The same Disney-branded clothing, toys, and accessories sold in the parks for $40–50 are often $8–15 in the outlet store.

- If your group plans significant purchases at Millenia, the personal styling suite service is genuinely worth booking (407-399-8025). You get a private air-conditioned suite, champagne, and a personal shopper with access to every brand in the mall. Reserve in advance.
- Black Friday (late November) transforms all Orlando shopping venues. The Premium Outlets open as early as 5am, and savings are exceptional. If your trip coincides, plan for extreme crowds — or shop online early the morning before opening.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **THE PRICE YOU SEE IS NOT THE PRICE YOU PAY — BUT IN A GOOD WAY**

In most of Europe, sales tax is already embedded in displayed prices. In Florida, sales tax of approximately 6.5–7% is added at the till on top of the shelf price — so what you see is not what you pay, but in a good way: prices look lower than they are in real terms, and they genuinely are lower. On top of that, international visitors often benefit from a favourable exchange rate. A handbag displayed at $420 rings through at around $448 with tax — and the same item may retail for significantly more at home. On larger luxury purchases, the combined effect of lower retail prices, lower tax rate, and exchange rate can add up to a very meaningful saving.

J — Essential Phone Numbers & Emergency Contacts

Keep this section accessible throughout your trip. Save the most critical numbers to your phone before you leave the UK.

🚨 **EMERGENCY — Police, Fire, Ambulance**

DIAL 911

Dial 911 from any phone — including a UK mobile — for all emergencies in the United States. Police, fire, and ambulance. Free call, available 24 hours.

Medical & Safety

Emergency (Police / Fire / Ambulance)	911
Non-emergency Police — Orange County	(407) 836-4357
Poison Control Centre (free, 24/7)	1-800-222-1222
AdventHealth Celebration Hospital (nearest to Disney, Encore & Reunion)	(407) 303-4000 · 400 Celebration Place, Celebration FL 34747
Orlando Health — Orlando Regional Medical Center	(321) 841-5111 · 52 W Underwood St, Orlando FL 32806
CVS 24-hour Pharmacy — I-Drive area	(407) 996-8879
Walgreens 24-hour Pharmacy locator	walgreens.com — use store finder for nearest 24hr location
Florida Highway Patrol (non-emergency)	(407) 737-2213

Theme Parks & Attractions

Walt Disney World Guest Services	(407) 939-5277 · disneyworld.disney.go.com
Universal Orlando Resort	(407) 363-8000 · universalorlando.com

SeaWorld Orlando	(407) 545-5550 · seaworld.com/orlando
Discovery Cove	(407) 513-4600 · discoverycove.com
Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex	(855) 433-4210 · kennedyspacecenter.com
LEGOLAND Florida	(877) 350-5346 · legoland.com/florida

Rental Car Companies — General & Roadside

Enterprise	1-855-266-9289
Alamo	1-844-357-5138
National	1-844-393-9989
Hertz	1-800-654-3131
Avis	1-800-633-3469
Budget	1-800-527-0700
Dollar	1-800-800-4000
Thrifty	1-800-847-4389
Sixt	1-888-749-8227

Transport, Tolls & Travel

SunPass Customer Service	1-888-TOLL-FLA (1-888-865-5352) · sunpass.com
Visitor Toll Pass	visitortollpass.com · available at MCO Level 1 kiosk
MEARS Connect (airport shuttles)	mearstransportation.com
Orlando International Airport (MCO)	(407) 825-2001 · flymco.com
Uber	uber.com / Uber app
Lyft / Minnie Vans	lyft.com / Lyft app
Brightline (MCO ↔ Miami)	gobrightline.com

Shopping & Visitor Services

Mall at Millenia — Concierge & Styling	(407) 363-3555 · mallatmillenia.com

Mall at Millenia — Tailoring appointments	(407) 399-8025
The Florida Mall	(407) 851-6255
Orlando International Premium Outlets	(407) 352-9600
Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets	(407) 238-7787
Disney Springs Information	(407) 939-5277
Visit Orlando Visitor Center	(407) 363-5872 · visitorlando.com

Resorts — Encore Resort at Reunion & Reunion Resort

Encore Resort at Reunion	encorereunion.com
Reunion Resort	reunionresort.com
Kerrie Potts — Exclusive Private Villas	+44 7771 554460 · exclusiveprivatevillas.com

K — Luxury Dining & VIP Experiences

Orlando's theme parks are not merely about rides. At the top of the market, both Disney and Universal offer Private VIP Tour experiences that transform the day entirely — a personal expert guide, zero queuing, private transport, and seamless door-to-door service. Equally, the dining scene has evolved to a point where signature restaurants inside and around the parks are genuinely worthy of a special occasion. This section covers the finest dining experiences across every park and the wider Orlando area, as well as the VIP Tour options that represent the ultimate way to experience Disney and Universal.

VIP Tour Experiences — The Ultimate Day

For guests who want to experience the parks at the highest possible level — no queuing, complete flexibility, expert insider knowledge, and private door-to-door service — both Disney and Universal offer Private VIP Tour programmes. These are the product that celebrities, VIPs, and families who visit frequently choose when they want the definitive park day. They are a significant investment, but the difference in experience is transformative.

Disney Private VIP Tour

Disney's Private VIP Tour is the gold standard of theme park experiences worldwide. A dedicated Disney 'Plaid' guide — so named for the distinctive tartan jacket worn by these specialist cast members — accompanies your group for the entire day, handling all logistics while you simply enjoy. No standby queues, no planning, no waiting. The guide navigates the park according to your priorities, secures Lightning Lane access for every attraction you wish to ride, and delivers an experience that no amount of advance planning can fully replicate independently.

Detail	Information
What is included	Your personal Plaid guide for the full tour duration. Expedited access to select attractions — the guide navigates Lightning Lane for your group throughout the day. Private door-to-door transportation between parks and between your hotel and the parks. Expert knowledge of every attraction, backstory, hidden detail, and park secret. Complete flexibility — your guide builds the day around your group's priorities and adapts in real time.
Duration & structure	Minimum 7 hours, maximum 10 hours. Guides are typically with you from park opening. You can visit a single park in depth or move between multiple parks on a Park Hopper day.
Pricing	Approximately $450–960 per hour (pricing varies by date, season, and demand — busier dates cost more). For a 7-hour minimum, budget from approximately $3,150–6,700 for the tour fee alone, for the whole group — not per person. Theme park admission must be purchased in addition to the tour fee.

Detail	Information
Group size	Private tours are exclusive to your group — up to 10 guests per guide. A single hourly rate covers the whole group regardless of size, making larger groups proportionally better value.
How to book	Call Disney's VIP Tours line: (407) 560-4033. Reservations can be made up to 60 days in advance. For peak dates (summer, Christmas, Easter), call as early as possible as availability is limited.
Tip — 2026 VIP Tour discount	Disney is offering a 20% discount on Private VIP Tours for select dates from late April through October 2026 for Disney Vacation Club members. If you are eligible, this is a meaningful saving — call the VIP Tours line to confirm current availability.

Is the Disney VIP Tour Worth It?

For families or groups with limited time, very young children, or anyone for whom waiting in queues would significantly detract from the day, the Private VIP Tour is exceptional value in a different sense from its headline cost. A guide who knows every shortcut, every operational detail, and every great viewing spot — who can pivot instantly when a ride goes down or a parade route changes — delivers a day that simply cannot be replicated independently. Guests consistently describe it as the best day they have ever had at Disney. If a single outstanding park day is your priority for the trip, the Disney Private VIP Tour is the finest way to achieve it.

Universal Orlando VIP Experience

Universal's VIP Tour programme covers all three parks: Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure, and Epic Universe. Unlike Disney's guide-only format, Universal's VIP Experience includes complimentary meals and valet parking as standard. Tours are available as non-exclusive (your group joins a small guided party of up to 12 guests) or as fully private (your group only, at a higher per-group rate).

Tour Option	Details
2-Park VIP Experience (Studios + Islands)	7-hour guided tour of Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure. Priority entrance to at least 10 major attractions across both parks. Complimentary breakfast and lunch included. Valet parking included (one vehicle). Merchandise discounts at participating stores. Tour departs from 9:30am, 10:30am, or 11:30am. Approximately $250–450 per person (non-exclusive). Admission not included.
Epic Universe VIP Experience	4-hour guided tour of Epic Universe. Priority entrance to select attractions, behind-the-scenes exclusive experience, VIP souvenir lanyard, valet parking. Prices start from approximately $380 per person, rising to $570–660 during peak summer periods. Separate Epic Universe admission required. Book well in advance — Epic Universe VIP Tours are in high demand since the park's 2025 opening.

Tour Option	Details
Combined Epic + 1 Other Park	7-hour tours combining Epic Universe with either Studios or Islands are available. Approximately $380–570 per person depending on season. The most efficient way to cover Epic Universe and one legacy park in a single day.
Private VIP Experience	Fully private tours (your group only, no other guests) are available at a significantly higher per-group rate. Book by calling (866) 346-9350. Private tours provide maximum flexibility and the most exclusive experience.
What all tours include	Expert guided narration, priority access to participating attractions, VIP credential, merchandise discount, valet parking, and reserved show seating where available. Meals included on 7-hour tours.
How to book	Non-exclusive tours: universalorlando.com or by phone. Private tours: call (866) 346-9350. Epic Universe VIP Tours are in particularly high demand — book as early as possible.

VIP Tour Comparison at a Glance

Tour	Key Facts	Best For
Disney Private VIP Tour	Fully private, group-rate pricing. 7–10 hrs. Plaid guide + private transport. All queues bypassed. ~$450–960/hr for the whole group. Book: (407) 560-4033.	The ultimate luxury Disney day. Best for families who want the park at the highest level with zero compromise.
Universal 2-Park VIP	Non-exclusive or private option. 7 hrs. Includes meals + valet. ~$250–450/person. Covers Studios + Islands. Book: universalorlando.com.	Excellent value for a full Universal day. Meals included make the day self-contained.
Universal Epic Universe VIP	Non-exclusive or private. 4 hrs in Epic Universe alone. ~$380–660/person depending on season. Book early.	Essential for first-time Epic Universe visitors who want the definitive experience of the new park.

Signature Dining at Walt Disney World

Disney's dining programme spans over 200 restaurants. At the signature level, several rank among the finest in Florida — not merely within a theme park context, but by any culinary standard. The advance booking system requires planning: the best tables are taken within minutes of the 60-day window opening. For the most sought-after reservations, book at exactly 6:00am Eastern time, 60 days before your chosen date.

Disney operates an Advance Dining Reservation (ADR) system for all table-service restaurants. Reservations open 60 days before your dining date, at 6:00am Eastern time. For the most popular restaurants — especially character dining, signature restaurants, and EPCOT World Showcase spots — slots disappear within minutes of the booking window opening. A Disney Resort hotel guest can book their entire trip's dining at once on their check-in date, 60 days out. Villa guests book 60 days before each individual dining date. Set an alarm and book the moment the window opens for anything you really want.

- Book via the My Disney Experience app or at disneyworld.disney.go.com/dining
- No-shows and late cancellations (within 24 hours) incur a per-person charge of approximately $10–25 depending on the restaurant.
- If you cannot get a reservation, check again regularly — cancellations appear constantly in the days before. Same-day walk-ins are occasionally possible for lunch, particularly on weekday afternoons.

Disney's Best Table-Service Restaurants — Our Picks

Restaurant	What to Know
Be Our Guest — Magic Kingdom	The most magical dining room in all of Walt Disney World: the ballroom from Beauty and the Beast, with towering arched windows, falling snow outside, and enormous chandeliers. Table service at dinner. Worth booking purely for the setting — the food (French-inspired, including beef tenderloin and roast chicken) is good rather than exceptional. One of the hardest reservations in Disney. Book exactly 60 days out.
Skipper Canteen — Magic Kingdom	The best-kept secret in Magic Kingdom dining. Set inside the Jungle Cruise boathouse, the menu spans the 'world regions' of the ride — South American, Southeast Asian, and African dishes with genuine ambition and variety. Consistently underbooked compared to its quality. A great choice for anyone bored of the usual park food.
Space 220 — EPCOT	One of the most theatrical dining experiences in any theme park. A simulated 'elevator' lift takes you to a space station 220 miles above Earth, where curved windows show a live view of the planet below. Modern American cuisine. The experience is extraordinary; the food is secondary but perfectly good. Dinner is more spectacular than lunch.
Le Cellier — EPCOT Canada Pavilion	The most sought-after steakhouse reservation in EPCOT. Signature Canadian beef, exceptional cheddar cheese soup, and a cosy wine cellar atmosphere in the Canada pavilion. Extremely hard to book. Well worth the effort for meat lovers.
Topolino's Terrace — Disney's Riviera Resort	Rooftop restaurant at the Riviera Resort with sweeping views of the Disney property, including distant fireworks sightlines. Excellent breakfast character dining (Minnie, Mickey, Daisy, Donald in artist costumes) and

Restaurant	What to Know
	refined dinner service. More accessible bookings than Magic Kingdom and EPCOT restaurants. One of the best character dining options for adults who want great food alongside the characters.
California Grill — Disney's Contemporary Resort	The penthouse restaurant of Disney's Contemporary Resort — and the best fireworks-viewing restaurant in all of Walt Disney World. Request a window table and time your booking for a summer evening when Magic Kingdom's nightly fireworks light up the sky at 9pm. Sophisticated sushi and wood-fired California cuisine.
Flying Fish — Disney's BoardWalk	Consistently ranked among the best seafood restaurants on Disney property. The potato-crusted red snapper with leek fondue is a signature dish that has been on the menu for years because it is simply that good. More accessible bookings than the resort's other signature restaurants.
Homecomin' — Disney Springs	Celebrity chef Art Smith's Florida-Southern restaurant at Disney Springs. Farm-to-table, farm-fresh ingredients, and the best fried chicken on Disney property — perhaps the best in Orlando. Signature Shine Cake, moonshine cocktails, and a back porch with a genuine Southern porch atmosphere. Weekend brunch (Saturday and Sunday) is outstanding. No park admission required — park at Disney Springs for free.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **CALIFORNIA GRILL — THE FIREWORKS RETURN SECRET**

If you dine at California Grill (Contemporary Resort) any evening, you can return to the rooftop observation deck later that same night to watch Magic Kingdom's fireworks — even after your meal has finished and your bill is paid. Keep your dining receipt as proof of visit and show it at the podium on your return. The rooftop view over the Seven Seas Lagoon is arguably the finest fireworks vantage point in all of Walt Disney World, and most diners have already left by the time the show begins.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **SKIPPER CANTEEN — THE BEST WALK-UP TABLE IN MAGIC KINGDOM**

Skipper Canteen in Adventureland is consistently one of the best restaurants in Magic Kingdom by food quality — and one of the easiest to walk into. Most guests pass straight by it on the way to the rides. Set inside the Jungle Cruise boathouse with elaborate theming, the menu covers South American, Southeast Asian, and African dishes with genuine ambition. Walk-up availability is common even on busy days. If your ADR falls through or you simply want a proper sit-down lunch without any advance planning, head here first.

Quick Service Worth Knowing About

Disney quick service has improved dramatically over the past decade. Mobile ordering through the My Disney Experience app is available at virtually every quick-service location — skip the queue entirely by ordering ahead and selecting your pickup time. These are worth seeking out:

- Columbia Harbour House (Magic Kingdom, Liberty Square): New England seafood — lobster rolls, clam chowder, fried shrimp, with lighter healthy sides. Consistently the best

quick-service food in Magic Kingdom. Two-storey restaurant with a quiet upstairs seating area that most guests walk past.

- Les Halles Boulangerie-Patisserie (EPCOT, France Pavilion): Authentic French boulangerie with croissants, quiches, sandwiches, and pastries baked throughout the day. Ham and cheese croissants, chocolate croissants, proper French coffee. A genuine highlight of EPCOT's World Showcase.
- Satuli Canteen (Animal Kingdom, Pandora): Heavily themed Avatar restaurant serving genuinely creative bowls — cheeseburger pods, blueberry cream cheese mousse, and rice and veggie bowls with tuber sauce. Consistent fan favourite.
- Woody's Lunch Box (Hollywood Studios, Toy Story Land): Breakfast here (scrambled egg brisket bowl, pastry tarts) is one of the best quick-service breakfasts in any Disney park. Go early before the queue builds.

Character Dining — Worth It for Families

Character dining allows you to meet Disney characters while eating a full sit-down meal — often the most time-efficient way to get meaningful character interactions without standing in separate meet-and-greet queues. Characters visit each table multiple times during the meal for photos and autographs.

Experience	Overview
Topolino's Terrace (Riviera Resort) — Breakfast	Minnie, Mickey, Donald, and Daisy in artist outfits. One of the most charming character meals in Disney. Adults enjoy the food; children love the characters. Book 60 days out.
Chef Mickey's (Contemporary Resort) — Breakfast & Dinner	The classic character breakfast: Mickey, Minnie, Pluto, Goofy, and Donald in a bright, energetic setting adjacent to the monorail. The food is a buffet rather than spectacular, but the character interaction is some of the best on property. Monorail access from Magic Kingdom.
Akershus Royal Banquet Hall (EPCOT, Norway Pavilion) — All meals	Princess character dining in a Norwegian medieval hall. Cinderella, Ariel, Belle, Snow White, Aurora, or Jasmine — the cast rotates. Better food than Cinderella's Royal Table at a slightly more accessible price and booking level.
Boma — Flavours of Africa (Animal Kingdom Lodge) — Breakfast & Dinner	African buffet with remarkable range and quality. Not character dining, but a genuine cultural dining experience in the most architecturally spectacular hotel on Disney property, with views over the animal savanna. Exceptional at both breakfast and dinner.

Disney Dining — Key Tips

- EPCOT is the best food park in Walt Disney World — not just for sit-down dining, but for snacking. World Showcase's 11 pavilions each offer genuine cuisine from that country, and browsing between meals is part of the experience. Allow extra time on EPCOT days for eating.
- The Disney Dining Plan is available for guests booking through Walt Disney Travel Company packages. For 2026, children aged 3–9 receive a free dining plan with eligible packages. Check current terms at disneyworld.disney.go.com — this offer significantly improves value for families with young children.

- Allergy-friendly dining is excellent across Disney. Every restaurant can accommodate the major allergens (gluten, dairy, nuts, shellfish, eggs). Inform your server at the start of the meal; a chef will often come to the table personally.
- EPCOT's annual Food & Wine Festival (typically autumn through winter) adds 30+ global food booths around World Showcase. It is the best value food event in any theme park in the world. Small plates, international wine, and beer from every pavilion — an entire afternoon can be happily spent eating around the loop.

Signature Dining at Universal Orlando

Epic Universe's opening in 2025 brought a new standard to Universal dining. Its two full-service restaurants — Atlantic and Blue Dragon — are the finest table-service experiences Universal has ever offered, and both require advance reservations. The Toothsome Chocolate Emporium at CityWalk remains Universal's landmark dining destination for an evening meal.

Epic Universe — The New Benchmark

Epic Universe's food scene was one of the most praised aspects of the park's May 2025 opening. Reviewers consistently noted that the themed quick-service restaurants are more immersive and better executed than anything previously seen at Universal — with menus designed for the specific world each restaurant inhabits, not just themed décor applied to standard park food. A notable innovation: most quick-service restaurants use a mobile-order-at-table system, allowing guests to order on their phone and have food brought to their seat, eliminating queue time.

Restaurant	Overview
Atlantic — Celestial Park (Table Service)	Epic Universe's flagship fine dining restaurant. Set inside a breathtaking Victorian aquarium, with glass walls and lit marine life surrounding diners, Atlantic offers surf-and-turf dining from breakfast through dinner. Seafood-forward menu, full bar, desserts worth specifically ordering. Reservations required — book online well in advance.
Blue Dragon Pan-Asian Restaurant — Celestial Park (Table Service)	The second of Epic Universe's two full-service restaurants. Located in front of the Grand Helios Hotel, with a courtyard setting under perpetual evening lantern light. Spans Chinese, Japanese, and Thai cuisine with genuine skill — reviewers have singled out the Sichuan-inspired dishes and plant-based options. Reservations required.
Toadstool Café — SUPER NINTENDO WORLD (Quick Service)	One of the most visually spectacular quick-service restaurants in any theme park. Set inside a giant mushroom-shaped building, with oversized props and a completely immersive Nintendo aesthetic. Mushroom soup, fire flower pasta, and themed desserts including Princess Peach cupcakes. Table ordering via the Nintendo app — no queue.
The Mead Hall — Isle of Berk (Quick Service)	Viking feasting hall themed around How to Train Your Dragon. Smoked meats, roasted vegetables, mead (non-alcoholic versions available), and a theatrical atmosphere praised as one of the most immersive restaurant settings in any theme park. Great for families with older children who love the films.

Restaurant	Overview
Pizza Moon — Celestial Park (Quick Service)	An Art Nouveau masterpiece of a quick-service restaurant, themed around a 1902 French film. Sit-down ordering, creative pizzas including an ube-crust option, pasta, and salads. The Giant Mushroom Pizza (roasted garlic béchamel, wild mushrooms, truffle aioli) has become a specific visitor recommendation.
Das Stakehaus — Dark Universe (Quick Service)	A gothic, monster-hunter-themed restaurant with dark stone walls and trophy mounts. The menu is themed entirely around 'stakes' — fish, chicken, and brisket meatloaf on wooden stakes, plus the Red Velvet Death dessert (a beet-based red velvet cake shaped like a coffin). Theatrical and genuinely good.
Café L'Air de la Sirène — Wizarding World (Quick Service)	A 1920s French art nouveau bistro in the Ministry of Magic's Parisian setting. Serves French-inspired food and — critically — Butterbeer crêpes. One of the most-photographed dining spaces in the park. All-day menu including breakfast pastries.
Le Gobelet Noir — Wizarding World (Quick Service)	Dimly lit stone-walled quick-service restaurant adjacent to the home of Nicolas Flamel. German and French-style comfort food — ideal for a hearty lunch during a full day at Epic Universe.
Oak and Star Tavern — Isle of Berk (Quick Service)	Berk-themed BBQ restaurant serving smoked brisket platters, burnt ends baked beans, and dragon-spiced wings. At its best, reviewers have called the brisket among the finest in any theme park. Order the mango bread as a side.

Universal Studios Florida & Islands of Adventure

Restaurant	Overview
Mythos Restaurant — Islands of Adventure	Housed inside a volcanic cavern at the edge of The Lost Continent, Mythos has been voted best theme park restaurant in the world multiple times. The décor is spectacular — waterfalls, organic rock formations, and arched ceilings. Mediterranean-influenced cuisine. Worth booking for lunch on an IOA day.
Lombard's Seafood Grille — Universal Studios Florida	Table service overlooking the Studios lagoon. Surf-and-turf focus: ahi tuna, lobster bisque, swordfish, Baja mahi tacos, and the signature fish and chips. Relaxed atmosphere and reliable food.
Toothsome Chocolate Emporium — CityWalk (Table Service)	CityWalk's landmark steampunk restaurant. If there is one non-theme-park Universal meal worth planning, this is it. Steakhouse-quality food, a spectacular interior, and one of the great milkshake menus in Orlando. The signature shakes are meal-sized — served with a full dessert topping tower. Book ahead for dinner.

Universal Butterbeer — What and Where

Butterbeer is Universal's signature drink — a cream soda and butterscotch concoction served cold (regular or frozen) with a foam topping, or hot during winter months. It is available in both Wizarding World areas: Hogsmeade (Islands of Adventure), Diagon Alley

(Studios Florida), and the Ministry of Magic (Epic Universe). The frozen version is widely preferred. Butterbeer ice cream, fudge, and crêpes (at Epic Universe) are also available. It is genuinely delicious and entirely non-alcoholic. The souvenir Butterbeer stein from the Three Broomsticks or Leaky Cauldron makes a good keepsake.

Dining at SeaWorld & Discovery Cove

SeaWorld Orlando

SeaWorld's in-park dining is practical rather than exceptional — there are a handful of decent sit-down options and good quick-service across the park. The park's Dine with Orcas package (table service with a view of the main Orca pool) is a meaningful experience for families, but book it early. The Sharks Underwater Grill is SeaWorld's standout dining destination.

Dining Option	Overview
Sharks Underwater Grill (Table Service)	The most theatrical dining experience at SeaWorld — a table-service restaurant built against the viewing wall of the shark exhibit. Diners eat surrounded by sharks, rays, and other marine life gliding past the glass. Florida coastal cuisine: fresh fish, seafood, and steaks. Reservations recommended. One of the genuinely memorable dining experiences in any Orlando park.
SeaFire Grill (Quick Service)	SeaWorld's largest quick-service area, offering burgers, chicken, fish and chips, and salads. Reliable and well-positioned near the central plaza.
Dine with Orcas Package	A pre-show meal package that includes a reserved seat to Orca Encounter. Good value if combined with a Quick Queue pass for a full-day visit. Confirm current availability and pricing at seaworld.com/orlando.

Discovery Cove

All-inclusive dining is included with your Discovery Cove admission — and it is one of the genuine pleasures of the day. Guests can eat freely at the Laguna Grill and all other food stations throughout their visit, with no extra cost. The menu is well above the standard you would expect: carved meats, fresh fish, salads, pasta, pizza, and a full dessert station. Dietary requirements are well catered for. Complimentary beer, wine, and soft drinks are included throughout the day for adult guests. After a dolphin swim and a morning snorkelling Grand Reef, lunch on an outdoor terrace with a glass of wine, looking across a tropical lagoon, is one of the most relaxed moments you will have in Orlando.

On-Site Dining at Encore & Reunion Resort

Both Encore Resort and Reunion Resort have on-site restaurants that are worth knowing about — especially for evenings when the family does not want to drive after a long park day. Reunion Resort in particular has invested significantly in its dining portfolio, and the results are strong.

Restaurant	What to Know
Eleven — Reunion Resort (Rooftop)	Reunion Resort's signature dining experience — an award-winning rooftop restaurant on the 11th floor of the Reunion Grande tower. Panoramic views across Orlando, live entertainment (DJ on Fridays, live musician on Saturdays), cocktails, and a menu of small plates, steaks, and seafood. On clear evenings, you can see the Walt Disney World fireworks from the terrace. Winner of the OpenTable Diner's Choice Award for Best Scenic View. Reservations recommended. reunionresort.com
7593 Chophouse — Reunion Resort (Steakhouse)	Reunion's premier steakhouse — named for the resort's address. The concept is precise: 7 sides, 5 enhancements, 9 proteins, and 3 signature sushi rolls. Celebrity golfer décor, an extensive wine list, and chef-driven seafood alongside the steaks. Consistently praised by guests and local diners. The kind of restaurant that justifies staying in for an evening rather than driving to Orlando.
Traditions — Nicklaus Clubhouse	Open-air kitchen and tavern at the Nicklaus golf clubhouse. American comfort food: buffalo wings, handmade sandwiches, burgers, and American classics. Scenic golf course views. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. More casual than Eleven or the Chophouse.
Grande Lobby Sushi Bar — Reunion Grande	Fresh sushi and a bar menu. Tuesdays–Saturdays adds steak plates and light fare from the Chophouse. A good low-key option for an evening when the group wants to eat well without a formal dinner reservation.
Clubhouse Restaurant — Reunion Resort	Reunion's most accessible on-site restaurant — open for breakfast, lunch, and post-golf bites. American regional cuisine with views of the golf driving range and the 18th hole of the Watson course. The breakfast service is particularly popular with villa guests.

Villa Kitchen Tip — Save Money Without Sacrificing Food

One of the great advantages of staying in a private villa is having a fully equipped kitchen. In a two-week Orlando holiday, a family of four eating out at every single meal will spend a significant sum — and at the end of a long park day, cooking a simple supper in the villa is often genuinely preferable to another restaurant.

Orlando's Restaurant Scene — Beyond the Parks

Orlando has a genuinely excellent restaurant scene that many visitors completely miss because they eat inside the parks for two weeks. For adults especially, at least two or three evenings out at proper restaurants is highly recommended — both for the quality of the food and for the pleasure of spending an evening in a room that is not decorated with cartoon characters. The two key areas are Restaurant Row (Sand Lake Road) and International Drive, both around 20–25 minutes from Encore and Reunion.

Restaurant Row — Sand Lake Road (Dr. Phillips)

Sand Lake Road in the Dr. Phillips neighbourhood of Orlando is, without question, the best dining street in the city. Known locally as Restaurant Row, this stretch of West Sand Lake Road concentrates more than two dozen excellent restaurants within a few miles — from old-school Italian and classic steakhouses to modern seafood, Turkish, Japanese, and craft cocktail bars. It is the area's equivalent of a premium dining district, and locals eat here regularly. Allow 25 minutes from Reunion or Encore, park for free at any restaurant, and take your time.

Restaurant	Overview & Address
Ocean Prime	An acclaimed Orlando original — modern American seafood with a stylish bar and impeccable service. Excellent for seafood lovers, with both classic preparations and creative specialities. One of the most consistently recommended restaurants on the Row. 7339 West Sand Lake Road.
Eddie V's Prime Seafood	Upscale seafood and prime steaks in an elegant setting, with live jazz most evenings. Excellent wine list. A great choice for a special evening out. 7488 West Sand Lake Road.
Norman's — Chef Norman Van Aken	Orlando's most famous celebrity chef restaurant, and the culinary home of New World cuisine pioneer Norman Van Aken. Sophisticated seasonal tasting and à la carte menus. The highest culinary ambition on Restaurant Row, and appropriate for a proper occasion dinner. Via Dellagio Way.
Christini's Ristorante Italiano	An Orlando institution — one of the longest-established fine-dining restaurants in the city, now in its fifth decade. Northern Italian cuisine with extraordinary freshness: handmade pasta, enormous veal chops, Chilean sea bass over shrimp risotto. Full sommelier service. Dress code enforced. One of the few restaurants in Orlando where the atmosphere is genuinely formal. 7600 Dr. Phillips Boulevard.
Seasons 52	Fresh, seasonal American cuisine with an open kitchen and an exceptional wine-by-the-glass list — 52 selections, rotated weekly. A lighter, more health-conscious approach than a classic steakhouse. Great for groups with mixed preferences. 7700 West Sand Lake Road.
Bosphorous Turkish Cuisine	Authentic Turkish cooking using imported ingredients — grilled meats, fresh mezze, and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. A distinctive choice on the Row for something genuinely different from the steakhouse norm. 7600 Dr. Phillips Boulevard.
Vines Grille and Wine Bar	Award-winning wine bar with live music most evenings, prime steaks, and fresh seafood. A combination of great wine, good food, and a lively bar atmosphere. 7533 West Sand Lake Road.

Restaurant	Overview & Address
Seito Sushi — Sand Lake	Multiple-award winner for best sushi in Orlando. Traditional technique combined with modern innovation, in an elegant Dr. Phillips setting. Over 25 years of reputation in the city. 8031 Turkey Lake Road.

International Drive (I-Drive)

International Drive is Orlando's tourist main street — stretching from the convention centre to the Universal area, lined with attractions, hotels, and restaurants. The dining quality is more variable than Restaurant Row, but there are strong options for families who want lively, casual evenings.

Restaurant	Overview & Location
The BOATHOUSE — Disney Springs	High-energy waterfront steakhouse and seafood restaurant at Disney Springs, with its own fleet of Italian water taxis and replica vintage boats. Perfectly cooked prime steaks, fresh raw bar, and spectacular lakeside views. One of the best dinner options near the Disney corridor. No park admission required. Disney Springs, Lake Buena Vista.
STK Orlando — Disney Springs	Upscale modern steakhouse with a full DJ lineup and a rooftop terrace. A more social, fashion-forward atmosphere than a traditional steakhouse. Excellent cocktails, prime beef, and a young crowd. Disney Springs, Lake Buena Vista.
Toothsome Chocolate Emporium — CityWalk	Universal CityWalk's most spectacular restaurant — a steampunk-themed building with enormous gears, pipes, and a full steampunk narrative. Table-service food is steakhouse-quality, but the main event is the signature milkshakes: enormous, dessert-topped creations that regularly go viral. The best family dinner in the Universal CityWalk area. Reservations recommended.
Taverna Opa — Pointe Orlando	Authentic Greek taverna on I-Drive where the tables go up and belly dancers perform. Hummus, grilled lamb, shared platters, and a genuinely theatrical atmosphere. One of the most fun evenings in Orlando. Pointe Orlando, 9101 International Drive.

Breakfast — The Most Important Meal of the Orlando Day

A villa-based Orlando holiday offers a strategic breakfast advantage: you can choose every morning whether to eat in the villa, go to a local breakfast spot, grab something at a park entrance, or do a proper character breakfast inside a park. Getting this decision right each day saves time and money. Here is what the options look like.

Best Off-Site Breakfast Spots Near Encore & Reunion

Option	Overview
Keke's Breakfast Cafe	The most consistently recommended breakfast chain in the Orlando area, with a passionate local following. Huge pancakes, fresh omelettes, creative egg dishes, and a lively atmosphere. Multiple locations including Dr. Phillips (near Restaurant Row and Universal) and Kissimmee (closest to Encore/Reunion). Queues form on weekend mornings — arrive before 9am or after 11am. A genuine treat before a long park day.
Maple Street Biscuit Company	Southern-style handcrafted biscuits and breakfast sandwiches. Buttery, generous, and outstanding quality. The biscuit with fried chicken, honey, and pecans has become a signature that loyal visitors plan their mornings around. Good strong coffee. A warm, welcoming atmosphere. Worth the short drive on a non-rush morning.
Hash House A Go Go	American diner food on an enormous scale. The portions are genuinely staggering — pancakes the size of hub caps, sage fried chicken Benedict, and waffle towers. Excellent for days when the family needs maximum fuel for a full Disney day. Multiple Orlando locations.
Celebration Town Tavern — Celebration	The town of Celebration (Walt Disney's original planned community, 5 minutes from Reunion) has a charming main street with restaurants overlooking the lake. The Town Tavern does a reliable American breakfast and brunch in pleasant surroundings. A good choice on a slower morning when you want atmosphere without rushing.
Villa breakfast	For the majority of mornings — particularly early park days — eating breakfast in the villa before you leave is the fastest and most economical option. A Publix or Walmart shop at the start of the week (eggs, bacon, fruit, cereal, orange juice, pastries) means the family eats before 8am and arrives at the park ready rather than stopping to eat once inside.

In-Park Breakfast at Disney

If you want to maximise your first hour in a Disney park, eating before you leave the villa is strongly advisable. However, Disney does have some genuinely excellent in-park breakfast options — and for character dining, breakfast is often the best meal to book.

Restaurant	Overview
Les Halles Boulangerie-Patisserie — EPCOT (Quick Service)	The best quick-service breakfast in any Disney park: real French pastries, ham and cheese croissants, pain au chocolat, and proper café au lait. Located in the France pavilion in World Showcase. Opens when EPCOT opens. Arrive early — the queue grows significantly through the morning.
Kona Café — Polynesian Village Resort (Table Service)	One of Disney's best breakfast restaurants, with the famous Tonga Toast: sourdough stuffed with banana, fried in cinnamon sugar, and served with strawberry compote. Monorail accessible from Magic Kingdom. Good for a pre-park breakfast at Magic Kingdom without going inside the park.
Topolino's Terrace — Disney's Riviera	Widely regarded as the best character breakfast on Disney property. Minnie, Mickey, Donald, and Daisy in French artist costumes bring warmth

Restaurant	Overview
Resort (Character Breakfast)	and charm, and the food quality (eggs, pastries, charcuterie, fresh fruit) is excellent for a character meal. Book 60 days out.
Woody's Lunch Box — Hollywood Studios (Quick Service)	Toy Story Land quick-service breakfast: scrambled egg and brisket bowl, chocolate-hazelnut pastry tart, and morning drinks. Available from park open. Among the best quick-service breakfast dishes in any Disney park.
Sanaa — Animal Kingdom Lodge (Table Service)	For a unique experience, Sanaa at Animal Kingdom Lodge serves a Kumasha Breakfast featuring both conventional options (eggs Benedict, Mickey waffles) and genuinely inspired African-inflected dishes — French toast with whipped chai cream, almonds, and raisins. Available to all guests, not just hotel residents. Views over the animal savanna.

In-Park Breakfast at Universal

Universal's parks have fewer dedicated breakfast options than Disney, but Epic Universe has changed this significantly — Café L'Air de la Sirène at the Ministry of Magic serves all-day pastries and breakfast items from opening time, and Pizza Moon opens early for its full menu. At Universal Studios Florida, the Hard Rock Café at CityWalk serves breakfast from early morning and is a reliable, hearty option before entering the parks.

Breakfast Strategy for a Two-Week Orlando Stay

- Park-opening days: eat a quick villa breakfast at 7am, arrive at the park gates by 8:30–8:45am, and grab a coffee from a park kiosk once inside. These are the days you want to ride the top attractions before the crowds build — do not stop for a sit-down breakfast on the way.
- Leisure mornings (day after a long park day, or a villa day): these are the mornings for Keke's, Maple Street Biscuit Company, or a long breakfast at the Reunion Clubhouse.
- Character dining breakfasts work best on Magic Kingdom days: book Topolino's Terrace or Kona Café for a 9am breakfast, then take the monorail directly to Magic Kingdom. It removes the usual scramble for a morning snack inside the park.
- EPCOT mornings: always stop at Les Halles Boulangerie in France on arrival. Buy pastries, find a table in World Showcase, and start the day properly. One of the genuine small pleasures of the Orlando holiday.

L — Disney World Itinerary Planners

Walt Disney World is a resort on a scale that requires a plan. With four major theme parks, two water parks, Disney Springs, dozens of resort hotels, and hundreds of restaurants, a two-week stay still will not cover everything. These planners are designed for villa guests at Encore and Reunion: driving in each morning, making the most of every park day, and returning to the villa each evening. Both the 7-day and 14-day plans are structured to hit every park's essential experiences, avoid the biggest crowds, and include the VIP and signature dining highlights worth building around.

Before You Arrive: Essential Pre-Booking Checklist

- Lightning Lane Single Pass (LLSP): book TRON (Magic Kingdom), Guardians (EPCOT), Rise of the Resistance (Hollywood Studios), and Flight of Passage (Animal Kingdom) at exactly 7:00am Eastern, 3 days before each park visit. These sell out in minutes.
- Lightning Lane Multi Pass (LLMP): book your initial 3 slots at the same 7:00am window. Prioritise one Tier 1 and two Tier 2 per park.
- Advance Dining Reservations: book at 6:00am Eastern, exactly 60 days before your dining date. California Grill, Le Cellier, Be Our Guest, and Space 220 require the full 60-day lead time.
- Disney Private VIP Tour: call (407) 560-4033. Up to 60 days in advance. For summer and Christmas periods, call the moment the window opens.
- My Disney Experience app: download and link your park tickets before departure. Set up Mobile Order, check Lightning Lane availability, and monitor bus times.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **EPCOT'S SECRET FIRST HOUR — USE IT ON THE RIGHT RIDES**

World Showcase — the international pavilions that form the back half of EPCOT — does not open until 11am. The front half of the park (Guardians, Test Track, Mission: SPACE, Spaceship Earth) opens at the standard park opening time. This means that for the first hour or two, all guests are concentrated in the same area. The smart play: use your Lightning Lane Single Pass for Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind the moment the park opens, ride Test Track and Mission: SPACE in the short early queues, and then arrive at World Showcase at exactly 11am when the pavilions open — before the lunchtime crowd arrives there. Do not spend the first hour wandering World Showcase expecting things to be open.

Disney 7-Day Planner

Seven days at Disney World — done well — covers all four theme parks with time to breathe, a water park day, and a Disney Springs evening. This plan assumes park-open arrivals most days, one dedicated character dining breakfast, and one signature dinner. Adjust for your family's pace.

Day	Planner
Day 1 — Magic Kingdom (Full Day)	Arrive at rope drop (8:30–8:45am). Priorities: Seven Dwarfs Mine Train (LLSP), TRON Lightcycle / Run (LLSP — book 3 days out at 7am ET), Peter Pan's Flight (LLMP). First hour: Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, Haunted Mansion, and Pirates of the Caribbean (all short waits at opening). Mid-morning: work through LLMP reservations. Lunch: Skipper Canteen (ADR recommended) or Columbia Harbour House (excellent quick service, upstairs seating). Afternoon: Carousel of Progress, Liberty Square, more LLMP. Evening: stay for the park's nightly fireworks spectacular — a world-class display, best viewed from the hub in front of Cinderella Castle. Depart after fireworks (~9:30–10pm).
Day 2 — EPCOT (Full Day)	Arrive at rope drop. Priorities: Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind (LLSP — virtual queue or LLSP, book at 7am), Remy's Ratatouille Adventure and Frozen Ever After (LLMP Tier 1). First hour: Test Track, Mission: SPACE. Mid-morning: World Showcase opens at 11am — spend the afternoon moving through pavilions. Lunch: Les Halles Boulangerie (France, excellent quality, no reservation needed). Dinner: Le Cellier Steakhouse (ADR essential, Canada pavilion) or Teppan Edo (Japan). Evening: EPCOT's nightly World Showcase lagoon show. If visiting during a festival (Food & Wine, Flower & Garden), allow extra time — the food booths around World Showcase are a highlight in their own right.
Day 3 — Hollywood Studios (Full Day)	Arrive at rope drop. Priority: Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance (LLSP). First hour: run directly to Slinky Dog Dash (shortest waits at opening), then Mickey & Minnie's Runaway Railway. Mid-morning: use LLMP for remaining slots — Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run, Tower of Terror, Rock 'n' Roller Coaster. Lunch: Oga's Cantina in Galaxy's Edge (ADR needed, unique cocktail/drink experience, adults will love it) or 50's Prime Time Café. Afternoon: complete Galaxy's Edge. Dinner: Hollywood Brown Derby (ADR recommended) — the Cobb salad has been on the menu for decades. Evening: Fantasmic! (spectacular nighttime show, book reserved viewing with dining package).
Day 4 — Animal Kingdom (Full Day)	Morning start (park opens early on most days). Priorities: Avatar: Flight of Passage (LLSP — the most immersive ride experience in all of Disney). Second priority: Na'vi River Journey (LLMP). First hour: Pandora — Flight of Passage and Na'vi. Mid-morning: Kilimanjaro Safaris (best in early morning when animals are most active). Lunch: Satu'li Canteen (Pandora, excellent quick service). Afternoon: DINOSAUR, Expedition Everest, Kali River Rapids. Dinner: Tiffins (ADR recommended, Animal Kingdom's finest sit-down restaurant, sophisticated international menu with beautiful artwork). Evening: Rivers of Light show when operating. Note: Animal Kingdom closes earlier than the other parks — plan to depart by 7–8pm.
Day 5 — Blizzard Beach or Typhoon Lagoon	A dedicated water park day. Check the 2026 schedule: Blizzard Beach operates February–May, then both parks are scheduled to open together from late May through September. Summer visitors will have both available. Arrive at rope drop — the best sun loungers and shaded spots go early. Book a Polar Patio cabana (Blizzard Beach, ~$225–425 + tax) or Beachcomber Shack (Typhoon Lagoon) for a private space with seating, shade, and attendant service. Blizzard Beach: Summit Plummet (one of the fastest free-fall waterslides in the world), Slush Gusher,

Day	Planner
	Teamboat Springs, and the Chairlift to Mount Gushmore. Typhoon Lagoon: North America's largest wave pool, Crush 'n' Gusher, Keelhaul Falls. A genuinely restorative day after four consecutive park days.
Day 6 — Disney Springs & Park Hopping Day	Late start. Morning at leisure — villa breakfast, pool, or local restaurant. Midday: choose one park for a half-day using Park Hopper (Magic Kingdom for a gentle afternoon is popular, or return to EPCOT for World Showcase and food). Late afternoon: Disney Springs for shopping and a pre-dinner drink. Evening: dinner at Homecomin' (Chef Art Smith's Southern kitchen, weekend brunch is also excellent) or The BOATHOUSE. Disney Springs requires no park ticket — free parking, open-air shopping and dining in a lakeside setting.
Day 7 — Second Full Magic Kingdom Day or Best-of Day	For families with children, a return Magic Kingdom day is almost always the right call — the park genuinely rewards multiple visits and there will be rides you missed, shows to catch, and the experience of arriving when you already know the park well. Alternatively, use this day to revisit your favourite park of the week. Optionally: book the Disney Private VIP Tour for Day 7 as a grand finale — the guide will take you through your family's highlights with no queuing, door-to-door service, and insider knowledge that turns a great holiday into an extraordinary one.

Disney 14-Day Planner

Fourteen days gives you the full Disney World experience — every park multiple times, both water parks, Disney Springs, signature dining, a VIP tour day, and genuine flexibility to revisit favourites. This plan builds on the 7-day above, adding depth rather than merely repetition.

Day	Planner
Days 1–7	Follow the 7-Day Planner above. Days 1–4 cover all four theme parks. Day 5 is the first water park day. Day 6 is a Disney Springs and Park Hopper day. Day 7 is a second Magic Kingdom visit or best-of day.
Day 8 — EPCOT Return (Focus: World Showcase & Dining)	A more relaxed second EPCOT day. Arrive later (10–11am) and spend it entirely in World Showcase. The 11 pavilions each have food, drink, and cultural experiences. Visit Morocco, Japan, France, and Italy with a glass of wine in hand. Book Monsieur Paul for dinner — EPCOT's finest French restaurant, in the France pavilion. This is the day to experience EPCOT as the adults' park it was always designed to be.
Day 9 — Hollywood Studios Return (Focus: Galaxy's Edge & TRON)	A second Hollywood Studios day, now that you know the park. Prioritise anything from Day 3 that was missed or worth repeating. If you haven't done the Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser experience (note: this closed in 2023 — see current Disney offerings), focus on completing Galaxy's Edge immersively. Book the Jedi Training experience for children. Dinner: 50's Prime Time Café for a fun family dinner, or Sci-Fi Dine-In Theater for the experience of eating in a 1950s drive-in cinema.

Day	Planner
Day 10 — Animal Kingdom Return + Boma Dinner	A second Animal Kingdom day. Spend the morning exploring areas you may have rushed on Day 4 — the Discovery Island Trails (sloth bears, giant river otters), Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail, and the Tree of Life garden. Book Boma — Flavours of Africa for dinner at Animal Kingdom Lodge: an extraordinary African buffet in the most spectacular hotel on the resort, with savanna views. Arrive early for dinner to walk the boardwalk and watch the animals at sunset.
Day 11 — Disney Private VIP Tour Day	Book the Private VIP Tour for this day. Your Plaid guide takes your group through the park of your choice — typically Magic Kingdom, which rewards expert navigation most. A full 7–10 hours with zero queuing, private transport, and the guide's complete attention. The contrast with your independent park days earlier in the trip will be remarkable. This is the day that guests consistently say changed their view of what a Disney day could be.
Day 12 — Second Water Park Day or Rest Day	If the summer schedule has both water parks open, use Day 12 for Typhoon Lagoon (if Day 5 was Blizzard Beach, or vice versa). Book a Beachcomber Shack cabana at Typhoon Lagoon for shade, service, and a base for the day. Alternatively, use Day 12 as a genuine rest day: villa pool, local restaurant, shopping at Orlando Vineland Premium Outlets (5 minutes from Encore/Reunion, including the Disney Character Warehouse for discounted park merchandise).
Day 13 — EPCOT Third Visit (Festival Day or Food & Wine)	If your trip falls during one of EPCOT's four annual festivals — especially the Food & Wine Festival (typically September through November) — dedicate a third EPCOT day to it. The Food & Wine Festival adds 30+ international food and wine booths around World Showcase, with dishes and pairings from every pavilion. An entire afternoon can be spent eating and drinking around the loop. No formal bookings needed for the booths — this is the most accessible luxury EPCOT offers. Book a final signature dinner: California Grill (Contemporary Resort), rooftop fireworks views and excellent sushi/wood-fired cuisine, is the ideal last-night Disney dinner.
Day 14 — Favourite Park Farewell Day	The final day. Revisit the park that resonated most with your family. No plan, no pressure — use what you know about the parks and enjoy the fact that you now navigate Disney World like a resident. If you have young children, Magic Kingdom almost always wins the final day vote. If you are adults or have older children, EPCOT World Showcase on a summer evening, with a last dinner in the France or Japan pavilion, is a deeply satisfying close to a Disney fortnight.

Disney 14-Day — Key Strategic Tips

- Always ride the newest or most-demand attractions on Day 1 of each park visit — before waits build. Return visits are the days for a more relaxed pace.
- Disney's parks are at their least crowded on weekday mornings. Tuesday and Wednesday mornings are consistently the calmest. Friday and Saturday evenings are the busiest.

- Book at least one signature dinner at California Grill (Contemporary Resort) for the fireworks view. Request a window table in advance. The fireworks are visible from the restaurant roof terrace or through floor-to-ceiling windows.
- The Disney Dining Plan is available for 2026 Walt Disney Travel Company packages, with free dining for children aged 3–9 on eligible packages. This is a meaningful benefit for families.

M — Universal Orlando Itinerary Planners

Universal Orlando Resort now comprises four parks: Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure, Epic Universe, and Volcano Bay (water park). For a villa guest at Encore or Reunion, Universal is approximately 25–30 minutes away. The opening of Epic Universe in May 2025 has fundamentally changed how to plan a Universal visit — the new park is large enough that it alone warrants a full day, and the three dry parks together now require three to four days to cover well. These planners assume you will buy a multi-park ticket covering all three dry parks, with Volcano Bay as an optional addition.

Before You Arrive: Universal Pre-Booking Checklist

- Epic Universe Express Pass: book online at universalorlando.com as early as possible. Peak summer dates sell out well in advance. Approximately $130–250 per person.
- Universal VIP Tour (Epic Universe): book by calling (866) 346-9350. Extremely high demand since the park opened — book months in advance for summer dates.
- Atlantic Restaurant (Epic Universe): book online via the Universal website. One of only two full-service restaurants in Epic Universe — fills fast.
- Blue Dragon Pan-Asian Restaurant (Epic Universe): same as Atlantic — book online in advance.
- Toothsome Chocolate Emporium (CityWalk): reservations recommended for dinner, especially Friday and Saturday evenings.
- Volcano Bay Cabana: call (877) 801-9720. Cannot be booked online. Book at least 4–6 weeks in advance for summer dates.

Universal 7-Day Planner

Seven days gives you a full day each at Epic Universe, Universal Studios Florida, and Islands of Adventure — plus a Volcano Bay day, a CityWalk evening, and flexibility to revisit highlights. This plan uses a multi-park ticket covering all three dry parks.

Day	Planner
Day 1 — Epic Universe (Full Day)	Arrive at park open. This is the most important day of any Universal visit in 2026 — the new park is extraordinary and deserves your freshest legs. Express Pass or VIP Tour strongly recommended for Day 1 when excitement is highest and patience for queues is lowest. Celestial Park on arrival: secure reservations at Atlantic for dinner (book weeks ahead). First hour: ride Celestial Park attractions and enter SUPER NINTENDO WORLD immediately — Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge and Donkey Kong Mine Cart Madness. Mid-morning: Ministry of Magic — Harry Potter and the Battle at the Ministry. Midday: lunch at Café L'Air de la Sirène (Butterbeer crêpes, French bistro setting). Afternoon: Dark Universe — CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF, Monsters Unchained: The Frankenstein Experiment. Late afternoon: Isle of Berk — How to Train Your Dragon —

Day	Planner
	Dragon Racer's Rally, Train Your Dragon. Evening: dinner at Atlantic (reserve the aquarium-wall table if possible).
Day 2 — Islands of Adventure (Full Day)	IOA is home to Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure — widely regarded as one of the most immersive and beloved rides in the world, and still the headline attraction at Islands of Adventure. Virtual queue or Express Pass on Day 1 of your IOA visit. Arrive at rope drop. Hogsmeade (Harry Potter) opens at park open — Three Broomsticks for a Butterbeer before the queue builds is a tradition worth keeping. Priorities: Hagrid's (Express Pass where available), Veloci Coaster, Jurassic World VelociCoaster, The Incredible Hulk. Lunch: Three Broomsticks (Hogsmeade) — butterbeer, Butterbeer soft serve, pumpkin juice. Afternoon: Marvel area (Spider-Man, Doctor Strange), Skull Island: Reign of Kong, Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls. Dinner: Mythos Restaurant — often ranked among the world's best theme park restaurants, set inside a spectacular volcanic cavern.
Day 3 — Universal Studios Florida (Full Day)	The original park, with Hollywood studios theming, the full Diagon Alley Wizarding World experience, and the Bourne Stuntacular live show. Arrive at rope drop. First: Springfield: Home of the Simpsons (Simpsons Ride before the queue builds). Then: Diagon Alley — a Butterbeer from the Leaky Cauldron, Gringotts dragon overhead, Harry Potter and the Escape from Gringotts. Lunch: Leaky Cauldron (Diagon Alley) — treacle fudge, Butterbeer soft serve, pasties. Afternoon: Race Through New York Starring Jimmy Fallon, Fast & Furious: Supercharged, Revenge of the Mummy (classic). Late afternoon: Bourne Stuntacular (live stunt show, genuinely impressive). Dinner: Lombard's Seafood Grille — lagoon views, excellent seafood. Evening: walk to CityWalk for Toothsome Chocolate Emporium if appetite allows.
Day 4 — Volcano Bay (Full Day)	Universal's water theme park. Arrive early for Early Park Admission (available to on-site hotel guests) or at standard opening. Book a private cabana — call (877) 801-9720. Single cabana (up to 6 guests) from approximately $160/day; family suite (up to 16 guests) from approximately $300/day. Cabana includes padded loungers, a stocked fridge, welcome snacks, towels, locker, and a concierge who handles food delivery and Express Pass reservations throughout the day. Must-ride: Krakatau Aqua Coaster (the centrepiece ride, inside the 200-foot volcano), Ko'okiri Body Plunge (70-degree drop, trap-door start), Honu and Ika Moana (large raft rides). Afternoon: float the Kopiko Wai Winding River through the illuminated caves. Note: Volcano Bay will close for a 5-month seasonal refurbishment from October 26, 2026, through late March 2027 — check current schedule before booking.
Day 5 — Epic Universe Return (Deep Dive)	Return to Epic Universe with the knowledge of Day 1. Now that you know the park's flow, revisit favourites and explore areas you may have rushed. Morning: begin with any worlds you haven't fully explored. This is the day to spend longer in SUPER NINTENDO WORLD — the interactive wristband Power-Up Band activities and Donkey Kong area rewards unhurried exploration. Midday: lunch at Toadstool Café (SUPER NINTENDO WORLD) for the full immersive experience. Afternoon: Dark Universe again — the theming rewards multiple visits. Das Stakehaus for a late lunch or early dinner. Evening: Blue Dragon Pan-Asian Restaurant for dinner (reservation essential). End the evening at Celestial Park —

Day	Planner
	the park's central hub is beautifully lit at night and the atmosphere around the Helios Grand Hotel terrace is genuinely special.
Day 6 — Islands + Studios Park Hopping	With a multi-park ticket, Day 6 is for covering the best of both legacy parks in one day. Morning: Islands of Adventure — Hogsmeade, Hagrid's (second ride), and Veloci Coaster. Cross to Universal Studios via the Hogwarts Express (requires a park-to-park ticket and links the two Wizarding World areas — a unique experience). Afternoon: Studios — Springfield, Diagon Alley, and the Bourne Stuntacular. Evening: CityWalk for dinner — Toothsome Chocolate Emporium is the standout destination for families. The milkshakes are legendary.
Day 7 — Universal VIP Tour Day	Book the Universal VIP Experience for your final Universal day. Either a 2-park tour (Studios + Islands, 7 hours, meals included) or the Epic Universe VIP Tour (4 hours, behind-the-scenes access) depending on your priorities. The VIP guide transforms the experience entirely — every attraction on the itinerary with priority access, no planning required, and insider knowledge that makes the parks come alive. For first-time Epic Universe visitors, the Epic Universe VIP Tour on Day 7 is the ideal way to close a Universal week with a definitive, fully guided experience.

Universal 14-Day Planner

Fourteen days at Universal — in combination with the Disney 14-day planner — would be an exceptional back-to-back two-week holiday. More practically, Universal as a 4–5 day programme within a wider 14-day Orlando holiday is the recommended approach. This extended planner allows genuine depth across all four parks and delivers the full breadth of what Universal offers.

Day	Planner
Days 1–7	Follow the Universal 7-Day Planner above. Epic Universe (Days 1 and 5), Islands of Adventure (Day 2), Universal Studios (Day 3), Volcano Bay (Day 4), Park Hop day (Day 6), VIP Tour day (Day 7).
Day 8 — Epic Universe Third Visit (Special Focus: Wizarding World Ministry of Magic)	With two Epic Universe days completed, Day 8 is for the fans of the Wizarding World. The Ministry of Magic is a fundamentally different Harry Potter environment to Hogsmeade and Diagon Alley — set in 1920s Paris, with art nouveau architecture, French food and drink, and a ride (Harry Potter and the Battle at the Ministry) that uses technology beyond anything in the earlier Wizarding Worlds. Spend the morning entirely in this land. Café L'Air de la Sirène for breakfast, Le Gobelet Noir for lunch. Afternoon: revisit Celestial Park at leisure — this is the park's 'town square' and is full of detail that rewards slow exploration.
Day 9 — Islands of Adventure Second Visit (Water Rides & Marvel Deep Dive)	Return to IOA for the experiences that deserve more time. Water rides: Dudley Do-Right's Ripsaw Falls, Bilge-Rat Barges, Jurassic World water rides. Plan these for the hottest part of the afternoon. Marvel area: The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man, Doctor Strange show, and explore the Marvel Super Hero Island in detail. Lunch: Green Eggs and Ham Café (Seuss Landing, one-off novelty) or Three Broomsticks. Afternoon:

Day	Planner
	Hagrid's again — there is no better way to spend 50 minutes in any theme park.
Day 10 — Studios Second Visit (Behind the Scenes & Shows Focus)	Universal Studios Florida has excellent live shows that visitors on a busy schedule often skip. Day 10 is the day to slow down and catch them all. Bourne Stuntacular (the finest live stunt show in any theme park), Animal Actors on Location, and Horror Make-Up Show. Afternoon: complete any Studios ride you missed on Day 3. Dinner: Hard Rock Café (CityWalk) for something different, or return to Lombard's for the lagoon view at sunset.
Day 11 — Volcano Bay Second Visit or Universal Studios Hollywood Comparison Day	A second Volcano Bay day, or use Day 11 as a rest and recovery day — villa pool, local dining, Kennedy Space Center day trip, or shopping. After 10 consecutive Universal days, a break in the middle of a two-week stay is strategically sensible for energy levels and appreciation.
Days 12–14 — Flex Days: Best-of Revisits	The final three days of a 14-day Universal programme are best used for revisiting the experiences that resonated most. Day 12: Epic Universe for a fourth visit — by now you know every corner of the park and can move through it efficiently and joyfully. Day 13: Islands of Adventure for Hagrid's, Veloci Coaster, and the complete Wizarding World experience end-to-end. Day 14: final day — choose your favourite park. For most guests with children, the answer is Epic Universe. For adults and those who love the original parks, Islands of Adventure with Hagrid's as the very last ride is a profoundly satisfying close.

Universal 14-Day — Key Strategic Tips

- Epic Universe rewards multiple visits more than any other Universal park — it is large, dense with detail, and the five worlds each have their own logic and atmosphere. Arriving for a third or fourth visit, when you no longer need a map, is genuinely a different and better experience.
- The Hogwarts Express connecting Hogsmeade (IOA) to Diagon Alley (Studios) is a unique theme park experience — different journeys in each direction. Always include at least one round trip as part of any Wizarding World day.
- Premier hotel guests at Royal Pacific, Portofino Bay, or Hard Rock Hotel receive complimentary Express Pass Unlimited for Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure. This is an exceptional perk — for an extended Universal stay, factor the hotel cost against the saved Express Pass cost. Epic Universe Express Pass is always separate.
- Volcano Bay's seasonal closure (October 26, 2026 to March 24, 2027) is significant. If your holiday falls after October, plan around it. Blizzard Beach or Typhoon Lagoon at Disney can substitute for a water park day.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **HAGRID'S SINGLE RIDER QUEUE — HALF THE WAIT, ALL THE MAGIC**

Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure has a single-rider queue that is consistently 30–60% shorter than the main standby queue. You will not sit alongside your group, but the ride itself is completely unchanged — and if your group splits into pairs, you'll likely be on the same train just a few rows apart. On peak days when the main queue stretches past 90 minutes, the single-rider line can be 25–40 minutes. Worth considering if your priority is riding rather than the shared moment of boarding together.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **CITYWALK FREE PARKING AFTER 6PM**

Universal's CityWalk parking structure is free of charge after 6pm for visitors who are not entering the theme parks. If you are coming to Universal purely for a dinner at Toothsome Chocolate Emporium, Antojitos, or any other CityWalk restaurant, arrive after 6pm and you will not pay for parking. It is a small saving on a big trip, but worth knowing — and CityWalk in the evening, once the day-trip crowds have thinned, is a genuinely pleasant place for dinner.

N — Waterparks: Disney, Universal & SeaWorld

Orlando's waterpark offering is the finest in the world. Disney operates two world-class water parks — Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon — Universal has Volcano Bay, and SeaWorld's Aquatica completes the roster. All four are full-day destinations. A well-planned waterpark day — with a private cabana booked in advance and an early arrival — is one of the most relaxing and enjoyable days in any Orlando holiday. Florida's heat between May and September makes at least one waterpark day not just a pleasant option but an essential respite.

Disney's Blizzard Beach

Blizzard Beach is built around one of Disney's most imaginative conceits: a ski resort in Florida that has melted in the summer heat, leaving behind waterslides where ski runs once were, a chairlift to the summit, and a mountain called Mount Gushmore at the centre of everything. The result is a visually coherent, beautifully themed park that feels entirely different from a generic water park.

2026 Schedule

Blizzard Beach closed in autumn 2025 for seasonal refurbishment and reopened on February 15, 2026. From May 12, 2026, both Disney water parks will operate simultaneously through the summer. Blizzard Beach is the park to visit in spring (February–May) when it is the only Disney water park open.

Signature Attractions

- Summit Plummet — The signature ride: a 120-foot free-fall drop at speeds reaching 60mph. One of the fastest free-fall waterslides in the world and a genuine bucket-list ride. Not for the faint-hearted.
- Slush Gusher — Summit Plummet's slightly less extreme neighbour: a double-humped speed slide with a gentler (but still thrilling) descent profile.
- Teamboat Springs — Family raft ride, longest multi-person white-water raft ride in the world. Takes the whole family down together.
- Cross Country Creek — The lazy river. Gentle, shaded, and wonderful. Float completely around the mountain with no effort required. One of the best lazy rivers at any Florida water park.
- The Chairlift — Not a waterslide: an actual ski-resort-style chairlift that carries guests to the summit of Mount Gushmore. A unique and magical addition that gives the park its coherent ski-resort identity.
- Tike's Peak — Fully Frozen-themed water play area for young children, with Olaf as the centrepiece. Splash zones, fountains, and pint-sized slides. Ideal for families with under-5s.

Premium Experiences — Polar Patios

Blizzard Beach's Polar Patios are the park's private cabana product — a guaranteed private space with seating, shade, and attendant service for the day. If you are visiting on a busy summer day, a Polar Patio is the difference between a comfortable day and an exhausting one.

Option	Details
Polar Patio Standard	Private seating area with dedicated shade, cushioned seating for up to 10 guests. Day-long reservation. Complimentary refillable soft drink mugs. Attendant service for food and drink throughout the day. Price: approximately $225–425 + tax depending on season and location.
Polar Patio Premium Plus	An enhanced Polar Patio with premium positioning. Better views, larger footprint, and enhanced amenities. Price: approximately $350–525 + tax.
Lodge Umbrella	A reserved umbrella and lounger set near Lottawatta Lodge — not a private cabana, but a guaranteed shaded spot with seating for 2–4 guests. Price: $49–109 + tax.
How to book	Polar Patios cannot currently be booked online. They are reserved walk-up upon arrival at the park — arrive at rope drop to secure the best locations. Seasonal Pass holders receive a 20% walk-up discount.

Disney's Typhoon Lagoon

Typhoon Lagoon is Disney's second water park, themed around a tropical resort devastated by a legendary storm — a ruined shrimp boat beached on top of the central mountain, broken buildings, and tangled vegetation are part of the narrative décor. The park's signature feature is its wave pool: the largest wave pool in North America, producing enormous rolling waves every 90 seconds. The experience of standing chest-deep in the wave pool as a wall of Atlantic-scale surf approaches is genuinely exhilarating.

2026 Schedule

Typhoon Lagoon was open through February 14, 2026, when it closed for its seasonal refurbishment. It will reopen on May 12, 2026, joining Blizzard Beach for the full summer season through at least September 8, 2026. Typhoon Lagoon is the park to visit in summer — its wave pool and surf experience are best in heat.

Signature Attractions

- Typhoon Lagoon Surf Pool — The heart of the park. North America's largest wave pool: 2.75 acres of water producing 6-foot rolling waves on a regular cycle. Between wave sets, the pool calms entirely for swimming. The surf pool experience — particularly the moment a full set begins and the wave wall rolls toward you — is one of the most memorable things in any Orlando waterpark.
- Crush 'n' Gusher — A water coaster: jets of water propel riders uphill as well as down, through a tangled network of fruit packing chute theming. Three different track options. A very high-quality ride by any waterslide standard.

- Keelhaul Falls — Winding single-rider tube slide through tropical scenery.
- Mayday Falls — The steeper, faster of Typhoon Lagoon's two major tube slides.
- Miss Adventure Falls — The newest major family addition: a family raft ride with a treasure-hunting narrative. Up to 4 riders. Pleasant and well-themed.
- Castaway Creek — The lazy river. Circumnavigates the entire park in a gentle, shaded current. A full circuit takes about 30 minutes and is ideal mid-afternoon.
- Ketchakiddee Creek — Dedicated water play area for younger children. Slides, spray features, and safe, shallow water.

Premium Experiences — Beachcomber Shacks

Typhoon Lagoon's private cabana product is the Beachcomber Shack — a private thatched hut on the beach around the wave pool, with unobstructed views of the surf. Booking one is the single best upgrade available at the park.

Beachcomber Shack	Private thatched beach hut accommodating up to 6 guests. Prime position on the wave pool beach. Complimentary refillable mugs, towel service, and an attendant who handles food and drink delivery throughout the day. Price varies by season — check disneyworld.disney.go.com for current rates. These sell out on busy days — book as early as possible via the My Disney Experience app or by calling (407) 939-7529.

Universal's Volcano Bay

Volcano Bay is the finest water theme park in Orlando by a significant margin. Built around a 200-foot artificial volcano — Krakatau — and themed as a Polynesian island resort inhabited by a tribe called the Waturi, the park is architecturally spectacular, narratively coherent, and home to several of the most thrilling waterslides in the world. The TapuTapu virtual queuing wristbands were retired in 2025 and replaced by standard queues with an optional Express Pass for skip-the-line access.

2026 Schedule — Important Notice

Volcano Bay will close for a major seasonal refurbishment from October 26, 2026, through March 24, 2027 — one of its longest-ever closure periods. New cabanas and a dedicated parking structure are under construction during this period. If your holiday is before October 26, the park is fully operational. If you are visiting after October 26, plan your waterpark day at a Disney water park instead.

Signature Attractions

- Krakatau Aqua Coaster — The centrepiece ride: a water coaster that passes through the heart of the Krakatau volcano using linear induction motors to propel riders uphill as well as down. Exits through a waterfall curtain. One of the finest water rides in the world.

- Ko'okiri Body Plunge — A trap-door body slide with a near-vertical 70-degree angle and a 125-foot drop through the volcano into a pool at the base. The most extreme slide in the park — and among the most extreme at any water park globally.
- Honu and Ika Moana — Two large multi-passenger raft rides that sweep groups of riders up massive curving walls before plunging back down. Family-friendly but genuinely thrilling.
- Ohyah and Ohno Drop Slides — Two body slides that end with a drop into a splash pool — Ohno drops you 4 feet, Ohyah drops you 6 feet. The unexpectedness of the ending makes these fan favourites.
- Kopiko Wai Winding River — The lazy river, but with a dramatic twist: it passes through the interior of the volcano, with lit caves, misting waterfalls, and special effects. Unlike any other lazy river in Orlando.
- Waturi Beach — The wave pool. Two zones: calm The Reef for relaxed swimming, and Waturi Beach for waves. The entire area is fronted by the illuminated Krakatau volcano — the views during a sunset session are exceptional.

Premium Experiences — Volcano Bay Cabanas

Volcano Bay's private cabanas are among the finest premium waterpark experiences available in Orlando. A personal concierge greets you at the entrance and escorts you to your cabana on arrival — the service standard is higher than the Disney equivalent. The experience of spending a full day in a private cabana at Volcano Bay, with the volcano as your view and food and drink delivered throughout the day, is a genuinely luxurious afternoon.

Option	Details
Single Cabana (up to 6 guests)	Private cabana with padded loungers, a small fridge stocked with bottled water, a complimentary fruit and snack welcome basket, towel and locker service, and personal concierge. Exclusive food and drink delivery menu. Concierge manages Express Pass reservations from the cabana. Price: approximately $160–450 + tax depending on season, position, and demand. Stand-alone units offer more privacy; ground-floor units within two-storey structures are slightly lower in price.
Upper Level Cabana (up to 6 guests)	The upper level of a two-storey cabana — spectacular views across the park to the volcano. The most scenic cabana position in Volcano Bay. Price: approximately $200–550 + tax.
Family Suite Cabana (up to 16 guests)	A large stand-alone private cabana for extended families or groups. All Single Cabana amenities at scale. Ideal for multi-family groups sharing a Reunion or Encore villa. Price: approximately $300–600 + tax.
How to book	Cabanas cannot be booked online. Call (877) 801-9720. Book 4–8 weeks in advance for summer peak dates. Note: if a cabana becomes available mid-afternoon (when early guests leave), Universal offers it at 30% off — ask at concierge huts from around 1pm.
Volcano Bay Nights (autumn)	Separately ticketed evening events running select Fridays in autumn 2026 (dates TBC). Reduced crowds, evening lighting on the volcano, DJ, character meet-and-greets, and access to 10 attractions. Private cabanas also available for purchase at Volcano Bay Nights events, from approximately $280.

SeaWorld's Aquatica Orlando

Aquatica is SeaWorld's water park — a Florida-sized, Polynesian-themed park positioned between SeaWorld and Disney on International Drive. It is the most underrated water park in Orlando: excellent rides, short queues (relative to the Disney and Universal parks), and a warm, well-designed layout. For families who have already done a Disney water park and Volcano Bay, Aquatica offers something meaningfully different, particularly its combination of waterslides and open-water swimming.

Attraction or Feature	Details
Ihu's Breakaway Falls	The park's headline thrill ride: a multi-person capsule drop with a transparent tube section above the wave pool. Random trap-door activation means you never know when you'll drop. Four different slides of varying drop angles, including a near-vertical option. High-quality engineering in a well-themed package.
Taumata Racer	An eight-lane racing waterslide — all riders launch simultaneously and race to the bottom. One of the most social and replayable rides at any Orlando waterpark.
Roa's Rapids	Fast-moving rapids river with strong currents. More intense than the lazy rivers at Disney and Universal parks — hold onto your float.
Cutback Cove & Big Surf Shores	Two distinct wave pool areas. Cutback Cove is calmer; Big Surf Shores produces larger, more frequent waves.
Omaka Rocka	High-speed tube slide with multiple intense transitions through near-horizontal segments.
Loggerhead Lane	The lazy river — uniquely, it passes through a clear underwater viewing tunnel through a pool containing rays and tropical fish. One of the park's most distinctive features.
Cabana rentals	Available for families and groups. SeaWorld-branded private beach areas with shade, seating, and attendant service. Contact Aquatica for current pricing: aquatica.com/orlando.
Combined ticket with SeaWorld	A combined SeaWorld + Aquatica ticket offers meaningful savings versus purchasing separately. Aquatica is approximately 5 minutes from SeaWorld's main gates by car.

Waterpark Strategy for a Two-Week Stay

- Summer visits (May–September): both Disney water parks are open simultaneously from mid-May. The ideal strategy is Blizzard Beach for one day (Summit Plummet, the ski-resort theming) and Typhoon Lagoon for another (the wave pool). Add Volcano Bay as the premium experience with a private cabana day.

- Spring visits (February–May): Blizzard Beach is open, Typhoon Lagoon is closed until May 12. Volcano Bay is fully operational. One Disney water park day (Blizzard Beach) plus one Volcano Bay day covers the essential waterpark programme.
- Autumn visits (post October 26): Volcano Bay closes for refurbishment. Both Disney water parks operate through the autumn. Blizzard Beach and/or Typhoon Lagoon plus Aquatica covers the waterpark programme.
- Cabana pre-booking: book Volcano Bay cabanas as far in advance as possible (call rather than waiting for online availability). Disney Polar Patios and Beachcomber Shacks are walk-up only — arrive at rope drop and proceed directly to the cabana desk.
- Weather: Florida afternoon thunderstorms are common May–September. Water parks close slides (and sometimes entirely) during lightning. Arriving at opening and targeting the first 3–4 hours before afternoon weather arrives maximises ride time on summer days.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **DISNEY CABANAS — ROPE DROP IS EVERYTHING**

Disney's Polar Patios (Blizzard Beach) and Beachcomber Shacks (Typhoon Lagoon) cannot be reserved in advance — they are walk-up only on the day. Guests who arrive at rope drop and walk directly to the cabana desk will almost always secure one. Guests who arrive at 10am will almost always find them gone. On busy summer days, the cabana desk can have a short queue even before the park officially opens — joining it immediately upon entry is the right move. It is also worth calling (407) 939-7529 the morning of your visit to ask about availability before you leave the villa.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **MAGIC KINGDOM FIREWORKS — FREE, NO TICKET REQUIRED**

Magic Kingdom's nightly fireworks spectacular is one of the finest fireworks shows on earth — and it is visible from several locations outside the park with no park ticket needed. The best free vantage points are the rooftop bar at Disney's Contemporary Resort (walk in from the monorail station), the Seven Seas Lagoon shoreline at the Ticket and Transportation Centre, and the ferry boat dock area at the TTC. The Contemporary rooftop bar requires a drink purchase but no park entry. For families who have had a long day and want to end it with the fireworks without fighting the park exit crowds, this is a genuinely wonderful option.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **PUBLIX — YOUR VILLA'S BEST FRIEND**

There is a Publix supermarket approximately 10 minutes from both Encore and Reunion resorts. Publix is not the cheapest supermarket in Florida but it is far and away the best — clean, well-stocked, excellent deli counters, and freshly made subs that work perfectly for villa lunches or a quick park picnic. Their hot food counter is open from the morning. For a two-week stay, a Publix run on arrival day sets the villa up with breakfast food, drinks, snacks, and pool supplies from day one — and saves the jarring experience of landing at 10pm after a transatlantic flight and needing to find a supermarket.

P — Where to Stay: Villas, Disney Hotels, Universal Hotels & Luxury Off-Site

Where you stay in Orlando shapes every aspect of your holiday — from how your mornings begin, to how far you drive each day, to what perks and advantages you carry into the parks. Orlando offers accommodation across a remarkable range: from private resort villas with their own pools, games rooms, and home cinemas, to world-class luxury hotels that put you steps from the parks. This section covers the full picture — so you can make the right choice for your group, or understand what you are working with if the villa decision has already been made.

Orlando Villa Resort Directory

The Kissimmee and Davenport corridor — the stretch of Central Florida running south and west of Walt Disney World — is home to over a dozen purpose-built private villa resort communities. Each has a different character, location, price point, and amenity profile. Below is a guide to the main villa resort options, to help you understand what is available and how they compare before you book.

Resort	Location / Drive to Disney	Villa Sizes	Character & Key Features
Encore Resort at Reunion	Kissimmee — ~8 miles / 12 min to Disney	3–13 bedrooms	The premier luxury villa resort in Orlando. Gated, 24-hr security. 10-acre waterpark, Eleven rooftop restaurant, spa, fitness centre, concierge, and multiple pools. The best-amenitised villa community in Central Florida. Kerrie Potts specialises here.
Reunion Resort	Kissimmee — ~8 miles / 12 min to Disney	3–12 bedrooms	Adjacent to Encore. Three championship golf courses (Nicklaus, Watson, Palmer). More residential and quieter in character. Grande hotel tower for overflow guests. 7593 Chophouse and Traditions restaurant on-site. Excellent for golf-focused groups.
ChampionsGate Resort	Davenport — ~9 miles / 14 min to Disney	4–10 bedrooms	Large resort community centred around the Omni ChampionsGate hotel and two David Ledbetter golf courses. Strong amenity provision including the Oasis Clubhouse waterpark (available to villa guests on some properties). A more sprawling layout than Encore or Reunion.
Solterra Resort	Davenport — ~10 miles /	4–8 bedrooms	Mid-range villa resort with a well-regarded clubhouse, resort pool with

Resort	Location / Drive to Disney	Villa Sizes	Character & Key Features
	15 min to Disney		water features, fitness centre, and tennis courts. More compact than Encore. Good value for groups who want shared amenities without the premium pricing of Encore. Popular with families.
Storey Lake Resort	Kissimmee — ~5 miles / 8 min to Disney	3–8 bedrooms	One of the closest villa resorts to Walt Disney World. Strong resort amenity package including a clubhouse with lazy river, water slides, and mini golf. Modern construction throughout. Excellent location for Disney-focused trips — shortest drive time of any major villa community.
Windsor at Westside	Kissimmee — ~7 miles / 10 min to Disney	5–10 bedrooms	Large gated community with a dedicated clubhouse, resort pool, and fitness facilities. Strong selection of larger villas (7–10 bedrooms) making it a good option for multi-family groups. More relaxed oversight than Encore — a quieter, more independent feel.
Windsor Hills Resort	Kissimmee — ~4 miles / 7 min to Disney	3–7 bedrooms	One of the established villa resort communities in Kissimmee — closer to Disney's main gate than most alternatives. Gated community with a communal pool, fitness room, and games room. Villa quality varies considerably by individual property — select carefully.
Highlands Reserve	Davenport — ~12 miles / 18 min to Disney	3–6 bedrooms	A golf community villa resort with an 18-hole course, communal pool, and a more neighbourhood-style layout. Popular with repeat visitors who value a quieter setting. Limited on-site dining or entertainment — very self-sufficient. Better suited to longer, self-contained stays.
Emerald Island Resort	Kissimmee — ~5 miles / 8 min to Disney	3–6 bedrooms	Smaller gated community adjacent to US-192. Communal pool and fitness suite. More modest amenity level than Encore or Solterra, but very competitive pricing and close Disney proximity make

Resort	Location / Drive to Disney	Villa Sizes	Character & Key Features
			it popular for budget-conscious families wanting a villa over a hotel.
Terra Verde Resort	Kissimmee — ~6 miles / 9 min to Disney	4–7 bedrooms	Mid-size gated community with communal pool, hot tub, and sports courts. Good-quality villa stock. Less well-known than Encore or Solterra, which tends to mean slightly lower per-night pricing for comparable villa specification. A reliable, unfussy option.

Private Villa Resorts — Encore & Reunion (Luxury Premium Resorts $$$$)

For families, large groups, or any party that values space, luxury, privacy, and the freedom to return to their own pool each evening, a private villa at Encore or Reunion is the finest base in Orlando. No hotel room — however luxurious — gives a family of five the experience of a 6-bedroom house with a private pool, a games room, a home cinema, and a fully equipped kitchen. The villa model transforms an Orlando holiday: it gives children somewhere to decompress after a long park day, gives adults a private space with a drink and a view of the pool in the evening, and eliminates the relentless cost of resort dining for every meal.

Encore Resort at Reunion

Encore Resort is one of the largest and most comprehensively amenitised private villa communities in the United States. Located in Kissimmee, approximately 8 miles from Walt Disney World's main entrance, it is purpose-built for the luxury short-term rental market. The resort is gated and 24-hour security-monitored.

Feature	Detail
Location	Reunion, FL 34747 — approximately 8 miles from Walt Disney World, 25 miles from Universal Orlando, 20 miles from SeaWorld.
Villa sizes	Studios through to 13-bedroom mansion homes. Most popular sizes for families: 5–8 bedrooms. Every villa has a private pool; many have hot tubs, games rooms, home cinemas, and themed children's bedrooms.
The Clubhouse	Encore's main clubhouse complex includes a 10-acre waterpark with slides and a lazy river, multiple restaurant and bar outlets, a fitness centre, a spa, and a concierge desk. Available exclusively to Encore guests.
Eleven Restaurant	Encore's flagship rooftop restaurant — an OpenTable Diners' Choice award winner. Fireworks-view dining, DJ or live music on select evenings, a

Feature	Detail
	strong cocktail programme, and a menu covering seafood, steaks, and sharing plates. Reservations recommended.
Villa amenities (typical)	Private heated pool, covered lanai, full kitchen, laundry, garage, high-speed Wi-Fi, flat-screen TVs throughout, Smart TV with streaming. Games rooms and home cinemas are available in premium properties.
Transport to parks	Drive — Encore is a car-based resort. Most families drive to each park and use the park's internal transport network once inside. Parking at Disney is approximately $30–35/day; Universal parking is $30+/day.
Booking	Contact Kerrie Potts at Exclusive Private Villas (Whatsapp +447771554460 — see the villa specialist section at the end of this chapter.

Reunion Resort

Reunion Resort is a luxury larger mixed-use resort community adjacent to Encore, comprising private villas, a hotel tower, and three championship golf courses designed by Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, and Arnold Palmer respectively. It is slightly more established than Encore and offers a quieter, more residential character — though it shares similar villa specification and the same proximity to Disney.

Feature	Detail
Location	Kissimmee, FL 34747 — adjacent to Encore Resort, with the same Disney/Universal/SeaWorld drive times.
Golf	Three 18-hole signature courses — Nicklaus, Watson, and Palmer. Lessons, club hire, and caddy service available. One of the finest golf destinations in Central Florida.
The Grande at Reunion	The resort's hotel tower offers suites and hotel-style accommodation for guests who want resort services without a full villa. Lobby bar, pool, and concierge.
7593 Chophouse	Reunion's own steakhouse — a serious, well-regarded restaurant for an on-site dinner. Not as well-known as Eleven but consistently well-reviewed.
Villa profile	Broadly similar to Encore in terms of villa sizes and specification. Many properties are individually owned and customised — some are among the most impressive holiday homes in Florida.
Booking	Contact Kerrie Potts at Exclusive Private Villas (Whatsapp +447771554460 — see the villa specialist section at the end of this chapter.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **THE STRATEGIC CASE FOR A VILLA**

A villa at Encore or Reunion is not just a luxury lifestyle choice — it is frequently the most economical option for a large family or group, even before you account for the experience advantages. A family of eight in a 5-bedroom villa with a private pool, full kitchen, and games

room may pay less per head per night than the same group split across Disney Value resort rooms — and they will eat breakfast at home, swim in a private pool, and have a proper base to return to each evening. When comparing costs across accommodation types for her clients, the villa option often wins on price-per-head for groups of six or more.

Disney On-Site Hotels — The Strategic Picture

Disney operates approximately 25 resort hotels on Walt Disney World property, ranging from Value resorts at around $130–180 per night to Deluxe resorts at $500–900+ per night. Staying on-site carries a set of genuine practical advantages — and some costs. Understanding what you actually get (and what you do not) is essential before committing to the significant premium.

The Real Benefits of Staying On-Site at Disney

- Early Theme Park Entry: Disney resort hotel guests can enter any theme park 30 minutes before the official opening time on every day of their stay. On busy days, this 30-minute window — used correctly on high-demand rides — is worth more than any skip-the-line pass.
- Lightning Lane booking advantage: resort guests can book Lightning Lane Multi Pass and Single Pass 7 days before each park visit (vs. 3 days for off-site guests). For peak-season trips, this 4-day window can make the difference between securing TRON, Rise of the Resistance, and Guardians — or missing out.
- Free Disney Transport: every on-site resort connects to the parks by bus, monorail, Skyliner, or boat — all included. No driving, no parking fees ($30–35/day at the parks).
- Free parking at the resort: on-site guests pay nothing to park at the hotels. Villa guests pay $30–35/day at the parks themselves.
- Extended Evening Hours: select Deluxe resorts receive 2 additional hours in one theme park per week after it closes to the general public. This is one of the most valuable perks available — a near-empty Magic Kingdom at 11pm is a genuinely extraordinary experience.
- Charge-to-room: purchases anywhere on Disney property can be charged back to your hotel room via a MagicBand or app. Convenient for large groups.

Disney Value Resorts

Disney's Value resorts — All-Star Movies, All-Star Music, All-Star Sports, Pop Century, and Art of Animation — offer the most affordable on-site option. They carry all the on-site advantages (Early Entry, Lightning Lane booking window, free transport) but with smaller rooms, fewer on-site dining options, and high-density layouts that can feel overwhelming at peak season. Art of Animation is the standout in this tier: larger family suites themed around The Lion King, Finding Nemo, Cars, and The Little Mermaid. If budget is the primary constraint and the on-site advantages are the goal, Art of Animation is the Value resort worth considering.

Resort	Overview & Approximate Nightly Rate
Art of Animation	Family suites sleep up to 6. Lion King, Cars, Finding Nemo, and Little Mermaid theming. Large themed pool areas. Strong quick-service dining. Skyliner access (to EPCOT and Hollywood Studios). Approximately $280–450/night for a family suite.
Pop Century	Standard rooms only (sleep 4). Skyliner access. 1950s–1990s pop culture theming. Well-regarded quick-service food court. Approximately $130–200/night.
All-Star Resorts (Movies, Music, Sports)	The most budget-friendly Disney option. Standard rooms only. Bus transport only (no Skyliner or monorail). Giant pop-culture theming. Good for single nights or price-sensitive stays. Approximately $120–175/night.

Disney Moderate Resorts

The Moderate tier — Caribbean Beach, Coronado Springs, Fort Wilderness, Port Orleans Riverside, and Port Orleans French Quarter — sits between Value and Deluxe in price and amenity. Caribbean Beach Resort is the Skyliner hub, giving it direct gondola access to EPCOT and Hollywood Studios without a bus. Coronado Springs is the Moderate tier's most sophisticated offering, with a 15-storey Gran Destino Tower and some of the best on-site dining in the moderate category.

Resort	Overview & Approximate Nightly Rate
Caribbean Beach Resort	The Skyliner hub — directly connected by gondola to EPCOT International Gateway and Hollywood Studios. Large, sprawling resort with Caribbean village theming. Multiple pools. Sebastian's Bistro (table service, Caribbean fusion) is a hidden gem. Approximately $260–380/night.
Coronado Springs Resort	The most 'grown-up' Moderate — Spanish colonial theming, a 46-acre lake, 15-storey Gran Destino Tower with rooftop bar and signature dining (Toledo — Tapas, Steak & Seafood). Strong convention facilities make it popular with business travellers. Approximately $280–420/night.
Port Orleans Riverside & French Quarter	Twin resorts sharing amenities. French Quarter is smaller and more intimate; Riverside has watermill and bayou theming. Boat service to Disney Springs in evenings. Approximately $250–350/night.

Disney Deluxe Resorts — The Flagship Properties

Disney's Deluxe resorts are genuinely world-class hotels — architecturally remarkable, beautifully maintained, and home to some of the finest theme park resort hotel experiences anywhere in the world. The premium over off-site hotels is significant, but so are the benefits: Early Entry, the 7-day Lightning Lane booking window, Extended Evening Hours (at select resorts), and the ability to walk or monorail to the parks. For a once-in-a-decade family holiday, a night or two at a Deluxe resort — or a full stay — is a transformative experience.

Resort	Overview & Approximate Nightly Rate
Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa	Disney's flagship luxury hotel — a Victorian seaside resort on the monorail loop, steps from Magic Kingdom. White-clapboard architecture, a soaring five-storey atrium lobby with live orchestra, white-glove service. Victoria & Albert's (Disney's only AAA Five Diamond restaurant — advance reservations essential, prix-fixe from $295/person). Citricos and Narcoossee's for signature dining. Pool complex. Spa. Direct monorail to Magic Kingdom and EPCOT via TTC. Approximately $700–1,200+/night.
Disney's Contemporary Resort	The architectural icon of Walt Disney World — the only resort the monorail runs through. Direct walk to Magic Kingdom (approximately 10 minutes). California Grill on the 15th floor (rooftop fireworks views — see Section K). Chef Mickey's character dining. The Tower rooms and Bay Lake Tower villa units are the most prestigious addresses on Disney property. Approximately $550–1,100+/night.
Disney's Polynesian Village Resort	Tropical Polynesian theming on the monorail loop. Immersive, atmospheric, and beloved across generations — the most emotionally resonant Disney hotel for many families who grew up visiting. 'Ohana (character dinner — Lilo, Stitch, Mickey, Pluto; shares and feasts), Trader Sam's Grog Grotto (the best hotel bar on Disney property). Direct monorail to Magic Kingdom and EPCOT. Approximately $600–1,000+/night.
Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge	The most architecturally spectacular Disney hotel — a recreation of a great African game lodge, with over 200 African animals visible from the hotel's savannas. Rooms and suites with private savanna views. Jiko (fine dining, one of the best restaurants on Disney property). Boma (African buffet — exceptional). Sanaa (Indian-spiced cuisine with giraffe views from the windows of Kidani Village). Shuttle to Animal Kingdom only. Approximately $550–950+/night.
Disney's Wilderness Lodge	Pacific Northwest national park lodge theming — timber beams, rock formations, roaring fireplace, and a geyser that erupts on the hour in the pool area. Boat service to Magic Kingdom. Artist Point (White Tablecloth dinner with Snow White character dining) and Territory Lounge. One of Disney's quieter Deluxe resorts. Approximately $450–800+/night.
Disney's BoardWalk Inn	A 1930s Atlantic City boardwalk recreation on Crescent Lake, between EPCOT and Hollywood Studios. Walk to EPCOT's International Gateway (10 minutes) and Hollywood Studios (20 minutes). BoardWalk promenade with restaurants, bars, street performers, and the ESPN Club. Flying Fish (signature seafood) and Trattoria al Forno (Italian character breakfast). Approximately $450–850+/night.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **EXTENDED EVENING HOURS — DISNEY'S MOST UNDERRATED PERK**

Guests staying at Disney Deluxe resorts (and Deluxe Villas) receive access to Extended Evening Hours on select nights — an additional 2 hours in one theme park after it closes to the general public. The parks that host these evenings rotate throughout the year. The experience of riding Seven Dwarfs Mine Train, TRON, or Guardians of the Galaxy with a 5-minute wait at

11pm — in a near-empty park — is one of the best things Disney World offers. If you are staying Deluxe, check which parks have Extended Evening Hours during your dates and plan your evening around them.

Universal On-Site Hotels — The Express Pass Equation

Universal operates seven on-site hotels at varying price points. The single most important fact about Universal hotels is the Express Pass equation: guests staying at Premier-tier hotels (Loews Portofino Bay, Hard Rock Hotel, and Loews Royal Pacific) receive complimentary Universal Express Pass Unlimited for Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure — for every person in the room, for every day of the stay. This perk can be worth $100–200 per person per day during peak periods, and it fundamentally changes how you experience the parks.

The Express Pass Equation — What You Actually Get

- Premier hotel Express Pass covers: Universal Studios Florida + Islands of Adventure. Unlimited use of Express Pass queues at participating attractions throughout the day.
- Express Pass does NOT cover: Epic Universe. A separate Epic Universe Express Pass (approximately $130–250/person/day) must be purchased regardless of which hotel you stay at.
- The maths: a family of four staying at Loews Royal Pacific for 5 nights might save $2,000–4,000 in Express Pass costs across their Studios and IOA days versus staying off-site. At that point, the hotel premium is effectively paid for by the saved Express Pass cost.
- Early Park Admission: all Universal on-site hotel guests receive 1 hour of Early Park Admission at Epic Universe, Universal Studios Florida, and Islands of Adventure. This head-start on Hagrid's and other high-demand attractions before the general public enters is genuinely valuable.

Premier Hotels — Complimentary Express Pass Included

Hotel	Overview & Approximate Nightly Rate
Loews Portofino Bay Hotel	The most luxurious Universal hotel — an immersive recreation of the Italian harbour village of Portofino, with cobblestone piazzas, restaurant-lined harbour, and elaborate Mediterranean architecture. Three pools. Mandara Spa. Bice Ristorante (upscale Italian, harbour views). Trattoria del Porto (character breakfast). The most romantic hotel in the Universal portfolio. Complimentary Express Pass Unlimited (Studios + IOA). Water taxi to CityWalk. Approximately $350–700+/night.
Hard Rock Hotel	Rock-and-roll theming at the closest hotel to Universal's theme park gates — you can walk to CityWalk and the park entrances in under 10 minutes. Loudwire Kitchen & Bar. The Kitchen restaurant (live music,

Hotel	Overview & Approximate Nightly Rate
	rock memorabilia). Large resort pool with underwater speakers. The most convenient Universal hotel for park access. Complimentary Express Pass Unlimited (Studios + IOA). Approximately $300–600+/night.
Loews Royal Pacific Resort	South Pacific Polynesian theming — lush tropical gardens, a large lagoon-style pool with a water slide, and the most family-friendly atmosphere of the Premier hotels. Emeril's Tchoup Chop (upscale Asian-Pacific cuisine). Character dining (Islands Dining Room). Luau dinner show. Water taxi to CityWalk. The best-value Premier hotel for families. Complimentary Express Pass Unlimited (Studios + IOA). Approximately $270–500+/night.

Preferred & Standard Hotels — No Complimentary Express Pass

Universal's Preferred and Standard hotels offer on-site convenience and Early Park Admission, but do not include the complimentary Express Pass. For guests who plan to purchase Express Pass for Studios and IOA separately, the cost savings over Premier hotels can be meaningful — but the maths need to be run per group.

Hotel	Overview & Approximate Nightly Rate
Loews Sapphire Falls Resort	Caribbean theming with a large lagoon pool, lush landscaping, and a relaxed resort atmosphere. Strong Amatista Cookhouse restaurant. Water taxi to CityWalk. A solid mid-tier choice for Universal stays. Approximately $220–380/night. No complimentary Express Pass.
Universal's Aventura Hotel	A modern high-rise tower hotel with a rooftop bar and pool deck — the best views in the Universal resort. Food Truck Lagoon on the ground floor. More contemporary and adult in character than the themed resorts. Approximately $200–350/night. No complimentary Express Pass.
Universal's Cabana Bay Beach Resort	A 1950s–1960s retro American road-trip resort — the largest Universal hotel and the most family-oriented. Two large pools (one with a lazy river), multiple dining options, bowling alley, and the most affordable on-site pricing. Adjacent to Volcano Bay. The best Universal hotel for value-focused families. Approximately $130–250/night. No complimentary Express Pass.
Universal's Stella Nova Resort & Universal's Terra Luna Resort	Two new hotels opening alongside Epic Universe in May 2025, directly adjacent to the new park. Modern design, convenient access to Epic Universe, and competitive pricing. Full details and pricing to be confirmed — check universalorlando.com.

Luxury Off-Site Hotels — The Best Independent Options

Several world-class luxury hotels operate in the Orlando area without being affiliated to Disney or Universal — and some are genuinely among the finest resort hotels in the United States. Staying at one of these properties gives you complete independence, a luxury hotel experience without theme-park-resort pricing, and in some cases a more refined adult atmosphere. The trade-off is that you will drive to the parks and miss the on-site perks — though for a group based at a luxury hotel rather than a villa, the experience can be exceptional.

Four Seasons Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort

The Four Seasons Orlando occupies a unique position: it sits within Walt Disney World property at Golden Oak (a private residential enclave adjacent to the parks), yet operates entirely independently. It is the only true luxury brand hotel with Walt Disney World addresses and direct links to Disney's infrastructure — and it is one of the finest resort hotels in Florida.

Feature	Detail
Location & Access	10100 Dream Tree Blvd, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32836. On Walt Disney World property — guests have direct access to Disney's Fastpass system, early theme park entry, and Disney's Magical Express transport. A dedicated Four Seasons shuttle runs to the parks.
Rooms & Suites	443 rooms and suites across 17 storeys. Rooms average 500 sq ft; suites from 1,100 sq ft to 4,600 sq ft. Balconies with park, pool, or golf course views standard from Deluxe category upward.
Pools	The Explorer Pool (main pool with slide, interactive water play area, and Four Seasons poolside service), Hideaway Pool (adults-only, serene), and Family Pool. Poolside cabanas available.
Dining	Capa (rooftop steakhouse, fireworks views over Magic Kingdom on select nights — one of Orlando's best restaurants), Ravello (Italian-Mediterranean), PB&G (poolside), and the Plancha counter. Capa is a reservation essential for any stay.
Spa	Full-service spa with 18 treatment rooms. One of the finest spa facilities in Central Florida.
The Disney Advantage	Four Seasons guests can use Disney's early park entry, access the Lightning Lane booking system for on-site guests, and use Disney transport. This is the only off-site luxury hotel that carries genuine Disney on-site perks.
Approximate rates	$700–1,800+/night depending on room category and season. Suites significantly higher.

Waldorf Astoria Orlando

The Waldorf Astoria Orlando is a sophisticated, European-influenced luxury hotel on Bonnet Creek — a private enclave surrounded by Walt Disney World land on three sides. It is the closest true luxury brand hotel to the Disney parks that is not on Disney property, and its Rees

Jones-designed golf course and rooftop pool make it one of the most complete luxury resort experiences in Orlando.

Feature	Detail
Location	14200 Bonnet Creek Resort Lane, Orlando FL 32821. Approximately 10 minutes from Disney's main gate, 20 minutes from Universal.
Rooms & Suites	498 rooms and suites across a 34-storey tower. Rooms from approximately 500 sq ft; suites to over 2,000 sq ft. Balcony rooms with Disney fireworks views available — rooms above floor 20 on the north side offer the best sightlines.
Dining	Peacock Alley (all-day, Waldorf signature), Bull & Bear (prime steakhouse, one of Orlando's most acclaimed), La Luce (Italian, poolside), and the Bull & Bear Bar (one of the best hotel bars in Orlando — cigar-friendly terrace).
Spa	Waldorf Astoria Spa — 11 treatment rooms, signature treatments, steam rooms, relaxation lounge.
Golf	18-hole Rees Jones championship course. One of the more accessible Orlando golf courses for visitors without club connections.
Pools	Three-tiered lagoon pool complex with a 256-foot slide, zero-entry family pool, and adult lap pool.
Approximate rates	$450–1,200+/night. Suite pricing significantly higher.

Signia by Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek

The Signia by Hilton sits adjacent to the Waldorf Astoria on the same Bonnet Creek property — a more family-oriented luxury option, slightly lower in price but sharing the same remarkable location surrounded by Disney land. Its pools are among the most spectacular of any Orlando hotel.

Feature	Detail
Location	14100 Bonnet Creek Resort Lane, Orlando FL 32821. Shares the Bonnet Creek site with the Waldorf Astoria.
Pools	Arguably the finest pool complex of any Orlando hotel: a 64-foot drop slide, multiple pools, a lazy river, and a dedicated children's splash area across a 3.5-acre waterscape.
Dining	Harvest Bistro (American), Cala Bella (Italian, rooftop), Pool Bar & Grille, and multiple outlets.
Rooms	1,009 rooms and suites. Premium Lake Buena Vista rooms offer Disney fireworks views. Suites with full living areas available.
Family positioning	More family-oriented than the Waldorf Astoria — the pools, the room scale, and the dining variety make it one of the best full-service luxury hotels for large families who do not want a villa.

Feature	Detail
Approximate rates	$320–800+/night.

Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate

The Omni at ChampionsGate sits 10 minutes from Disney on US-192 — immediately adjacent to Encore and Reunion Resorts. It is the natural hotel choice for villa guests who have family or group members joining for part of a trip, or for the first or last night of a stay when villa check-in times do not align with arrival.

Feature	Detail
Location	1500 Masters Blvd, Davenport FL 33896. Adjacent to Encore and Reunion Resorts. Approximately 10 minutes from Walt Disney World.
Golf	Two David Ledbetter-designed championship courses — the National and the International. Golf Academy on-site.
Pools	Lazy river, resort pool, adult pool, and waterslide. Well-maintained resort pool complex.
Dining	Zen (sushi and Asian), Trevi's (Italian), Mokara Spa restaurant, David's Club Bar & Grill.
Spa	Mokara Spa — a full-service destination spa with extensive menu.
Practical use	The most convenient hotel for guests staying at Encore or Reunion who need to accommodate overflow guests, or as a one-night buffer on arrival or departure day.
Approximate rates	$250–500+/night.

Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes

The Ritz-Carlton Grande Lakes sits approximately 15 miles from Disney and Universal — further from the parks than the other hotels in this section, but worth knowing for its exceptional spa, golf, and food and beverage programme. It shares a 500-acre site with the JW Marriott Grande Lakes and is one of the finest free-standing luxury hotel experiences in Florida.

Feature	Detail
Location	4012 Central Florida Pkwy, Orlando FL 32837. Approximately 20 minutes from Disney, 20 minutes from Universal, 10 minutes from SeaWorld.
Spa	The Ritz-Carlton Spa Grande Lakes — one of the finest spas in Florida. 40 treatment rooms, a full spa village, hydrotherapy facilities, and an extensive treatment menu. A destination in its own right.
Golf	18-hole Greg Norman-designed championship course. Golf Academy. Club car transport around the property.

Feature	Detail
Dining	Knife & Spoon (John Tesar's steakhouse — AAA Four Diamond), Highball & Harvest (farm-to-table), Flint (modern American), poolside dining. The food and beverage programme at this hotel is one of the strongest of any Florida resort.
Rooms & Suites	584 rooms. Ritz-Carlton Club Level available. Lake and golf course views.
Best for	Guests who want a luxury Florida resort experience without being immersed in the theme park bubble. Excellent for adult couples or groups visiting Orlando partially for golf, spa, and dining rather than purely for the parks.
Approximate rates	$500–1,200+/night.

★ **INSIDER TIP** **FIREWORKS VIEWS WITHOUT A PARK TICKET**

Several Orlando hotels offer genuine fireworks views from their rooms or restaurants on select nights. The Waldorf Astoria and Signia Bonnet Creek (rooms above floor 18–20 on the north-facing side) offer clear views of Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom fireworks. The Four Seasons Capa rooftop restaurant positions its tables specifically for fireworks viewing on party nights. If your hotel room faces north toward Disney from sufficient height, you may have an entirely private fireworks show each evening from your own balcony. Ask specifically when booking — front desk staff can advise on which rooms and floors have the best sightlines.

Choosing Where to Stay — A Practical Framework

The right accommodation for an Orlando holiday depends on your group's size, priorities, and how you plan to divide your time between parks. Below is a practical framework for making that decision.

Guest Profile	Recommended Option
Large families / groups (6+ guests)	Private villa at Encore or Reunion is almost always the strongest option — more space, private pool, kitchen, and frequently lower cost per head than multiple hotel rooms. Kerrie Potts can compare villa options with hotel costs for your specific group size and dates — see the villa specialist section below.
Families prioritising Disney immersion	Disney Deluxe resort — particularly Polynesian, Grand Floridian, or Animal Kingdom Lodge. The on-site experience, Early Entry, 7-day Lightning Lane window, and Extended Evening Hours are worth the premium for a full immersive Disney holiday.
Families on a Disney budget	Art of Animation (Skyliner access, family suites, all on-site perks) or Caribbean Beach (Skyliner hub, moderate pricing). Both carry all the Disney on-site advantages at a significantly lower nightly rate than Deluxe.
Universal-focused stays	Premier hotel (Royal Pacific, Portofino Bay, or Hard Rock) for the complimentary Express Pass Unlimited at Studios + IOA. Run the maths: premium over off-site + complimentary Express Pass vs. off-site + purchased Express Pass. For 4+ guests over 3+ days, Premier is often cheaper overall.
Luxury without theme park immersion	Four Seasons (if Disney is primary park), Waldorf Astoria Bonnet Creek, or Ritz-Carlton Grande Lakes for adult couples or groups where spa, golf, and dining are as important as the parks.
Multi-park / flexibility priority	Villa at Encore or Reunion. Drive to any park each day, full independence of schedule, pool to return to each evening, and no dependency on hotel transport systems.

About the Author — Kerrie Potts, Exclusive Private Villas

For villa bookings at Encore and Reunion, Kerrie Potts has spent years specialising exclusively in the Encore and Reunion villa market, not as a general holiday agent who handles villas among dozens of other products, but as a specialist whose entire business is built around these two resorts and the guests who stay in them.



Kerrie Potts

Exclusive Private Villas

Encore Resort & Reunion Resort Specialist

+44 7771 554460 (Phone & WhatsApp)

www.exclusiveprivatevillas.com

If you are looking for a Luxury Villa Rental, every villa enquiry is handled personally by Kerrie. For school holiday dates, peak summer, and the Christmas period, Kerrie recommends enquiring at least six months in advance. The best-positioned, best-specified properties at both resorts are reserved early — the villa that is perfect for your family will not be available if you leave it too late.

Contact Kerrie to Book Your luxury Villa

Kerrie Potts · Exclusive Private Villas

/ WhatsApp: +44 7771 554460

www.exclusiveprivatevillas.com