

getaway orlando, florida

A member of SeaWorld
Orlando's family of
nine killer whales and
his trainer swim to
the water's surface
during "Believe."
Photos courtesy of
Orlando/Orange County
Convention & Visitors
Bureau, Inc.

Orlando

DISNEY AND BEYOND

The opening of Walt Disney World in 1971 put Orlando on the map as a top tourist destination not only in the USA, but in the world. Today, with more than 50 million visitors each year, Orlando has become a destination location for families of all ages, as well as grown-ups who want to experience the more sophisticated side of the city. With that in mind, SANDRA CHAMBERS explores Orlando for families and Orlando for adults. And with Wilmington's new Allegiant Air's nonstop service to Sanford, Florida, Orlando's magic is just an hour away.

ORLANDO FOR FAMILIES

Ask any 10-year-old and they will assure you that Walt Disney World is the capital of Florida. For most families with kids or teens, this attraction is the No. 1 priority when visiting Florida. But it will take more than a weekend (or even a week) to cover Disney's 47-square-mile kingdom. To make the most of your time, Disney has a free DVD vacation planner to help you map out the perfect trip.

"Most people don't realize that Disney World is more than just the *Magic Kingdom*," says Dave Herbst, Walt Disney media spokesperson. "We actually have four theme parks — the *Magic Kingdom*, *Epcot*, *Hollywood Studios* and *Animal Kingdom* — two water parks — *Blizzard Beach* and *Typhoon Lagoon* — and Disney's *Downtown West End*, *Marketplace* and *Pleasure Island*."

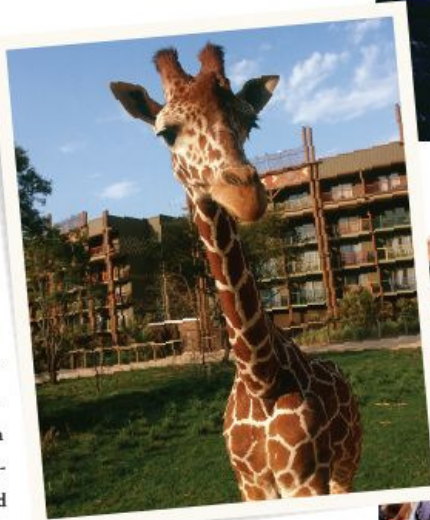
If you do plan to spend the majority of your vacation at Disney World, you will save time and money by staying at one of the 25 onsite hotels, which range in price and style from affordable to luxurious. Staying onsite offers several advantages: customized ticket packages, meal plans, hassle-free transportation between hotels and parks, and extended hours at the parks.

For a unique vacation experience, try Disney's *Animal Kingdom Lodge*. This luxury accommodation is surrounded by a 33-acre savannah with more than 30 species of African wildlife that can be viewed

from your private balcony. (Be sure to ask for a savannah-view room.)

Some of the fun educational activities offered at the Lodge include animal tracking and safaris, African crafts and games, and folktales told nightly around the outdoor Arusha Rock fire pit. At *Boma* — *Flavors of Africa*, a family-friendly buffet offering breakfast and dinner, happy vacationers can experience cuisine from 50 African countries. Adults will enjoy the AAA Four-Diamond *Jiko*, *The Cooking Place*, which boasts the world's largest selection of South African wines, as well as excellent multicultural cuisine.

Although Orlando is known for its great theme parks — *Disney*, *Universal Studios* and *Islands of Adventure*, *Sea World* and *Cypress Gardens* (Orlando's very first theme park) — the area offers a wealth of other fun and educational opportunities.



Top to bottom: Rotisserie meat and salmon at Boma — *Flavors of Africa* at Disney's *Animal Kingdom Lodge*. Cinderella Castle in the *Magic Kingdom*. A trio of *Green Army Men* characters from the Disney-Pixar animated films *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2* march through "Pixar Place" at Disney's *Hollywood Studios*. Inset: More than 200 mammals and birds populate Disney's *Animal Kingdom Lodge*'s 33-acre savannah. Photos courtesy Walt Disney World Resorts.

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Downtown Orlando is home to the **Orlando Science Center** with multiple floors of hands-on exhibits for kids, giant-screen films and the largest refractor telescope in Florida. And if you happen to be in town during basketball season, get tickets to see the NBA's **Orlando Magic**.

Interested in Biblical history? Orlando has a very unique theme park that will take you back in time 2,000 years. **The Holy Land Experience** explores the ancient city of Jerusalem through biblical exhibits, models and performances.

While Orlando boasts 52 million square feet of retail shopping and nine world-class malls, for kid-friendly shopping that will earn you a parent-of-the-year award, visit the 4,400-square-foot, free-standing **LEGO Imagination Center** and the largest Disney character store on earth, both located at **Downtown Disney**. Grab lunch at **Bahama Breeze Island Grill** and enjoy a tropical setting with an outstanding menu of fresh Caribbean-inspired dishes for adults and kids. Since you *are* in Florida, be sure to order their famous **Rebecca's Key Lime Pie**.

Several of Florida's state parks (161 in total) are within easy driving distance of Orlando and offer a variety of activities for outdoor enthusiasts. **Blue Spring State Park**, with the largest spring on St. John's River, is a designated Manatee Refuge and winter home (mid-November to March) for a growing number of West Indian Manatees. Bring a picnic lunch and cool off in the 72-degree spring where you can swim, snorkel or scuba dive. Cabins are also available for overnight stays.

You don't have to go all the way to the Everglades to experience Florida's wetlands and wildlife. Several locations in and around Orlando offer airboat rides as well as full- and half-day fishing trips.

ORLANDO FOR ADULTS

There's a wave of grown-up-style fun redefining the Orlando experience," says Amy Voss, public relations representative for the Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau. "From trendy restaurants and couture shopping to brand-name luxury hotels and spas and a growing cultural arts scene, adults have a variety of sophisticated new experiences to indulge in."

The **Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress** is one of those luxury hotel resorts that aims to be for adults what Disney World is for children. This 1,500-acre resort includes an equestrian center, racquet club, fitness center, lake, pitch

it hard to believe you are almost next door to **Disney's Downtown** area. While at the resort, don't miss the superb seven-course wine-pairing dinner at **La Coquina Chef's Table** — a perfect spot for a romantic celebration.

Want an adult vacation that will allow you to bring your extended family? The **Ginn Reunion Resort**, located just six miles south of Disney World, is the perfect spot to satisfy everyone's vacation itineraries. Accommodations include a choice of condominiums, villas and multi-family homes. The resort is within easy reach of the theme parks, yet miles away from the hustle and bustle. Guests enjoy three signature golf courses, a fitness center, tennis courts, a rooftop pool and lounge, a full-service spa and excellent food at **Forte**, a contemporary chophouse. Relax or play at the resort or spend the day away.

If you're still a kid at heart and would like to enjoy some of the theme parks at a more leisurely pace, visit **Epcot** in the evening and take the 1.3-mile walk around the 11 countries in **World Showcase**. Stop for dinner in Germany to enjoy folk dancing and an oompah band, belly dancers in Morocco, or singing waiters in Italy. Be sure to stay for the **Illuminations** nightly outdoor show of fireworks, music and laser lights.

Another option is **Disney's Hollywood Studios** and **Universal Studios**, both of which offer sights and activities for those who would rather skip the zero-gravity thrill rides. At **Disney's Hollywood Studios**, stop in the **Brown Derby Restaurant** to view sketches of famous Hollywood stars and sample their famous Cobb



Ginn Reunion Resort - Legacy Golf Course. Photos courtesy of Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

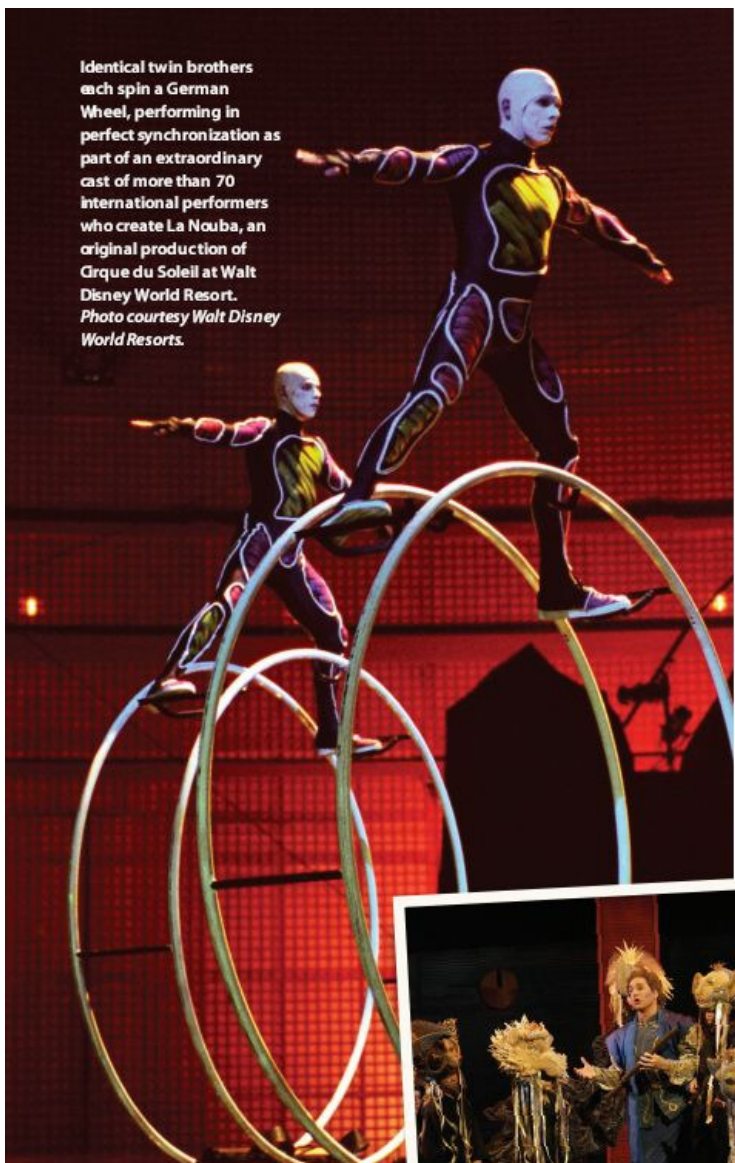
and putt golf course, and a one-half-acre pool with several waterfalls and a swim-through grotto and bar. With 45 acres of natural Florida terrain, including a nature area and Audubon Walk with elevated boardwalk, you will find

FLY AWAY — AL LEGIANT AIR'S SEASONAL SERVICE TO SANFORD/ORLANDO RESUMES OCTOBER 31. AT THE TIME WBM WENT TO PRESS, A SINGLE, ROUND-TRIP FARE FROM WILMINGTON TO SANFORD COST \$168.



Above: Birds flock to Greater Orlando's more than 2,000 named lakes, rivers and springs. Left (from top to bottom): The Incredible Hulk Coaster at Universal Orlando Resort, Islands of Adventure launches. *Photos courtesy of Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.* Manatee in Blue Spring State Park, Orange City, Florida. *Photo by Gavin Baker.* The Koutoubia Minaret (a detailed replica of a famous prayer tower in Marrakesh) stands guard over the entrance to the Morocco pavilion in World Showcase at Epcot. Downtown Disney West Side at Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., is home to a star-studded lineup of restaurants, nightclubs and shopping adventures. *Photos courtesy Walt Disney World Resorts.*

Identical twin brothers each spin a German Wheel, performing in perfect synchronization as part of an extraordinary cast of more than 70 international performers who create *La Nouba*, an original production of Cirque du Soleil at Walt Disney World Resort. Photo courtesy Walt Disney World Resorts.




Salad and Grapefruit Cake.

If you enjoy the nightclub scene, both **Universal City Walk** and **Downtown Disney's Pleasure Island** offer a variety of musical and comedy clubs. Two shows you won't want to miss are the famous **Cirque du Soleil, La Nouba**, with its mesmerizing acrobatics and stunning costumes (Disney's West End), and the **Blue Man Group** offering a unique evening of music, comedy and multimedia theatrics (Universal Studios).

Enjoy a traveling Broadway show or Orlando's own ballet, opera or Philharmonic orchestra at the **Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre** in downtown Orlando. The downtown area is also home to several museums, including the **Orlando Museum of Art**, the **Mennello Museum of American Art** and the **Orange County Regional History Center**, a Smithsonian affiliate. Don't miss the **Harry P. Leu Gardens**, a 50-acre botanical park featuring the largest documented collection of camellias in the nation.

Take a day to get off the beaten path with a trip to the quaint, brick-lined town of Winter Park. Stroll down Park Avenue with its upscale boutiques and restaurants, and be sure to sample the famous chocolate popcorn at **Peterbrook Chocolatier**. Have lunch at **Café de France**, a favorite with locals who appreciate its authentic French food and excellent service.

After lunch, visit **The Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art**, which is home to the world's most comprehensive collection of works by Louis Comfort Tiffany, including an elaborate chapel interior. End your relaxing day with a scenic one-hour boat tour on **Lake Osceola**.

Whether you plan to ride every theme park ride, explore the cultured side of the city or simply cocoon yourself at a luxury resort, Orlando has it all! 



Left to right: The **Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art** in Winter Park is home to the world's most comprehensive collection of works by Louis Comfort Tiffany. The museum also features late-19th and 20th century American art. **Boggy Creek Airboat Rides** in Kissimmee takes riders through Florida wetlands for a look at native wildlife. Inset: The **Orlando Opera** has been Central Florida's professional opera company for nearly 50 years, featuring grand opera and classical music theater performances. Photos courtesy of Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.

