

## How to Feel Like an Orlando Family

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In my house, and undoubtedly in many others, the mere mention of Walt Disney World and Orlando can cause little eyes to sparkle and smiles to appear, a phenomenon often accompanied by the spontaneous outbreak of jumping and dancing about the room. If there is any doubt at all that a trip to Orlando is worth the effort, I need only see the wonder, amazement, and excitement in the faces of my five kids, not to mention the tens of thousands of other kids I see when visiting Orlando. It simply confirms what I've known for a long time: that this is truly a magical place where children and families are the real VIPs.

Orlando businesses roll out the red carpet to children of all ages and their families. The city tempts you with special child check-in desks, kids' menus, character meet-and-greets, and an array of unique attractions (with slightly lower admission prices for those 3 to 9 years old). Some hotels and resorts have special programs for youngsters—and, in a few cases, teenagers—giving them their own space to hang out with their peers. A handful offer rooms with cartoon-character or action-hero themes. And almost every one of them lets kids ages 17 and under stay free with paying adults.

Thank Walter Elias Disney and his wannabes for that.

Uncle Walt laid the foundation for what in the past 3 decades has become America's *number-one vacation destination* for the young and young at heart.

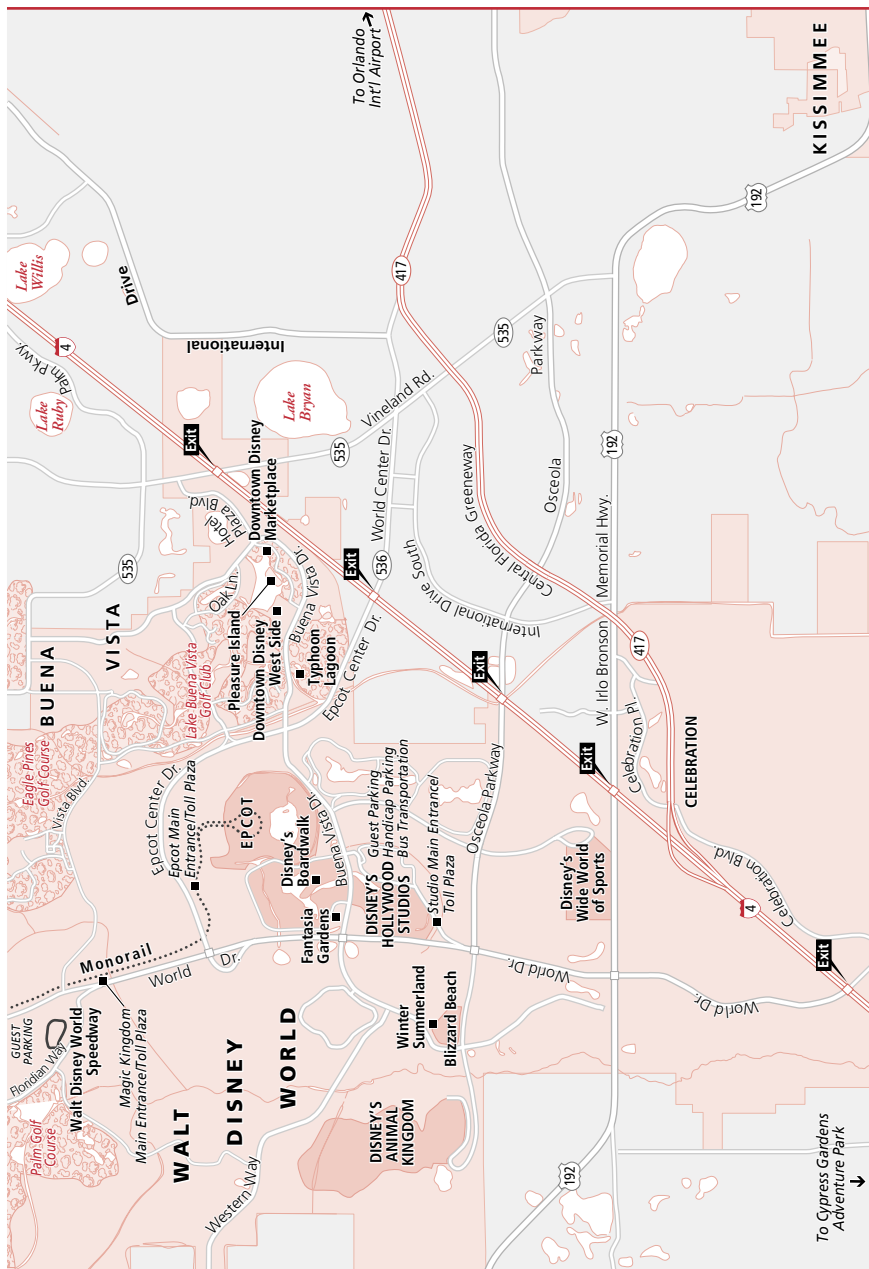
Until Disney's heirs opened the gates to the Magic Kingdom in 1971, water-skiing and alligator-wrestling shows were the only attractions in town. Nowadays, the Kingdom That Walt Built tempts you with four major theme parks; two water parks; a dozen or so smaller attractions; an entertainment, shopping, and dining district; tens of thousands of hotel rooms (including timeshares—or what's called the Disney Vacation Club); scores of restaurants; and a cruise line all its own (with two—soon to be four—cruise ships). Universal Orlando adds two theme parks, three luxury hotels, and an entertainment district to the mix, while SeaWorld tosses in three more parks. The smaller fry ante up 80 or so lesser attractions, an avalanche of restaurants, and enough hotel rooms to boost Central Florida's total population to more than 114,000.

Of course, all of that comes with a price—and you're the one paying.

A typical family of four spends about \$300 a day for admission, parking, a fast-food lunch, and two small souvenirs. That's not taking into account your hotel room, meals other than lunch, transportation (both to and from Orlando as well as to and from the parks, if need be), and other miscellaneous expenses and incidentals.

There's also an intangible price to pay: anxiety. There are so many things to see and do that even a 2-week stay and very deep pockets won't allow you the time to





### **Fun Fact By the Numbers**

With tourism once again on the rise, Central Florida finds itself hosting a staggering number of visitors. While individual parks don't release specific figures, *TEA (Themed Entertainment Association)*, in association with *Economic Research Associates*, estimates theme-park attendance and releases the reports annually. Its figures show that Disney parks welcome around 49 million visitors annually; Universal's two parks, about 12 million; and SeaWorld chips in another 6 million.

experience all of the parks and attractions. That completely unravels a good many travelers and can leave the unwary family feeling frazzled.

But don't panic—not yet, anyway. Over the years, I've explored and re-explored the parks with (and without) my five kids in tow, dined at Orlando's restaurants, and scoped out the area's best resorts and hotels just so I can give you the inside track. With this book, you'll have the tools to plan ahead, ensuring that all members of your family will have a good time. There's more than enough information here to make you a savvy shopper. My job: to make your family vacation easy to arrange and as enjoyable as possible, so you'll be able to relax and have fun while you're here. At the same time, I give plenty of options to make your vacation affordable. I've noted some of the best deals around, along with a handful of ways to maximize your fun while keeping your expenses to a minimum. And Orlando tourism gurus will make sure your family has a steady stream of new things to see and do each and every time you visit.

## **1 Frommer's Favorite Orlando Family Experiences**

From Cinderella Castle to Space Mountain, everybody loves the Magic Kingdom, but here are plenty of other things to explore at Disney, Universal, SeaWorld, and in the greater Orlando area (see chapters 6 and 7 for details):

- **Go Globe Trotting at Epcot:** This is a great stop if your kids are old enough to have inquiring minds. You can travel around the world at the World Showcase pavilions, explore the all-new Seas with Nemo & Friends, blast off riding Mission: Space, get your thrills on Test Track, fly through the skies aboard Soarin', and glimpse the future at Innoventions. And what better way to cap your day than watching the **IllumiNations** fireworks show? See the "Epcot" section, beginning on p. 207.
- **Get Behind the Scenes at Disney's Hollywood Studios:** This park has plenty to offer both tots and teens. Ariel, Belle, and Bear in the Big Blue House come alive on stage, entrancing the younger set, while kids over 8 won't want to miss the thrills of the Tower of Terror and the Rock 'n' Roller Coaster. The whole family should see the Light, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show, where stunt-car secrets are revealed. Get shrunk to the size of a toy and play along the midway on Toy Story Mania!; watch your favorite Disney-Pixar characters come to life in the all-new Block Party Bash parade; and catch Wildcat fever when you sing, dance, and cheer 'em on at the High School Musical 2: School's Out! street show. End the day with Fantasmic!, the fireworks, live-action,

and laser-lights show. See the “Disney’s Hollywood Studios” section, beginning on p. 226.

- **Catch a Wave at Typhoon Lagoon & Blizzard Beach:** Sandy beaches to sink your toes in and waterslides that range from terrifying to toddler-friendly—the entire family will have fun at these Disney water parks. You can even hang ten before park opening at Typhoon Lagoon: Surf lessons are offered twice weekly. See the “Disney Water Parks” section, beginning on p. 246.
- **Co-Pilot the WDW Monorail:** If there’s no one but the pilot aboard, ask to sit up front, and you and your kids can pretend to drive Disney’s monorail. Your best chance is if you board at the Grand Floridian, Contemporary, or Polynesian resorts, where the crowds are thinner than at the transportation center. Don’t try this at park opening and closing times.
- **Experience Universal Orlando:** Universal Studios Florida and its sister park, Islands of Adventure, combine cutting-edge, high-tech special effects with edgy and amazing creativity. Not-to-be-missed attractions include the new Simpsons ride, Fear Factor Live, Terminator 2: 3-D Battle Across Time, Revenge of the Mummy, Men in Black Alien Attack, Jimmy Neutron’s Nicktoon Blast, Shrek 4-D, Dueling Dragons, the Incredible Hulk Coaster, the Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man, and Dudley Do-Right’s Ripsaw Falls. You’ll have a tough time tearing the younger ones away from A Day in the Park with Barney, Curious George Goes to Town, Fievel’s Playland, Caro-Seuss-el, and Camp Jurassic. And look for the highly anticipated Wizarding World of Harry Potter (a park-within-a-park) to make its debut in late 2009. See the “Universal Studios Florida” (p. 255) and “Islands of Adventure” (p. 270) sections.
- **Explore Eco-Edutainment at SeaWorld, Discovery Cove & Aquatica:** The Journey to Atlantis and Kraken rides give SeaWorld a little zip, and the expansion of Shamu’s Happy Harbor adds a little zing, but it’s the hands-on encounters with sea critters, spectacular shows, and up-close viewing of the animals from polar bears to killer whales (kids of all ages will be entranced) that you should come for here. Its younger sister, Discovery Cove, gives you a chance to swim with dolphins and other undersea inhabitants (alas, currently at a cost of \$249–\$279). SeaWorld’s newest sibling, Aquatica, takes undersea adventure one step further: The eco-themed water park is filled with slides and rides featuring up-close animal encounters and aquatic edutainment. See the “SeaWorld” section, beginning on p. 285.
- **Go Wild at Gatorland:** Located between Orlando and Kissimmee, this throwback park is a great way to spend a half day at less than a third of the price of the major theme parks. In addition to the animal exhibits, make sure to catch Gator Jumparoo, a signature show since the park opened in 1949. Gator Wrestlin’ is worth a look, too. Other options include a children’s water playground, an aviary, and a train ride through the park. If you have money to spare, and your kids are over 12, they (or you) can be a Trainer for a Day—definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience. See p. 296.
- **Star-Gaze at the Orlando Science Center:** The center’s planetarium is only part of the fun. Your heirs can dabble in Weird Science, 123 Math Avenue, KidsTown, and lots more at this popular downtown attraction. See p. 301.

## Moments **Chills & Thrills**

For parents and older children (who meet the mandatory height requirements) looking for the ups and downs of a good ride, here are the top stomach-churners and G-force generators in Orlando:

- **Incredible Hulk Coaster** (Islands of Adventure): Blast from 0 to 40 mph in 2 seconds, spin upside down, and endure seven rollovers and two plummet on this glow-in-the-dark roller coaster. See p. 278.
- **Rock ‘n’ Roller Coaster** (Disney’s Hollywood Studios): You’ll launch from 0 to 60 mph in 2.8 seconds and go into the first inversion as 120 speakers in your “stretch limo” mainline Aerosmith at (yeeeeow!) 32,000 watts. See p. 234.
- **Dueling Dragons** (Islands of Adventure): Your legs dangle as you ride through five inversions at 55 to 60 mph and—get this—come within 12 inches of the other roller coaster three times. See p. 281.
- **Summit Plummet** (Blizzard Beach): This one starts from a 120-foot-high perch and turns into the world’s fastest body slide—a test of your courage and swimsuit, as it has you moving sans vehicle at 60 mph. See p. 250.
- **The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror** (Disney’s Hollywood Studios): The free-fall experiences are more than thrilling—they’re also scary (even one of the ride’s designers is too scared to go on it). Once your legs stop shaking, *some* of you will want to ride again. See p. 235.
- **Expedition Everest** (Disney’s Animal Kingdom): Disney’s latest contribution to the thrill-ride category takes you on a hair-raising expedition through the Himalayas. You’ll careen through twisted tracks and tight turns—and even make an 80-foot drop before ending up face to face with the legendary Yeti.
- **The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man** (Islands of Adventure): 3-D doesn’t get any better than this ride, which has you twisting, spinning, and soaring before a simulated 400-foot drop that feels awfully real. See p. 277.
- **Mission: Space** (Epcot): If you’re claustrophobic or prone to motion sickness, stay clear of this ride, which simulates an actual liftoff (and the accompanying G-force) and gets the seal of approval from the NASA astronauts who helped design it. See p. 215.
- **Kraken** (SeaWorld): This floorless, open-sided coaster uses speed (up to 65 mph), steep climbs, deep drops, and seven loops to create a stomach-churning ride that lasts far too long for some folks. See p. 290.
- **Revenge of the Mummy** (Universal Studios): In shadowy darkness, you’ll plunge forward, propel backward, twist and turn, start and stop without warning—all while flames and fireballs fly past you and creepy skeletal creatures give chase. See p. 266.

## 2 Best Hotel Bets

- **Most Family-Friendly Hotels:** All Disney properties cater to families, with special menus for kids, video arcades, free transportation to the parks, extensive recreational facilities, and, in some cases, character meals and kids' clubs. Camping at woodsy **Fort Wilderness** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 105) makes for a unique and fun-filled family experience. If bunk beds, bubbling springs in the lobby, and a gushing geyser sound good, check into the **Wilderness Lodge** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 99). Set sail for the **Yacht Club** and **Beach Club** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 96, 87), where the sand-bottom pool and pirate-ship play area are just part of the seaside charm. The African savanna serves as a backdrop for the **Animal Kingdom Lodge** (☎ 407/934-7369; p. 98).

Beyond the House of Mouse, the **Nickelodeon Family Suites** (☎ 877/387-5437; p. 115), **Holiday Inn Main Gate East** (☎ 888/465-4329; p. 120), **Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort Lake Buena Vista** (☎ 800/366-6299; p. 114), and **Seralago Hotel & Suites Main Gate East** (☎ 407/396-4488; p. 121) offer kids' suites, kids' clubs, activities, and more. See chapter 4 for more family-friendly accommodations.

- **Best Moderately Priced Hotels:** For Southern charm, head to the French Quarter and Riverside areas in **Disney's Port Orleans Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 102); the pool in the French Quarter has a water slide that curves out of a dragon's mouth. In the free world, the **Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort** (☎ 407/827-4000; p. 108) is the only official resort on Hotel Plaza Boulevard to offer Disney's Extra Magic Hours option. Other pluses include two

pools and spacious junior suites—and it's located just across from Downtown Disney. Nearby, the **Staybridge Suites Lake Buena Vista** (☎ 407/238-0777; p. 116) has room to spare, with oversize one- and two-bedroom suites. Full kitchens, free breakfasts, weekday receptions, and helpful services, including grocery delivery, are all part of the deal here. A second location on International Drive (☎ 407/352-2400; p. 126) offers much the same. The **Marriott Village at Lake Buena Vista**, which includes a Courtyard, SpringHill Suites, and Fairfield Inn & Suites (☎ 407/938-9001; p. 113), offers an array of accommodations to fit families (including themed family suites), conveniences like microwaves and fridges (in select rooms), pools and play areas, and plenty of nearby dining options—all just down the road from Downtown Disney.

- **Best Value/Deal:** That's easy: **Disney's All-Star Movies Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 103), **All-Star Music Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 103), **All-Star Sports Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 104), and **Pop Century Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 105). If you're going to stay on WDW property, you can't beat them, though they would be significantly overpriced outside the realm. The **Best Western Lakeside** (☎ 407/396-2222; p. 119) has three pools, miniature golf, a convenience store, free shuttles to area theme parks, and a kids-eat-free program. Plenty of restaurants are right nearby, and Disney is only 2 miles away. The **Comfort Suites Maingate East** (☎ 407/397-7848; p. 119) offers plenty of freebies including breakfast, shuttles to all theme parks, and high-speed



Internet access. From this all-suite hotel, it's only a short walk to shops, restaurants, and miniature golf, plus Disney is only minutes away.

- **Best Budget Motel:** The **Comfort Suites Maingate** (☎ 407/390-9888; p. 120) is modern, clean, and comfortable, with a location and price that are hard to beat. Restaurants and shops are steps away and Disney's just 2 miles down the road.
- **Best Spa for Kids:** That's not a typo. The **Nickelodeon Family Suites** (☎ 877/387-5437; p. 115) started something good with its Kids' Spa, with services such as manicures and temporary tattooing. The resort also has a lounge where parents can spend a little time on their own. At the Mandara Spa in the **Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando** (☎ 800/235-6397; p. 122), teens can choose from a menu of special services just for them.
- **Best Kids' Programs:** The Wizard of Oz has dandy kids' clubs at select resorts, but some really good ones can be found beyond Disney's doorstep, too. The top picks beyond Mickey's boundaries include Camp Gator at the **Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress** (☎ 800/233-1234; p. 111), Ritz-Kids at the **Ritz-Carlton** (☎ 800/241-3333; p. 112), La Petite Academy at **Gaylord Palms** (☎ 877/677-9352; p. 110), Camp Holiday at **Holiday Inn SunSpree** (☎ 800/366-6299; p. 114), Kids Crew at the **Ginn Reunion Resort** (☎ 888/418-9611; p. 118), Camp Lil' Rock at the **Hard Rock Hotel at Universal Orlando** (☎ 407/503-2236; p. 125), the Mariner's Club at the **Royal Pacific Resort at Universal Orlando** (☎ 407/503-3235; p. 125), and Camp Portofino at the **Portofino Bay Hotel at Universal Orlando** (☎ 407/503-1200; p. 122). You can

find more details in chapter 4, "Family-Friendly Accommodations."

- **Tops for Tots & Toddlers:** Watch your kids' faces light up when larger-than-life raccoon mascots Max and Maxine show up to tuck them in at **Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort Lake Buena Vista** (☎ 800/366-6299; p. 114). Of course, it's hard to beat the **Nickelodeon Family Suites** (☎ 407/387-5437; p. 115), with its water-park-style pools, themed kids' suites, and character breakfasts. Kids from tots to teens will go crazy for this one.
- **Tops for Teens:** I've yet to find a mainstream hotel that comes close to the activities offered in **Aloft** and **The Stack**, the teen clubs aboard the **Disney Cruise Line** ships *Wonder* and *Magic* (☎ 800/951-3532; p. 56). Activities include karaoke, a Hawaiian pool party, and improv. Inland, head over to the **Hard Rock Hotel at Universal Orlando** (☎ 407/503-2000; p. 125), with its sandy beach, way-cool underwater sound system, and hip rock-star decor.
- **Best Location:** **Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 92), **Polynesian Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 94), and **Contemporary Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 92) not only offer waterfront access to Seven Seas Lagoon and Bay Lake, but they're also right on the WDW monorail, providing quick and easy access to the parks. The **Portofino Bay Hotel** (☎ 407/503-1000; p. 122), **Hard Rock Hotel** (☎ 407/503-2000; p. 125), and **Royal Pacific Resort** (☎ 407/503-3000; p. 125) are within walking distance of Universal's parks and CityWalk, with boat service available as well.
- **Best Views:** The whole family can watch the Magic Kingdom's Wishes



### **Fun Fact Room Roulette**

If you wanted to stay one night in every guest room at the hotels and resorts currently on Walt Disney World property, it would take you well over 72 years to get the job done.

fireworks display from the comfort of your room if you book one on an upper floor on the west side of **Disney's Contemporary Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 92). From boardwalk-side rooms at **Disney's BoardWalk Inn & Villas** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 90), you can catch the fireworks during Epcot's IllumiNations. And you have a front-row seat for the action at SeaWorld from the upper-east-side floors at the **Renaissance Orlando Resort at SeaWorld** (☎ 800/327-6677; p. 126).

- **Best Family Pools:** Arguably the best pool in O-Town is at the **Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Resort** (☎ 800/233-1234; p. 111). It's a half-acre, lagoonlike pool that flows through rock grottoes, is spanned by a rope bridge, and has 12 waterfalls

and two steep water slides. The **Lazy River** at the **JW Marriott** (☎ 800/241-3333; p. 113) finishes a very close second. It's a 24,000-square-foot stream winding through small waterfalls and rock formations. At Disney, squish your toes in the sand-bottom pool of Stormalong Bay at **Disney's Yacht Club Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 96) and **Beach Club Resort** (☎ 407/934-7639; p. 87)—though most WDW resorts have fabulous pools, this one's a stand-out. The newest addition to the list is the **Nickelodeon Family Suites** (☎ 407/387-5437; p. 115). Thanks to its two water-park-style pools, complete with slides, flumes, squirters, fountains, and more, the action here is almost unending.

### **3 Best Dining Bets**

While Orlando can't compete with U.S. destinations such as New York or San Francisco, it has everything from fast-food eateries that will satisfy your kids to five-star fine dining for a more adult palate. Look for more details on these and other eateries in chapter 5, "Family-Friendly Dining."

- **Best Character Meal:** Hands down, it doesn't get any better than **Chef Mickey's** (☎ 407/939-3463) breakfasts and dinners at Disney's Contemporary Resort. These events feature their respective namesake and other characters, but a word of warning: They draw up to *1,600 guests* at each meal! See p. 171.
- **Best Kids' Menu Variety:** When it comes to the deepest menu for young tastebuds, **Pastamore Ristorante**, at Universal's CityWalk (☎ 407/363-8000; p. 162), and the **Rainforest Cafe**, at Downtown Disney (☎ 407/827-8500; p. 157), each give kids a choice of 10 entrees.
- **Best Offbeat Kids' Menu:** With a menu that offers crispy chicken, shrimp tempura, and barbecued pork or beef—each served with shrimp chips and lo mein noodles—it's hard to beat the **Ming Court** (☎ 407/351-9988) in this category. See p. 164.
- **Best Burgers:** From cheeseburgers in paradise to Cuban meatloaf survival

## **Tips Orlando's Best Websites**

Given Orlando's enormous popularity, it should come as no surprise that hundreds of websites are devoted to it. These sites have information about everything from WDW history to getting around town.

There are several sites written by Disney fans, employees, and self-proclaimed experts. A favorite, [www.hiddenmickeys.org](http://www.hiddenmickeys.org), is about **Hidden Mickeys**, a park tradition. These subtle images can be found scattered throughout the realm, though they are sometimes in the eye, or imagination, of the beholder (see "Find the Hidden Mickeys," p. 232, to learn more). **Deb's Unofficial Walt Disney World Information Guide** ([www.allearsnet.com](http://www.allearsnet.com)) offers tons of family info on hotels, restaurants, attractions, and more. Definitely take a look at Disney's official site, [www.disneyworld.com](http://www.disneyworld.com), if you're planning a pilgrimage to the Land of the Mouse. The newest addition to the wireless waves, [www.travel-insights.com](http://www.travel-insights.com), is filled with information for families, including travel tips and insider advice on everything Disney, as well as Orlando's kid-friendliest hotels, hot spots, restaurants, and attractions (including Universal Orlando and SeaWorld).

If a trip to Universal Orlando's theme parks or CityWalk is on your dance card, stop at [www.universalorlando.com](http://www.universalorlando.com). You can check out the attractions, order tickets, make reservations, and find out about special events. Fish fans can get in the know about SeaWorld at [www.seaworld.com](http://www.seaworld.com), Discovery Cove at [www.discoverycove.com](http://www.discoverycove.com), and Aquatica at [www.aquaticabyseaworld.com](http://www.aquaticabyseaworld.com).

For general information about the city, accommodations, dining, nightlife, or special events, head to the Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau website at [www.orlandoinfo.com](http://www.orlandoinfo.com). The *Orlando Weekly* site, [www.orlandoweekly.com](http://www.orlandoweekly.com), offers reviews and recommendations for arts, movies, music, restaurants, and more from Orlando's premier alternative weekly. Other great options include the online version of the local newspaper, at [www.orlandosentinel.com](http://www.orlandosentinel.com), as well as the *Sentinel*-produced site [www.go2orlando.com](http://www.go2orlando.com). Both feature information on upcoming events, area attractions, restaurant reviews, and local nightlife.

sandwiches, **Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville**, at Universal's CityWalk (☎ 407/224-2155), has some of the juiciest and most unusual burgers in town. See p. 161.

- **Best Outdoor Eating:** Kids can get into the festive jungle atmosphere while digging into their own wild menu at the **Rainforest Cafe**, at Downtown Disney (☎ 407/827-8500; p. 149), which offers indoor dining in an outdoor atmosphere.

The terrace at **Artist Point** (☎ 407/939-3463; p. 151), the premier restaurant at Disney's Wilderness Lodge, overlooks a lake, waterfall, and scenery evocative of America's national parks. And the **Rose & Crown**, at Epcot (☎ 407/939-3463; p. 140), delivers a front-row seat for the IllumiNations fireworks display.

- **Best Value:** At **Romano's Macaroni Grill** (☎ 407/239-6676), the ambience and northern Italian cuisine

score very high, and prices are low, low, low. See p. 159.

- **Best Spot for a Parents' Night Out:** Dinners don't get much more romantic than those at the Victorian-style **Victoria & Albert's**, at Disney's Grand Floridian Resort (☎ 407/939-3463). The meal, which comprises seven courses, is served in an opulent and very intimate atmosphere by none other than Victoria & Albert. See p. 151.
- **Best Barbecue:** Hands down, follow your nose to **Bubbalou's Bodacious BBQ** (☎ 407/628-1212) after catching a whiff of the tangy hickory smoke. It tastes as good as it smells. See p. 169.
- **Best Italian Cuisine:** I have to give the nod to **Pacino's Italian Ristorante**, in Kissimmee (☎ 407/396-8022). It has great food and a moderately priced menu. See p. 168.
- **Most Entertaining Restaurant:** It's hard to contain yourself when the corny jokes and lively music kick into gear at the **Hoop-Dee-Doo Musical Revue**, at Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort (☎ 407/939-3463; p. 324). Outside of Disney's dinner shows, the **Whispering Canyon Café**, at Disney's Wilderness Lodge (☎ 407/939-3463; p. 152), ensures a stompin' good time with its kid-friendly activities and wild Western theme.
- **Best Steakhouse:** At the **Yachtsman Steakhouse**, at Disney's Yacht Club Resort (☎ 407/939-3463), the aged steaks, chops, and seafood are grilled over a wood fire. See p. 151.
- **Best Breakfast:** Disney character breakfasts certainly get the nod if you have children under 10 in tow. But it's hard to beat the buffet at **Boma**, in Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge (☎ 407/938-3000). See p. 152.
- **Most Kid-Friendly Service:** The kids-eat-free program at the **Nickelodeon Family Suites** (☎ 877/387-5437) makes it a winner. Up to four kids per family, ages 5 and under (the real VIPs at this hotel), eat at select on-site eateries for free when accompanied by at least one paying adult. See p. 115.
- **Best Late-Night Dining:** The trendy **B-Line Diner**, at the Peabody Orlando (☎ 407/345-4460), is open around the clock for eclectic fare ranging from steaks to falafel sandwiches to grits and eggs. You and your kids won't be able to resist the desserts. See p. 163.
- **Best Spot to Celebrate with Kids:** The chefs at **Mikado Japanese Steakhouse**, in the Marriott Orlando World Center (☎ 407/239-4200; p. 166), entertain by slicing and dicing your meal. It makes for a fun and entertaining evening out. For a lively yet laid-back celebration, head to **Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville**, at Universal's CityWalk (☎ 407/224-2155; p. 161). If you're celebrating sans kids (or with teens, not tots), **Emeril's**, at CityWalk (☎ 407/224-2424; p. 160), and **Todd English's Bluezoo**, at the WDW Dolphin (☎ 407/934-1111; p. 154), are both great choices for a high-end special occasion.
- **Best Special Sunday Brunch:** The **House of Blues**, at Disney's West Side (☎ 407/934-2583), has a down-home gospel brunch featuring live foot-stomping music and an array of vittles that includes greens, red beans and rice, jambalaya, gumbo, and more. The entertainment makes it a certifiable winner. Reservations aren't accepted for parties under six, so arrive early for the 10:30am or 1pm show. See p. 158.