

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

How To Enjoy Orlando Without A Single Theme Park

Our Friends · Thursday, June 8th, 2017

If you tell your friends or coworkers that you're headed to Orlando for vacation, you're likely to hear a lot of the same responses. "Have fun at Disney World/Universal/Sea World!" There's nothing wrong with any of these places, and they bring millions of people from around the world into Orlando for good reason. But what if I told you that you don't need a theme park for a great Orlando vacation? Say goodbye to long lines and hello to some hidden gems on this list.

More Family Fun

Many people enjoy theme parks because of the [family adventures](#) they provide. If you're looking to save some money or have already been, though, there are still plenty of options. One great option that is less than an hour east of town is the Kennedy Space Center. With your base admission, you get a bus tour of the grounds, as well as exhibits on the space race that ended with a man on the moon, some of the early heroes of NASA's space program, as well as what projects it is working on now. Perhaps one of the major benefits of the Space Center is that it is completely indoors, making for a good alternative plan for a rainy day.

If your family is more inclined to see some of the [local fauna](#), Gatorland is a good day trip option. This 110-acre area combines a theme park and wildlife preserve, complete with exhibits of various Everglades animals, including alligators, naturally. Other highlights of Gatorland include 1,200 feet of ziplines, an observation tower, and a train ride. Be sure to keep an eye out for the four rare leucistic (white) alligators.

The Great Outdoors

Orlando and Florida in general is very unique in the U.S., and you don't want to leave without seeing a bit of what the outdoors has to offer. There's no shortage of [recreational activities](#) you can take part in here to enjoy the sun. Try out:

- Jet Skiing/Wakeboarding
- Bike Riding
- Hiking
- Paddle Boarding
- Kayaking

However, if you want to explore something truly Floridian, an airboat ride is the way to go. Not only can you see plenty of local wildlife as you ride along the water's surface, but this is a great

family activity to boot. Many recommend taking the trip at sunset for a special sight and adrenaline rush. As you would expect, check out the weather before booking your arrangement.

If you are looking for something a little less wild, the Harry P. Leu Gardens may be more your speed. This 50-acre attraction has over 1,000 rose bushes at the peak of the season, as well as the most camellias in North America.

Orlando's Hip Downtown and Beyond

If you're looking for [shopping and eating](#), downtown Orlando is going to be the place to hang out. Along with a wide selection of restaurants, there are also two major shopping malls here: the upscale Mall at Millennia with several of luxury brands and The Florida Mall. If you're looking to save, the Orlando Premium Outlets International Drive and Orlando Premium Outlets Vineland Avenue both have name brands and home products at a discount.

There are also some surprise cultural spots to enjoy in the Orlando area. For one, the city has the largest collection of Tiffany glass in the world at the [Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art](#) in Winter Park. Stop by from November to April on Friday nights for free admission. Winter Park is also home to three major wine bars along Park Avenue. The boat tours are also popular as well when weather is warm.

Top Accommodations

While some of these options can make for a rather unconventional way to enjoy your vacation, some things are always going to be the same. Namely, you are going to need some place to stay. One of the best options for value and convenience is booking a resort or hotel package. In some cases, you may be able to get more savings than if you purchase the individual components.

Learn more about some of the resort offerings from Westgate Reservations at <https://www.westgatereservations.com/orlando/>. Specializing in luxury resort packages across the country, Orlando is one of Westgate Reservations' signature cities. Wherever you choose to stay, understand that Orlando's tourist status is well-deserved, with not just the signature destinations available, but some offerings off the beaten path as well. Be sure to keep these in mind the next time you plan out an Orlando trip.

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