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Instant Guide to Orlando Area Interstate 4

4 hours on the go

Fodor's



Orlando is the gateway to Florida for many visitors, primarily because it's close to all things Disney. It's also about two hours east of Tampa, home to Busch Gardens. However there's more to an Orlando experience than walking 10 miles a day in theme parks. Travelers flocked to central Florida's myriad lakes, streams, and golf resorts decades before Disney entered the picture. Besides the great outdoors, a handful of sights—from cultured to wacky—throughout Greater Orlando are worth checking out. Our top picks will give you the best Orlando experience.

GET HERE FAST

A car is essential for visiting the sights in the Orlando area. From Walt Disney World, take I-4 northeast. The sights along International Drive are clustered around Exit 74; for Downtown Orlando, take Exit 82C or 83B eastbound.

DON'T MISS

■ **WonderWorks:** If the strange sight of a topsy-turvy facade complete with upended palm trees and a simulated FedEx box doesn't catch your attention, the swirling "dust" and piped-out creaking sounds will. Inside, it's a playground of 100 interactive experiences—you can encounter an earthquake or a hurricane, pilot a fighter jet, make giant bubbles, play laser tag, design and ride your own roller coaster, lie on a bed of real nails, and play basketball with a 7-foot opponent.

■ **Harry P. Leu Gardens:** A few miles from downtown Orlando on the former lakefront estate of a citrus entrepreneur, these gardens are a quiet respite from the bustle of the theme parks. You can see ancient oaks, a 50-foot floral clock, and one of the largest camellia collections in eastern North America (in bloom November through March).

■ **Orlando Science Center:** Hands-on educational exhibits about the human body, mechanics, electricity, math, nature, the solar system, and optics might be enough to tempt kids—and adults—away

from the theme parks. There's a DinoDigs room, and the atrium is home to live gators and turtles. The Dr. Phillips Cine-Dome offers large-format films as well as planetarium programs.

QUICK HITS

■ **Pirate's Cove Adventure Golf:** You can play the crème de la crème of miniature golf at the two Pirate's Cove Adventure Golf locations. Each site has two 18-hole courses that wind around artificial mountains, through caves, and into lush foliage.

■ **Fun Spot:** Four go-kart tracks offer a variety of driving experiences for children and adults. Rides range from the dizzying Paratrooper to an old-fashioned Revolver Ferris Wheel. Inside the arcade, traditional Whack a Mole and Spider Stompin' challenges get as much attention as the high-tech video games.

SHOPPING BLITZ

■ **Mall at Millenia:** Pull out those charge cards at this high-end mall. Designers such as Gucci, Dior, Burberry, Chanel, Jimmy Choo, Hugo Boss, Cartier, and Tiffany have stores here. A few minutes northwest of Universal, the mall is easy to reach via Exit 78 off I-4.

■ **Prime Outlets Orlando:** Two malls and four annexes make Prime Outlets Orlando the area's largest collection of outlet stores. There are dozens of apparel



stores to choose from, along with a few stores specializing in housewares, jewelry, perfume, and luggage. Among the trendy shops to search out are 7 For All Mankind, Juicy Couture, Aeropostale, and Polo Ralph Lauren Factory Store.

IN-THE-KNOW

At the **Orlando Science Center** on Friday and Saturday night you can peer through Florida's largest publicly accessible refractor telescope to view the planets and many of their moons, plus other galaxies and nebulas.

At **Prime Outlets Orlando**, one of the best places to find deals is **Off 5th**, the Saks Fifth Avenue outlet that sells high-end labels at ridiculously low prices. More bliss for bargain hunters is at the **Neiman Marcus Last Call Clearance Center**.

