



7 Things to Do in Orlando Besides Theme Parks

Gatorland

Gatorland has been named “Alligator Capital of the World” and is the best place to get up close and personal with around 2,500 alligators!

The park opened in 1949 and by the 1950s, the American Alligator was added to the extinction list. Thanks to the conservation efforts of organizations, including Gatorland, alligators are now thriving in their natural habitats.

Gatorland's focus is on education and conservation and you'll have a chance to learn all about these fascinating creatures through exhibits, live shows, and activities.

One of the main attractions at Gatorland is the Screamin' Gator Zipline where you can soar over the Alligator Breeding Marsh filled with hundreds of alligators!

The course is spread across the 110-acre park and includes 7 towers, 5 lines, and a swing bridge. It took us about an hour to complete the course and we thought it was well worth the additional cost. At the time of our visit, it was \$35 to add the zipline experience to the price of admission.

Other [activities](#) not included in the price of admission are the Stompin' Gator Off-Road Adventure, Croc Rock, and the Gator Gauntlet.

There are also plenty of activities that are included in the price of admission, like live shows.

The Legends of the Swamp was our favorite show. During the show, you'll watch one of the handlers wrestle an alligator out of the water.

While he's busy manhandling the gator, he'll share interesting facts about alligators and give safety tips on what to do if you ever encounter one. We learned that alligators lose between

2,000-3,000 teeth in a lifetime and that new teeth regrow almost as fast as they fall out!

The Gator Jumper Show is also a must-see where you can watch alligators jump out of the water during a feeding frenzy. For a small fee, you can purchase bait and feed the alligators using a pole and line.

There are also other animal habitats you can walk through and a petting zoo. We loved visiting "Pops", the resident Hollywood celebrity. He has starred in several movies including *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

The bird aviary was also one of our favorite attractions. You can purchase a feeding stick for \$2 (bring cash) and dozens of colorful birds will land on you to eat from the stick.

Orlando Watersports Complex

If you're looking for an adrenaline rush, check out the [Orlando Watersports Complex](#)! This is one of the largest wakeboard cable parks in the nation.

If you're not familiar with a cable park, it uses a cable system to tow you around the lake on a wakeboard. The course has different obstacles like ramps and rails for more advanced wakeboarders. If you are a beginner, you can just ride around the obstacles.

The park has a beginner course and an advanced course. The advanced course will tow you at a faster speed and it has more challenging obstacles.

If you are a beginner, lessons are available and there is also an option to do a kneeboard instead of a wakeboard.

In addition to the cable park, there is also an Aquapark which is an inflatable obstacle course on the water. My younger son really enjoyed this!

Kayaking at King's Landing

If you want to escape the city, head about 20 miles north of Orlando to King's Landing in Apopka. Here, you will find Rock Springs Run with crystal clear water and a white sandy river bottom.

This is one of the best places to kayak in Florida. You can rent kayaks, bring your own, or book a guided kayak tour. We booked a tour and it was such a fun afternoon!

The shallow river is a refreshing 72 degrees year-round and it is the perfect spot to escape the oppressing summer heat.

The river flows past the famous Emerald Cut, a scenic oasis perfect for swimming.

It takes about 40 minutes to paddle upstream to the border of Kelly Park, and about 30 minutes to paddle back. You'll want to plan extra time to swim and eat a picnic lunch.

For more information and details, see our complete guide to [Kayaking at King's Landing](#).

A few other nearby springs that are worth visiting are Kelly Park (but you must arrive early since they close the gates once it is full), Blue Springs State Park, and Wekiwa Springs State Park.

WonderWorks

As you drive by [WonderWorks](#), you might take a double-take! This indoor entertainment center is housed in a cool upside-down building. Inside, you'll find a mix between an optical illusion museum, an arcade, a science center, and a gymnasium!

With over 100 interactive exhibits, you could easily spend a full day here. All of the activities are designed to be educational, hands-on, and active.

You'll find games, simulators, laser tag, a ropes course, and a 4D XD Theater. The outerspace exhibit has some cool astronaut training simulators, but my stomach couldn't handle all of the spinning!

I love that all of the activities are included in the price of admission, except the arcade games by the ropes course.

The museum does get busy on the weekends, especially in the summer when it's hot outside and people are looking for a place to escape the heat. However, the museum is open until midnight and the crowds tend to die down in the evenings.

WonderWorks is located near the Icon Park entertainment district where you'll find the famous [Orlando Eye](#) observation wheel, the Orlando Slingshot, the Sea Life Aquarium, Madame Tussauds, the Orlando Starflyer swings, Ripley's Believe it or Not and Marvelous Mirror Maze, and a handful of great restaurants.

The Andretti Indoor Karting & Games Center is also located less than a mile from WonderWorks. There really is so much to do in this area, especially for families!

Cocoa Beach

Cocoa Beach is the closest beach to Orlando and is the perfect day trip to escape the crowds. It's about an hour drive, depending on traffic, but is a great way to spend an afternoon.

Cocoa Beach lies on a narrow peninsula with miles of sandy beaches. Because the beach stretches for so long, it is easy to find parking and an empty spot to set up an umbrella.

It never fails to amaze me just how warm the Atlantic is, and Cocoa Beach is no exception! The warm rolling waves are so much fun to play in. Bring boogie boards and a ball to throw around and your kids will be entertained for hours.

We also love Cocoa Beach because there are so many great restaurants within walking or easy driving distance.

We love the Caribbean dishes at The Tiny Turtle. Be sure to save room for a scoop of ice cream at The Fat Donkey next door!

Cocoa Beach is located on the Space Coast near Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center. If you want to make a full day of it, I recommend spending the morning and early afternoon at the [Kennedy Space Center](#) and then relaxing on the beach in the late afternoon and early evening.

If you have time that night, I've heard the [Bioluminescent Kayaking Tour](#) at the Indian River Lagoon is awesome!

Disney Springs

Disney Springs is a shopping, dining, and entertainment complex that offers a taste of Disney magic without entering the theme parks.

You'll find a variety of restaurants, retail shops, activities, and live entertainment. It's one of our favorite places in Orlando to stroll around in the evenings.

Disney Springs is where you'll find the famous Amphicar Tour where you can ride a vintage convertible right into the water! The Amphicar turns into a boat once it hits the water and will take you on a 20-minute cruise around Lake Buena Vista.

The Aerophile is also an iconic Disney Springs activity. Take a ride in this tethered helium balloon where you'll soar 400 feet in the air and enjoy panoramic views of Disney Springs and the Walt Disney World Resort.

Don't miss the World of Disney store, the largest Disney character store in the world. It offers a large selection of Disney merchandise, from apparel and toys to home decor and collectibles.

The LEGO Store is also a must-stop. It features interactive play areas, life-sized LEGO models, and an extensive selection of LEGO sets.

The line to enter the store is often wrapped around the building, so arrive early or during the week. Even if you don't go inside the store, be sure to admire the intricate LEGO creations on display outside of the store, including a life-size version of the Loch Ness Monster!

The three-story Coca-Cola Store is also a fun place to pick up exclusive merchandise and enjoy the rooftop beverage bar.

Free entertainment is offered at the Waterside Stage where you can enjoy a variety of live performances from musicians and bands. The House of Blues and the Edison regularly host live music events as well.

There are so many great restaurants at Disney Springs. Our favorite is Chef Art Smith's Homecomin'. This farm-to-fork restaurant serves up classic Southern dishes with a modern twist, using fresh ingredients from local farms.

They are known for their Fried Chicken & Doughnuts, but the Art Burger with housemade barbecue chips is also really good. I am also still dreaming about their creamy mac & cheese! Try the Church Lady Deviled Eggs or Bunch of Puppies (hush puppies) for an appetizer, and order a slice of Chocolate Pecan Pie a la mode for dessert.

Not only is the food mouthwateringly delicious, but the ambiance is great too. They offer outdoor patio seating by the water, or indoor seating with a sun porch and walls of windows overlooking the water.

The Boathouse is also a popular restaurant. It offers waterfront dining and a menu featuring fresh seafood, steaks, and a raw bar. I recommend making reservations in advance, they fill up quickly! This restaurant is also where you'll find the Amphicar tours.

Marsh Landing Airboat Tours

Taking an airboat tour is something every Florida tourist needs to do at least once!

We have taken an airboat tour in Everglades National Park on the southern tip of Florida, but I didn't realize you could do a tour in central Florida so close to Orlando!

There are actually a few tour operators in the area and [Marsh Landing Adventures](#) is one of the most popular tours. It is located only about 20 miles from Orlando.

This 90-minute tour will skim across the river swamp where you'll spot alligators and other local wildlife. The tour guides know where the gators like to hang out and even know them by name.

They will also share some interesting facts about alligators and the surrounding area. It's a fun and educational experience and one of our favorite things we did on our [One-Week Florida Road Trip!](#)

If you would like to compare prices, a few other airboat tours in the area include [Gator Airboat Rides](#), [Boggy Creek Airboat Rides](#), [Wild Florida Airboats & Gator Park](#), and [Wild Willy's](#)

[Airboat Tours.](#)

If you are planning to visit theme parks as well

We love that there are so many things to do in Orlando besides theme parks. However, we recognize that the theme parks are the biggest draw to Orlando. If you are planning to visit some theme parks while in Orlando, I have a few guides that can help you out:

- [The Wizarding World of Harry Potter Photos & Tips](#)
- [10 Disney Magic Kingdom Tips & Tricks](#)
- [The Best Snacks at Disney's Magic Kingdom](#)

I hope you enjoy your Orlando vacation, it is sure to be a memorable one!