


Parent's Guide to Universal Orlando Resort and 13 Theme Park Tips For Families

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The two Universal Orlando Resort theme parks in Orlando, Florida, just a quick 8 hour drive from Atlanta, are two of the most **epically popular family vacation destinations** in the country, with over 3.6 million people visiting the parks in 2011.

Universal Orlando Resort offers opportunities for guests to visit favorite fictional destinations like Harry Potter's Hogsmeade and the colorful world of the Cat in the Hat at Seuss' Landing.

Gather the family and head to Orlando for a fun time suitable for every age! *Atlanta Moms® was provided with tickets in order to facilitate this article. Opinions are those of Atlanta Moms® editors and not influenced in any way.*

Inside This Guide:

- [Universal's Islands of Adventure Ride Highlights](#)
- [Universal Studios Florida Ride Highlights](#)

- [On-Site Hotels](#)
 - [Universal Orlando Resort Theme Park Dining Highlights](#)
 - [Shopping at Universal Orlando Resort Theme Parks](#)
 - [Plan Your Visit](#)
 - [13 Theme Park Visit Tips + What Your Child Should Wear!](#)
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Universal's Islands of Adventure Attractions Highlights

Embark on a journey to one of the most adventure filled parks on the planet. Visit Seuss Landing to please the 10 and under crowd. My daughter (and I) especially enjoyed Seuss Landing. The peaceful **The Cat in the Hat ride** has no height requirement and takes guests through the colorful pages of the beloved children's book. Caro-Seuss-El (accepting Express Passes) lets kids ride much loved characters like the elephant birds from Horton Hears a Who, dog-a-lopes, and the twin camels from One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish. Even my 14-year-old son couldn't help smiling during this fun carousel ride!



Hit **Jurassic Park** for an exciting river raft ride through dinosaur inhabited jungles and get up close and personal with the prehistoric beasts. Express Pass holders can cut to the front of the line and enjoy this family friendly ride as you get stalked by raptors and catch a glimpse of a baby stegosaurus and its mother.

Doctor Doom's Freefall (Express Pass participant), while best suited for the older crowd (12 and up) as riders are skyrocketed 150 feet in the air before being dropped back down at stomach-twisting speeds.

Transformers: The Ride 3D is great for all members of the family (but perhaps not for kids under 5) where guests fight alongside Optimus Prime to defeat the Decepticons and prevent the Allspark from going to the enemy. Express Pass holders can jump straight to the front of the line.

[See all Universal's Islands of Adventure attractions](#)

Universal Studios Florida Attraction Highlights

Hop onto **Despicable Me's Minion Mayhem** for a ride perfect for all ages. 3D glasses turn guests into Minions followed by an interactive Minion dance party with Gru, Margo, Edith, and Agnes. My 7-year-old daughter and I loved this ride! A family of 4 can sit together in one row during this 3D motion ride and enjoy the hilarious, dramatic, excitement that ensues. Jump ahead with your handy Express Pass.

For the older, braver crowd, **Revenge of the Mummy** plunges guests into the darkness of a pyramid on a speeding roller coaster with fireballs, flesh eating scarab beetles, and the soul sucking Mummy from the motion picture. Definitely use your Express Pass for this ride; it's one of the park's most popular attractions.

The Twister: Ride It Out puts guests right in the middle of a tornado, simulating the powerful winds of an F5 tornado as it hurtles vehicles through the sky, shattering windows, and smashing houses. With the sound system blaring as high as 110 decibels this ride is best suited for kids over 10.

Woody Woodpecker's Nuthouse Coaster is a kid-friendly coaster ride that takes kids through Woody Woodpecker's nuthouse factory, cracking jokes and yucking it up through gentle ups and downs.

For fun for the entire family, the **E.T. Adventure** puts guests on E.T.'s infamous bicycle to sneak E.T. past

police and scientists to return him to his dying planet where you're greeted by his thankful family members. Like most popular attractions, this ride accepts the Express Pass.

[See all Universal Studios Florida attractions](#)

Rides at Universal Studios Florida



On-Site Hotels

As seasoned tourists will tell you, staying on-site saves so much time and energy, especially if you're parents traveling with small kids. The [four on-site hotels](#) are all luxurious with top of the line amenities plus offer the benefit of exclusive theme park benefits.

Universal's Cabana Bay Beach Resort

Considered the "moderate/value hotel", this hotel is retro themed, bringing back the 50s and 60s for a funky style and hip vibe. It has two large pools, a lazy river, a bowling alley, and a fitness center! Guests enjoy early Harry Potter admission, letting them in one hour before the park opens.

Loews Royal Pacific Resort

This is Universal's "deluxe" hotel with island cuisine, a lagoon style pool, and a white sand beach! Guests who stay here can enjoy free Universal Express Passes (which can be purchased for \$89 per person for those not staying at this hotel) which gives them all day unlimited ride access to skip to the front of the line at both Universal theme parks. Guests also receive early admission the Wizarding World of Harry Potter

one hour before it opens, as well as complimentary water taxis and shuttle buses.

Hard Rock Hotel

A 12,000 square foot pool beckons guests with free Universal Express Passes and early admission to the Wizarding World of Harry Potter.

Loews Portofino Bay Hotel

This is another “deluxe” hotel that allows guests a day of free Universal Express Passes, early Harry Potter admission, and choice seating at select restaurants around Universal parks. An Italian Riviera sets a romantic ambiance with three themed pools and a luxury day spa.

[Learn more about Universal's on-site hotels](#)

Universal Studios Dining Highlights

The Three Broomsticks takes guests to Harry Potter’s Hogsmeade and serves traditional pub fare like fish and chips and shepherd’s pie. Mel’s Drive In brings back the kitschy 1950s with jukebox oldies and a feast of burgers, fries, shakes, and crunchy onion rings. Lombarde’s Seafood Grille offers a fine dining option at a recreation of San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf.

My family’s restaurant of choice for lunch during our recent visit was [Confisco Grille & Backwater Bar](#).

Eating at a restaurant gave my husband and I time to rest and recharge while the kids (and us) enjoyed a fabulous meal. My husband and I shared the gluten-free Shrimp Scargo appetizer then proceeded to stuff ourselves with a delicious, juicy cheeseburger. My daughter had pizza and my son also had a cheeseburger. Sitting down for a meal during a visit to a theme park is so important! It gives everyone time to cool down, relax, talk about the fun they’re having and discuss what everyone wants to do after lunch.

Dining at Universal Studios Florida



Universal Orlando Resort Dining Plan

The convenient dining plan lets guests dine at most of the restaurants in both parks and at CityWalk, adding up to [over a hundred locations to eat!](#)

Adult plans are \$45.99 and include an entree, alcoholic beverage, and a dessert; a “quick service meal”

which is an entree and a non-alcoholic drink; and a snack and a non-alcoholic drink.

A kids' (3-9) plan is \$17.99 and includes an entree and a drink; a "quick service platter" with an entree and a drink; a snack and a drink.

Shopping at Universal Studios

One of my daughter's "most favorite" things about Universal Studios was [Honeydukes Sweets](#). My husband left with one of Harry Potter's famous Chocolate Frogs™ (he won't dare let anyone actually eat the frog) while my daughter and I stocked up on gummy snacks...to keep us nourished during our visit to Universal, of course.

There are more than 60 places to get your shop on at both Universal Studios theme parks, offering souvenirs, candy, and comic book stores. Universal Studio's has Shrek's Ye Olde Souvenir Shop where guests can find Shrek themed apparel, toys, and gifts. Harry Potter's Hogsmeade offers shopping straight out of the books at Dervish and Bangers for all of your magical supply needs, Honeydukes for the famous wizarding candy, and of course Ollivander's for a custom matched wand for even the littlest wizard or witch.

Shopping at Universal Studios Florida



[See all of the shopping destinations at Universal Studios here](#)

Plan Your Visit To Universal Studios

Universal Orlando offers [3 ways to plan your visit](#).

The “**Watch**” feature lets people watch travel planning videos, ranging from “Fun for the Whole Family” to a sample three day itinerary.

The “**Customize**” feature asks how many people are coming on your trip, the dates you’ll be at the Universal parks, and your interests (shows, movie rides, romance, thrills). The site then collects the must-see things that match your interests, offering dining options, kids shows if you’re bringing the littles, and of course, rides and attractions that are suited to the ages of the people in your group.

The “**Browse**” features lets you scroll through sample itineraries so you can completely customize your own plan on your own time.

One more thing.. go through the tips below to ensure that your visit is even more fun that your kids could imagine!

13 tips to make your family’s visit to Universal Studios a HUGE success!

1. Bring and wear sunscreen.
2. Wear comfortable shoes (this goes for everyone in the family!).
3. Plan what rides everyone in the family wants to go on and when.
4. Eat a good meal at least once during your visit in order to rest and recharge – this is very important!
5. Bring a backpack and plan on renting a locker while on rides or to get a load off your back.
6. Don’t hesitate to rent a stroller if your child fits in it! I was hesitant to rent a stroller for my 7 year old but after about 4 hours in the park, she was getting tired and renting a stroller made life easier for her and the rest of my family. The wide stroller will hold bags and backpacks too.
7. Bring and use hand sanitizer often.
8. Drink a lot of water and take regular restroom breaks.
9. Bring medicine such as Advil or Tylenol in case someone gets a headache.
10. Bring Dramamine for those who get car sick or dizzy easily.
11. Don’t push kids to go on rides they are scared of. That won’t make the experience fun for anyone.
12. Bring a small first aid kit in your backpack in case of minor scratches – kids get excited and run and fall in parks like Universal so it’s best to be prepared!
13. Measure your child’s height before your visit so you and your child know which rides he/she is allowed to go on beforehand thus avoiding confusion and frustration during your theme park visit!

Most of all, enjoy your visit to Universal Orlando Resort!

