

Florida Tips

General

- Downtown Disney check in with Virgin - highly recommend it! Get there about 08.00-08.30 that way you get rid of your luggage early and go for breakfast.
- Get a fan from one of the supermarkets to use in the parks.
- Take Calpol for children
- Take plasters into the park for cuts and grazes.
- Don't go to the toilet on the plane in bare feet or socks!
- Don't go to Walmart on Friday or Saturday nights - it's really busy.
- If you want a shopping day, try the Florida Mall. Drive down the Interstate "14" Eastwards towards Orlando and take exit 74A, then follow Sand Lake Road (again heading East, towards the airport) for about 6 miles and the mall is on your right just after you pass the intersection with Orange Blossom Trail. You may also want to stop off on the way, or way back, at WalMart (there's one on Sand Lake Road, just by the intersection with John Young Parkway). There's rather more there than you'd find at Asda over here, and is worth a visit just for the experience!

Driving

- Unless it says otherwise, you can turn right on a red light.
- Get a cheap windscreen shade from Walmart, it helps to keep the car cool and saves a red hot steering wheel.
- Always park in the direction of traffic, i.e. Passenger side to the pavement.
- Don't reverse park in car parks.

Food and Drink

- Freeze bottles of water overnight to take out the following day.
- Get a cheap cool box for the car. Fill the bottom with a couple of inches of ice in the morning.
- Make a shopping list.

General Theme Park

- Always have a plan for when you get separated.

- Tell children to stand on a park bench or similar if they are lost so that you can see them more easily.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Take a bottle of water and refill it from the water stations around the park.
- Get going early to get to the parks when they open. The best times to visit are at opening time and late afternoon.
- Study the park maps before you go, make a plan to go to the most important rides first.
- Get your Fastpasses early on the popular rides, as they sometimes sell out.
- If one person is not going on the ride, they can go and get Fastpasses for another ride whilst the others are on it.
- Make sure children have your contact details at all times.
- Write down the car registration number and where it is in the car park. Take pictures to remind you. VERY IMPORTANT - the car parks are HUGE!
- Take a break during the day if you need it.
- Take waterproof bags to the parks to keep phones, etc. in whilst on wet rides.
- Take a small towel to the parks.
- If some of your family want to do a particular ride but others don't, use the Rider Swap facility. Tell the cast member as you enter the ride that you want to do this, and then one adult can stay back with one or both of the kids while the others go on the ride. Once the first riders finish, the riding adult can collect the kid(s) while the other adult gets to do the ride without having to re-queue.

Epcot

- Send one person ahead to Soarin' to get Fastpasses. This ride fills up quickly.
- Take a change of clothes so you can cool off running through the fountains.
- Sample the FREE Coca Cola from around the world in Innoventions.
- Don't miss Test Track.

Animal Kingdom

- Do Kilimanjaro Safari early in the morning whilst the animals are out.
- Send one person ahead to Everest to get Fastpasses. This ride fills up quickly.
- If you arrive at opening time, use the entrance inside the Rainforest - smaller queues.
- Make use of FastPass for the bigger rides (Dinosaur, Expedition Everest and Kilimanjaro Safari, plus Kali River Rapids if the temperature isn't too cold) and use the time before you ride to do other animal-oriented activities nearby (e.g. the various animal viewing trails, Conservation Station or the Finding Nemo show).

- Do make sure you see all the live shows at this park (especially Nemo and the Lion King) and plan to get to those theatres at least 30 mins before showtime. - Depends on your childrens' ages.

Magic Kingdom

- Good spot to watch the fireworks is from the train station above the main gate, but it gets busy, so get there early.
- Try to arrive at opening time to catch the Opening Ceremony.
- Never go to the Emporium last thing in the evening - it's very busy.
- Best self-service lunch - the Harbour House in Liberty Square. Best tuna sandwiches going and relatively quiet.
- Get children to ask to pilot the Liberty Belle - didn't do this.
- Big rides are quieter when there is a parade on.
- Call in to City Hall at the entrance to get your "First Timers" pin badge.

MGM/Hollywood Studios

- When leaving Fantasmic, walk to the front and use the stairs nearest the exit.
- Get Fastpasses to Toy Story Mania first thing.
- For character photos, take the Animation Studio tour, then after there's a meet and greet with several characters.
- For your Fantasmic evening, plan to be in the queue for this show at least ONE HOUR before the advertised showtime, and ideally aim to see the second performance of the day rather than the first showing as it will be less packed. Don't sit in the front three or four rows if it's a cold or windy evening as you could get splashed by some of the show elements.

General Water Park Tips

- Wear water shoes in the park - it gets hot underfoot.
- Wear swimming costume with shorts so that it doesn't matter if you get wet.
- Get a waterproof throw-away camera.
- Always carry water park gear in the car so you can drop in whenever you want.
- DO THE BOMB (look up The Bomb waterparks florida)

Busch Gardens / Clear Water

- Visit in the first week when you are getting up early so that you get a full day. Also applies to Kennedy Space Centre.

Universal and IOA

- Take the LH lane when approaching the car parks. Also take the LH lane up the ramps.
- Take a full change of clothes.
- If the park is busy, buy Express Passes.
- For Universal, take the Interstate "I4" road East toward Orlando at leave at exit 75A and follow the signs for parking (for your GPS, the address is 6000 Universal Boulevard, Orlando, Florida 32819. 'Geocode' Longitude -81.46228, Latitude +28.47399).
- The original Universal theme park is more about movie-themed experiences, while the newer Islands of Adventure theme park is more oriented towards the bigger thrill rides and Harry Potter. You have one full day at each; there is no hopping option on your tickets.
- You can purchase "Front of Line" passes for everyone, which means you won't have to queue for most of the big rides, but they are rather expensive and to be honest at this time of year may not be worthwhile unless you're thrill-ride junkies.
- The Wizarding World of Harry Potter is a smaller land inside the Universal Islands of Adventure theme park, and it is very popular. Sometimes they will issue 'return time tickets' which give you a specific admission time for getting into the Harry Potter area; if they are doing this, get yourselves tickets as soon as you get into Islands of Adventure and then go and do other stuff until your entrance time is due. Otherwise, if you're not at Universal at park opening time, it might be worth letting the early crowds die down and visit Harry Potter after lunch.
- The main Harry Potter ride, "Forbidden Journey" is not a roller coaster as such (it's a motion control track system) but you do still get bumped around quite a bit. It's also fairly intense (rather like the more recent films). Although it's a must-do, if anyone does not want to ride then they can go through all the queue area in the castle (which is very well done) and wait and watch some films while the rest of the group do the ride, then swap over when they come off the ride.
- Buy a refillable drink cup for \$6.99. Refills are \$1.06 and you can take the cup back in on subsequent visits.
- For Harry Potter Forbidden Journey, go into Filch's Emporium first and enter the free locker area (to leave a bag) from inside the shop. Then join the queue from the locker

area to the ride to save a load of time when it's busy.