

Orlando

By [Angela Ash](#)



Located in central Florida, Orlando is a mecca for the family vacation. With such mega powers as Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, and Sea World calling it home, visitors from all over the globe peak in each year, making it one of the top tourist destinations in the world.

Orlando is most definitely synonymous with the word "fun", whether you are dining in a world famous restaurant, zooming through Space Mountain, or relaxing poolside.

As with most getaways, finding a hotel property that puts you right in the middle of the action is key. Luckily, Orlando has no short supply. Most of the large theme parks have on-site accommodations, but when an attempt is being made to access several areas conveniently in one trip, or a budget is firmly in place, often a neighboring hotel is just the answer.

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The Palms Hotel & Villas is located in sunny Kissimmee, Florida... just south of Orlando and yes, mere minutes from Walt Disney World.☐

Finding the perfect hotel may seem to be a near impossibility, especially when budgets and space are a factor.☐ A family vacation to Disney can offer so many possibilities, but please believe me when I tell you that your choice of accommodations can literally make or break your magical getaway.☐

This is why I am so happy to share my new "go to" hotel, just miles from all of the magic!☐ The Palms Hotel & Villas has absolutely EVERYTHING that you need to make your home base convenient, relaxing, and economical... all on one property.☐

The condo-style hotel offers one and two bedroom suites, with plenty of room for the entire family... even the crazy uncle!☐ With separate living and sleeping areas and full kitchens, the conveniences keep pouring in.☐

And after a long day park-hopping, a relaxing swim or a nice soak in the outdoor pool and hot tub are definitely in order.☐ Beautifully landscaped in a tranquil setting, your island oasis awaits!☐

To start off the day, feast away at the complimentary breakfast buffet in the lobby, serving fresh juices and fruit, scrambled eggs, a tasty breakfast meat, muffins, bagels, toast, cereal, and anything else to begin your morning.☐ If you are about to depart to a theme park, this breakfast is a life saver, freeing up time AND precious vacation dollars spent at an on-site restaurant.☐

Now, one concern when staying off property is... how exactly will I get to the theme parks? It would be a shame to see the dollars saved spent away on cab or shuttle service. However, at the Palms Hotel & Villas, FREE scheduled shuttle service runs to and from Walt Disney World, Universal Studios, and Sea World.



Just to show show off a little bit, the Palms Hotel & Villas also offers complimentary WiFi, gas grills and picnic tables, a fitness center, game room, basketball court, laundry facilities, free parking, and a computer and printer available in the hotel lobby.

Convenient to absolutely EVERYTHING, the Palms Hotel & Villas is your obvious choice for your next Orlando getaway! A Walt Disney World Good Neighbor Hotel, the Mouse must also agree.

For additional information, visit the Palms Hotel & Villas [online](#) , or call (407) 396-2229.

Is all of this planning making you really hungry? When visiting Walt Disney World, the dining options are almost overwhelming. From quick service to immaculate dinners, everything is a possibility. However, I have found two restaurants that always offer delicious food and impressive service, all while keeping you right in the action!



While Walt Disney World is one of my favorite places on the planet, sometimes a long day at the park can take its toll. You begin to fantasize about air conditioning, and actually sitting down for longer than the teacups spin. However, it is truly difficult to pull yourself away from the magic, even for one minute. And with wonders like the Rainforest Cafe, you won't have to make the sacrifice!

Located at the entrance to the Animal Kingdom park, a long break from the thrills is not required. In fact, excitement is roaring and swinging from every corner... quite literally. Hence the name, be prepared to walk into an active rainforest, where elephants, monkeys, and snakes rage to life, and storms fill the skies.

With an extensive menu, the only question is what to order first? Prepare to feast on starters like an assortment of salads with a twist, cheesesticks, lava nachos for two (or three), onion stacks, buffalo wings, and quesadillas.

And when you are really ready to dig in, burgers like the Rainforest and the Canopy beg to be devoured. The entree selection is nothing short of amazing, with delicious dishes like the Portofino Shrimp Pasta, Paradise Pot Roast, Chicken Fried Chicken, Mojo Bones, and the Big Easy Chops.

The portions are HUGE, but trust me, you will want to save room for the

Sparkling Volcano, Rainforest Cafe's version of a brownie sundae, piled high with ice cream, whipped topping, and chocolate and caramel sauces.☐

When visiting the Animal Kingdom, be sure to set aside a very important part of your day to have quite possibly one of the best meals of your life!☐ Serving up breakfast, lunch, and dinner, this must definitely go on your "Disney To Do List"!

For additional information, visit the Rainforest Cafe in Walt Disney World [online](#), or call (407) 938-9100



Downtown Disney is a wonderful part of the Walt Disney World Resort!☐ Offering shopping, dining, and even a movie theater, it is a low-key, relaxing way to spend an evening.☐ However, any visit to Downtown Disney is not complete without an experience at Planet Hollywood.☐ I say "experience", because this fascinating eatery is equal parts restaurant and Hollywood museum, completely carrying over the presumed Disney mantra that bigger and brighter is always better!☐

Everything at this property is exciting... even the walk up the tall stairs into what nearly feels like a spaceship filled with treasures that represent the silver screen like nothing I have ever seen before!☐ The memorabilia within

is impressive to say the least, almost placing the mind on sensory overload as your eyes float from one artifact from the next, crammed into literally every inch of space available for your viewing pleasure.[]

And you haven't even opened your menu yet![] Planet Hollywood offers an extensive selection, from mind-blowing specialty drinks to dishes that you will be talking about for weeks.[] To get the party started, order up the Titanic, a tantalizing concoction of premium liquors and fresh juices.[] And while you are at Planet Hollywood, you may as well go red carpet with the VIP Platter, the absolute best appetizer that your taste buds could invent.[] This giant platter comes with Texas Tostados, Spinach Dip, Buffalo Wings, and my all new favorite thing in the world... the famous Chicken Crunch![]

But of course, make certain that you save room for the main attraction![] You really can NOT go wrong with any selection, but the ribs are fall-off-the-bone, bbq goodness.[] Stacked high, they are so impressive that you may wonder how you will even leave a dent, but oh... you will find a way![] And if you are in a Mex sort of seafood mood, the Shrimp Fajitas are magnificent![] Also on the menu are a fine selection of salads, burgers, steaks, pastas, and favorites like the Teriyaki Salmon and the Roasted Half Chicken.[]

And never fear, you are on Disney property, so there is a wide selection for the little ones, complete with chicken fingers, pizza, spaghetti and meatballs, and even peanut butter and jelly.[]

But be sure to save room for the final bow, because the dessert selection is nothing short of amazing.[] Have a hand-dipped milkshake, or try... just try to finish the giant brownie sundae.[] I dare you!

For additional information, visit Planet Hollywood in the Walt Disney World Resort [online](#) , or call (407) 827-7827.[]

Now, if you have been waiting on pins and needles to hear all about the brand new Fantasyland, then your wait is over!



Located within the Walt Disney World Resort is the Magic Kingdom theme park. This is truly a land of enchantment, where one can travel to the future and experience the marvels in Tomorrowland, sail down the river into the past in Frontierland, or experience thrills, spills, and surprises at every corner in Adventureland.

However, it is difficult to enter the Magic Kingdom and not head straight for Fantasyland. After all, Cinderella's Castle looms over Main Street, almost like a beckoning welcome to what special experiences lay just beyond its spires. Filled with family amusements like Peter Pan's Flight, It's a Small World, Mickey's Philharmagic, and the Mad Tea Party, this is Disney at its absolute best.

However, the folks at Disney are never typically happy with just being "the best". They like to take what you may think is absolute perfection and turn it into something that usually completely evades human description. As Walt always said, "It's kind of fun to do the impossible".

And so began the transformation of Fantasyland. With a brilliant addition to Dumbo the Flying Elephant, now twice as many visitors may experience

this flight through the sky at once, cutting the wait time in half. This area within the new Fantasyland has been dubbed Storybook Circus, and it also includes the Casey Jr. Splash 'N' Soak Station (where the little ones can cool off with a myriad of wet adventures), Pete's Silly Sideshow (where patrons may meet characters in a fun, "big top" environment), the Barnstormer (Goofy's family fun roller coaster), and the newest station addition to the Walt Disney World Railroad, which makes zipping from one side of the Kingdom to the next even easier than before!

The Princess Fairytale Hall also makes its debut in Fantasyland. Anna and Elsa are waiting inside to meet ecstatic Frozen fans, who may take advantage of FastPass+ to avoid long wait times. Cinderella, Rapunzel, and other princesses are also available to create special memories.



Also new to Fantasyland is the area known as the Enchanted Forest, based mainly upon the stories of Belle and Ariel, surrounded in a fantastic setting, with the attention to detail that only Disney can provide.

Under the Sea: Journey of the Little Mermaid is a visual masterpiece.

Before even boarding the clamshells that will whisk you away into Ariel's world, you will experience a simply stunning entrance that leads down into a cave full of "thingamabobs". As you slowly ride through the scenes from the silver screen, you will see Ariel dream of becoming human and fall in love with Prince Eric... all right before your eyes.

After the ride, you may even visit Ariel's Grotto to meet your favorite mermaid!



The absolute newest addition is the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train, where you will enter a forest and encounter the Dwarfs and Snow White herself! Before you know it, you will be twisting and turning through a diamond mine, on an exciting train adventure. Experiencing sharp banks and hairpin curves, this thrill ride will be one that you will want to ride twice!



All ages of Beauty and the Beast fans will want to experience Tales With Belle, an interactive story-telling adventure that often puts you right in the middle of the action. In a beautiful setting, it is easy to imagine that you are right in the Beast's library!

And looking over the Enchanted Forest is the Beast's Castle, which houses the new Be Our Guest Restaurant. Guests may dine in one of three areas (the West Wing, the Rose Gallery, or the 2 story Ballroom) for a magical, sit-down dinner. If you are in a hurry to get back to the attractions, Mrs. Potts presents a quick service meal with real china and flatware, where patrons may order from a flat-screen terminal.



And just around the corner is another new eatery!☐ Gaston's Tavern is a counter service restaurant that offers up "super manly" snacks like roasted pork shanks and warm cinnamon rolls.☐

The new Fantasyland is designed in such a way that even the scenery may get as many gasps as the attractions themselves.☐ This is a creative, inspired area that you may find extremely difficult to leave.☐

I guess that's why they offer a seven day ticket?

For additional information, visit Walt Disney World [online](#) , or call (407) 939-5277.