

Should I stay in a resort hotel? Inequitably, if you can afford it, yes. If visiting the 6 Disney parks is where you will be spending over 50% of your time, then seriously consider paying that little bit more and stay in a Disney Resort Hotel. Three categories with Value being the cheapest, Moderate (the one we plump for) and De-Luxe with several hotels within each category. Staying at Disney means that all Disney transportation is free – bus, ferry, monorail and gondolier and as parking for any one park is \$25 per day - \$45 for preferred parking – that is an immediate saving. That being said, Disney have introduced hotel parking charges this year but UK visitors did have dispensation. Check the latest news on this. Add the time saved (an immensely valuable holiday commodity) every day and the ability to pop back to your hotel anytime of the day (heat, sickness, change of clothes, tantrum etc.) and then visit another park later in the day/evening, gives a compelling case for saving that bit longer to stay on Disney property. Disney guests also get to visit one park a day an hour early and one park a day at least 2 hours after general closing time. This is the time to ride the really popular rides. You can also book your Fast Pass (FP) 60 days before you arrive (30 days for non-residents) which means the really popular ones should be available. These allow you to ‘jump’ the queues for some of the more popular rides.

What applies to Disney above equally applies to Universal. No categories of hotel so judge by price. The two parks plus their shopping/eating/entertainment centre are walkable (flat so ECVs can use them) from most hotels but there are free buses and boats. Staying in some of the Universal hotels (not all) entitle you to a free Express Pass (Disney - FP) otherwise you can buy these for squillions a day depending on the season. I’ll cover FP/EP in more detail in part 3.

How easy is it to drive in the USA? Relatively straightforward although their directional signage can be a bit confusing. Obviously, they drive on the right and only seem to have automatic cars for hire. On their major roads you can over and undertake but clear signalling is a must – you will be pulled over for moving and indicating simultaneously. Have a few spare dollars handy when leaving either airports as there are a lot of toll roads with the tolls ranging from 50c to \$2 per section. It is also a good idea to have the car filled up with petrol when you hire it as it will save looking for a petrol station early in your holiday. Also STOP in the road means stop! You must come to a full stop even if the road is clear. Finally, you can break a red light if you are turning right and the road is clear.

How much planning should be done, or can I take it a day at a time? I know it’s a holiday and you don’t want to be too regimented but it can’t do any harm in listing what you definitely want to see/do and have a rough idea of how each day will pan out. You would need to do this anyway to ensure you don’t miss your FP or EP slots. The days can easily be swapped but at least you will know what you might be missing. e.g. water park to mall shopping on a rainy day. Also, researching when rides are due to close for refurbishment can pay dividends. My daughter loves Big Thunder Mountain so we rode it a couple of times before it closed for a 2 month refurbishment in the middle of our holiday. Check out <http://allears.net/> as they have a planned refurbishment section. This site is also recommended for other info regarding Disney.

I have limited mobility, is that OK? Wheelchairs and ECVs are hireable both from individual parks and from Companies that both Disney & Universal recommend. If you hire from a park then it is for that day, can only be used in that park and it is on a first come first served basis. Wheelchairs are hard work for the pusher as none of the parks are flat and the User relies totally on the pusher where they go. We hired an ECV for our 14 day holiday and the cost is not cheap (about \$40 a day) but so worth it as it gives the User a degree of independence meaning their holiday is more enjoyable for the whole party. All rides are accessible but most do require you to be able to transfer from the wheelchair to the ride seat. Where there is conveyor belt entry, this can and is if requested, slowed down to make entry/exit easier.

How much extra money do I need? No getting away from this but holidays are expensive. There are ways to save money and I will include that in part 2 but what you will definitely need money, that is not included in the holiday package price, for souvenirs (for first timers a lot), shopping and shows. The latter should come from the general holiday fund and can be bought before you go. For the other two, it may be an idea to have a set amount to spend a day (per person) and only deviate from that if you carry over some of your allowance from the previous day(s). Allocate a little more for that day when (if) you visit a mall as bargains are to be had.

These are just a few questions that should be considered after deciding Orlando is your next holiday destination. If you have a question, feel free to contact me – ahspr@ntlworld.com