

Visit Orlando

# Exciting Orlando

Why groups keep coming back  
to this world-class destination.







BY MARIA LENHART

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hile Orlando is well-known as “The Theme Park Capital of the World,” that’s just part of why it’s an exciting, multi-dimensional meeting destination that earns top kudos from planners and keeps them coming back.

Among its many attributes are a state-of-the-art convention center, an abundance of hotel choices, ease of accessibility, award-winning dining and entertainment, intriguing neighborhoods and plenty of expert guidance from start to finish.

Planners will discover a great “boots on the ground” partner with Visit Orlando, always at their service to help craft unforgettable events for attendees. As Certified Meeting Professionals (CMP), Visit Orlando’s Destination Experience team is well-versed in the complexities of planning events of all sizes, providing hands-on assistance with coordinating venues and offering deep expertise about the destination.

Marc Simon, vice president of PGA Golf Exhibitions, can attest to this, and describes Orlando as “an ideal destination” for the PGA Show since 1985.

“Visit Orlando, along with their partners and affiliates, offers amenities, services and messaging that create a welcoming VIP experience for PGA Show guests from the moment they arrive,” he says. “That destination welcome, combined with the unique offerings of our venues, reasonably priced flights into Orlando, a wealth of hotel options and plentiful golf, dining and entertainment experiences, creates a destination that we would be hard-pressed to match anywhere else.”

In particular, Simon appreciates the ability to combine recreational golf with dining and entertainment at facilities like Topgolf, Popstroke and Drive Shack.

“These new social golf experiences are great for staff of every

skill level and offer a fun way to be actively engaged with co-workers,” he says.

When it comes to planning an event in Orlando, Simon recommends working closely with Visit Orlando and the host venue team to create a custom guest experience.

“We begin speaking with the teams at Visit Orlando and the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) well in advance of the PGA Show to explore new ways to offer additional value to our guests each year,” he says. “Destination touch points are an important factor in our guests’ overall event experience and help us ensure their return.”

### Ease of accessibility

Accessibility has always been a key reason to meet in Orlando, but now it’s even easier to travel to and from the destination with the recent opening of Orlando International Airport’s South Terminal Complex. The new facility adds 15 gates and includes a seamless, low-touch environment with a state-of-the-art radio frequency baggage system, as well as numerous shops, restaurants and lounge facilities.

Unveiled in April, the Brightline Orlando Station, conveniently located at the new terminal, connects domestic and international visitors traveling by high-speed rail between Orlando and Miami with stops in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. Tickets are on sale now for late summer and riders will enjoy touchless ticketing, premium in-station lounges, complimentary WiFi and topnotch bars and restaurants at every Brightline station.

### Award-winning convention center

One of Orlando’s crowning assets is undoubtedly the award-winning OCCC, located in the heart of the Convention Center District and only 15 minutes from the airport. With its variety of spaces and flexibility, the OCCC offers 7 million square feet of combined meeting and exhibit space for events of all types and sizes.



The center is also supported by 125,000 guest rooms in the Central Florida region, including 5,000 directly connected to the facility by pedestrian bridge. A broad offering of show management and exhibitor services, ranging from catering to telecommunications, is considered the finest in the convention industry. The facility is also known for “green” initiatives that are part of one of the most innovative, large-scale sustainability programs in the U.S.

### Michelin dining

Orlando's evolution into a world-class dining destination earned recognition from the prestigious MICHELIN Guide. In 2023, the MICHELIN Guide Miami, Orlando and Tampa announced 13 new MICHELIN-Starred restaurants in Orlando alone. The destination now includes a total of 46 MICHELIN restaurants, including four starred venues, 11 Bib Gourmands and 31 Recommended.

### What's new: Hotels

Set to open in December, the 433-room **Conrad Orlando** will offer 40,000 square feet of indoor meeting space, a spa, dining options and a signature rooftop experience. The hotel will be part of **Evermore Orlando Resort**, a



10,000-bedroom complex offering single homes, villas, flats and hotel rooms.

**Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando - Disney Springs® Area**, the newest official Walt Disney Partner Hotel, is now open with 604 guest rooms and over 17,000 square feet of meeting space.

**The Alford Inn at Rollins** in Winter Park is completing a renovation of the 112 existing rooms and unveiling an additional 71 rooms, a lobby café, a full-service spa and new meeting space this summer.

Opening fall 2023, **Aloft Lake Nona** will be a six-story, 205-room, music-themed property with a 10,000-square-foot conference center and full-service restaurant.

Set for completion in late 2023, **Signia by Hilton Orlando**

**Bonnet Creek** is adding over 90,000 square feet of meeting space, including a ballroom, a screened lanai with views of the Walt Disney World® fireworks, an outdoor patio, an event lawn and seven additional meeting rooms.

**Cambria Hotel Orlando Universal Blvd** opened recently in the International Drive Resort area, offering 118 rooms, flexible meeting space, a rooftop pool, a fitness center and more.

The **Grand Bohemian Hotel Orlando** in downtown Orlando completed a comprehensive renovation this year with new additions, including the upscale Altira Rooftop Pool Lounge.

**JW Marriott Orlando, Grande Lakes** completed an extensive renovation that included refreshed guest rooms and a new expansive waterpark.

### What's new: Dining

**Rosa Mexicano** opened its first Orlando-area location in the **Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin** in early 2023, featuring a menu showcasing authentic Mexican cuisine. A private events team can host small dinner parties and gatherings of up to 200 people.

The **Hyatt Regency Orlando** recently opened **Descend 21**, a lounge and entertainment venue with indoor and outdoor areas that can host private events.

Pointe Orlando's newest restaurant addition is **KAVAS Tacos + Tequila**, which pays tribute to Mexico's rich culinary history and hosts groups up to 500 people.

### What's new: Attractions and Venues

**TRON Lightcycle / Run**, one of the fastest coasters at any Disney theme park in the world, recently opened at **Magic Kingdom Park**.

**Universal's Great Movie Escape** at **Universal CityWalk** is the first-ever escape room experience that features two rooms with interactive state-of-the-art missions, captivating storytelling and intricately detailed sets inspired by the films “Jurassic World” and “Back to the Future.”



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**Illumination’s Villain-Con Minion Blast**, opening this summer at **Universal Studios Florida**, combines innovative screen technology, state-of-the-art gaming interactivity and elaborate physical sets to create a game-based adventure.

The new **Pipeline: The Surf Coaster** at **SeaWorld**

**Orlando** is the world’s first “Surf Coaster,” offering a dynamic surfing launch and “wave jumping” motions

**Luminary Green Park** is a new, 2.3-acre gathering space in the Creative Village district near downtown Orlando with a spacious lawn available for events. ■

## Visit Orlando Services for Meeting Groups

### Elevated health services

Visit Orlando and Orlando Health have elevated health services for meeting attendees through the new Orlando Health Virtual Care Center at the Orange County Convention Center. During large conventions, the care center will be staffed by an Orlando Health team member who can help triage the needs of those visiting or connect visitors virtually to a board-certified physician if minor care is needed. Additionally, a new telephone number, (321) 265-4200, offers visitor-specific wellness tips, urgent care and individualized health resources. For additional information, visit [www.orlandohealth.com/visitorlando](http://www.orlandohealth.com/visitorlando).

### Enhanced virtual tours

Visit Orlando has further enhanced its live virtual site inspection platform with Orlando Virtual Tours, offering meeting planners the opportunity to seamlessly travel to more than 1,100 locations throughout the city. For more information, planners can visit [OrlandoMeeting.com](http://OrlandoMeeting.com).

### Vacation planning

With its famous theme parks and other attractions, Orlando provides a prime opportunity for attendees to bring their families and turn their next business trip into a “bleisure” adventure. Attendees who would like some assistance in making the most of their extended stay can visit [www.visitorlando.com](http://www.visitorlando.com) and take advantage of Visit Orlando’s complimentary Vacation Planning Services for insider advice and special offers.

*Find out how Visit Orlando can help make your next event a success at [OrlandoMeeting.com](http://OrlandoMeeting.com).*



## Orlando Neighborhoods

Orlando’s wide variety of intriguing neighborhoods offer an endless array of options.

In **Downtown Orlando**, large hotels such as Grand Bohemian Hotel Orlando and Hotel by Marriott can serve as the perfect base of operations or the meeting site itself.

Just east of downtown, the **Milk District** serves as a progressive lifestyle, music and cultural hub offering creative dining venues.

The **Parramore District** brings awareness to the rich, deeply rooted culture of Orlando’s African American community.

The charming **Audubon Park Garden District**, 10 minutes from downtown, adds natural beauty and tranquility to meetings and events.

**Winter Park** offers boutique hotels and pedestrian-friendly, tree-lined streets filled with European-flavored shops, bistros and museums.

**Lake Nona** is a 17-square-mile neighborhood that is home to a wide variety of shops, restaurants and activities connected by miles of trails.



VisitOrlando

# LOCAL INGREDIENTS HIT WORLD CLASS HEIGHTS.



UNBELIEVABLY REAL

**Orlando dining is on the rise.** With notable new restaurants opening every year, the Orlando dining scene continues to outdo itself. A group of newly-recognized MICHELIN restaurants represent a wide variety of cuisines in neighborhoods all across town. Whether it's your first or fiftieth time hosting a group in Orlando, these eateries are designed to impress.

[ORLANDOMEETING.COM](http://ORLANDOMEETING.COM)