



JW Marriott Orlando and beyond

by Alexandra Cohen

Orlando, Florida has long been known as the theme park capital of the world, making it an ideal visiting location for people of all ages, including both children and Disney Adults. While I had visited the city with great enthusiasm as a child, this was my first time returning in my adult years, and I am pleased to report that it has not at all lost its magic and wonder.

Where to Stay

While Orlando has more than 490 unique properties to choose from, we chose to stay at the JW Marriott Orlando Bonnet Creek Resort & Spa, a beautiful hotel which first opened its doors in 2020. Looking for action and fun? The hotel includes not only a pool, but also an Activity Garden for families which features the Mount Chelonia rock-climbing wall, a nine-hole mini golf course, and an open lawn to play giant chess. There is also the sixth floor Kids Conservatory, which offers access to various games and arts and crafts. When you

are ready to explore the city, the hotel offers a free shuttle service to take guests to the Disney World theme parks, as well as to Disney Springs, which is located less than 10 minutes from the hotel. The shuttle service can be booked in advance, and if desired, will also pick you up from any of these destinations.

The resort has 516 rooms, as well as 18 event/meeting rooms, two pools, a soothing hot tub, personal poolside cabanas (highly recommended), the Spa by JW and some excellent on-site dining options. I recommend their signature Sear + Sea steakhouse, which offers both a nice interior and a small patio overlooking the pool and the ninth floor rooftop lounge, Illume, which features a menu of creative and hand-crafted cocktails, sushi, and Asian tapas.

Universal Studios

When trying to select a theme park, the options are limitless. While I had visited

several as a child, I had no doubt upon my return to Orlando that the Universal parks were at the top of my list. Outside of its separate water park, Universal features two distinct parks that one may wish to explore: Universal Studios, and Universal's Islands of Adventure. Visit one, visit both separately, or visit both in the same day by purchasing a park-to-park pass. Amongst other attractions, Universal Studios features areas tributing various cities, including Hollywood, New York, and San Francisco, as well as Minion Land and Springfield, USA: Home of the Simpsons. Universal's Islands of Adventure includes Marvel Superhero Island, Skull Island, Jurassic Park, Seuss Landing, and more. That being said, the highlight for me was, without a doubt, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter. The Harry Potter universe is a must-visit for all fans of the books and movies, and sprawls over both Universal Parks.

Dining Out

During my recent trip, I discovered the wonders of Disney Springs, which is an incredibly popular entertainment, dining, and retail district formerly known as Downtown Disney. Disney Springs is a completely outdoor district featuring 120 acres of boutiques, restaurants, and entertainment. Let me recommend Wine Bar George and Morimoto Asia, both located in this area and Sophia's Trattoria at the brand new Conrad Hilton. Wine Bar George is predominantly tapas-style restaurant and as its name implies, this is the only restaurant in North America to offer more than 200 wines, all available by the glass, by the bottle, or in some cases, even by the ounce. Morimoto is a spectacular two-story Pan-Asian destination Sophia's Trattoria's patios seating is directly facing the hotel's picturesque lagoon and man-made beach. Both the restaurant's aesthetic and menu are meant to celebrate the coastal-inspired Southern Italian cuisine, with dishes including wood-fired pizzas, handmade pasta, fish, and meat. ■

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