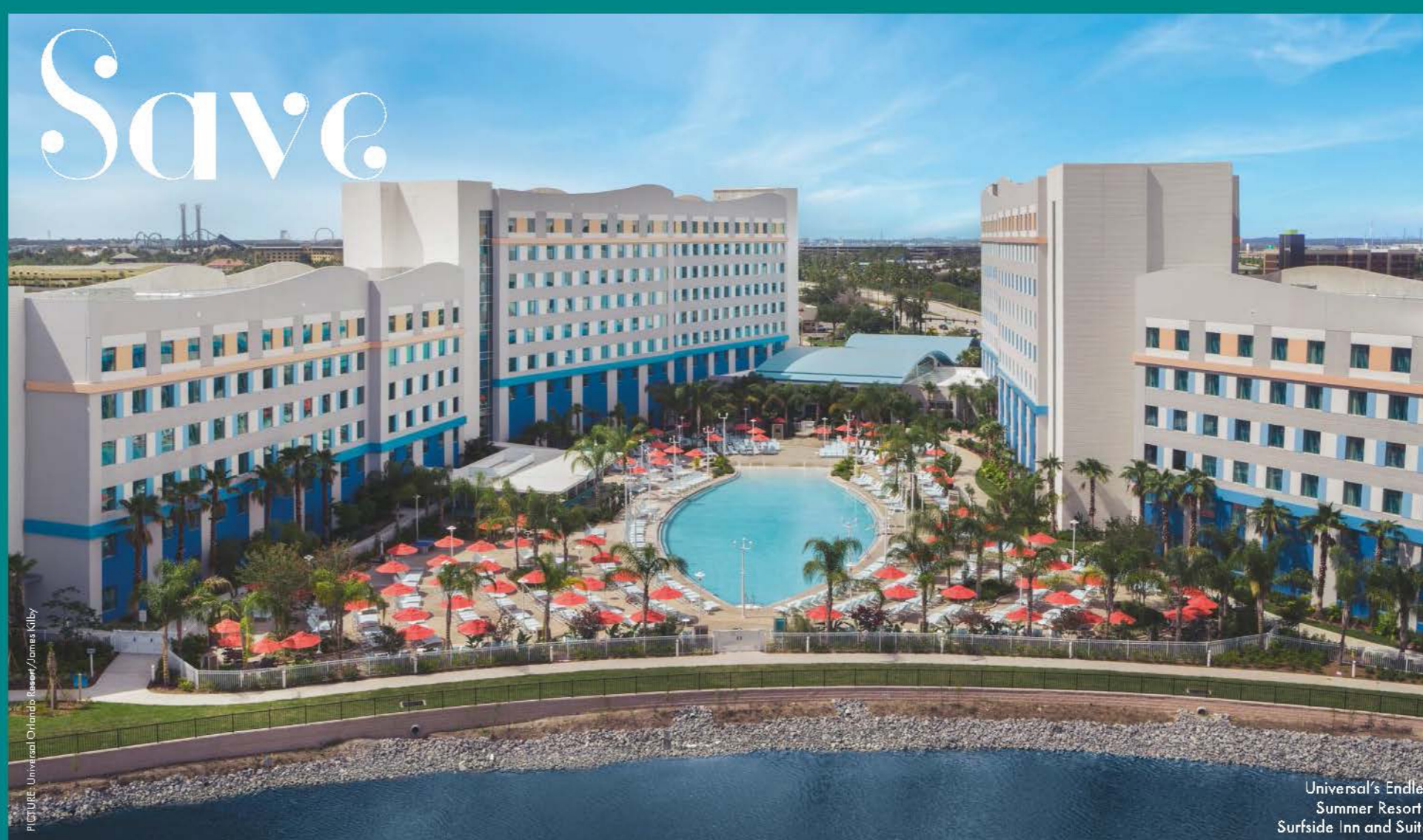


ORLANDO HOTELS

Do clients want a fun-filled break to Orlando? Laura French finds accommodation for every budget

ways

Whether it's the theme parks, the restaurants, the bars or the malls that charm, Orlando is something of a playground for visitors of every age. And with new rides and attractions opening up this year – from Universal Studios' Minion Land to Epcot's Moana-inspired Journey of Water – it's a great time to book. Whether you're booking an affordable resort stay for a family, with early access to the parks, or a luxury property with a strong health and wellbeing offering for a couple – there's accommodation in Orlando to suit everyone. To help you scout out some of the best options, we've put together a guide and split it by budget, combining recent openings with existing properties.



PICTURE: Universal Orlando Resort/Jonas Kulby

Universal's Endless Summer Resort – Surfside Inn and Suites

UNIVERSAL'S ENDLESS SUMMER RESORT - SURFSIDE INN AND SUITES

Universal opened its resort in 2019 with the aim of bringing down Orlando's price point and it's certainly achieved that. It's split into two properties: Dockside Inn and Suites, a 2,050-room hotel with two pools, three bars, a restaurant, and games room; and Surfside Inn and Suites, a smaller property with a laid-back, beachy vibe (complete with surfboard-shaped pool). Both properties have Standard Rooms and Two-Bedroom Suites. Guests at all Universal resorts get early admission to The Wizarding World of Harry Potter up to an hour before the crowds descend.

Book it: Gold Medal offers a week in a Standard Room at Dockside Inn and Suites from £1,339 per person room-only, based on two sharing and including Universal 3 Park Explorer Tickets, plus flights from Manchester, departing September 6. goldmedal.co.uk

AC HOTEL BY MARRIOTT ORLANDO LAKE BUENA VISTA

This hotel opened last year and is just a stone's throw from Disney Springs and less than a 15-minute drive from the main parks. It's an elegant property that's all about affordable luxury. There are both King Rooms and Queen Rooms that are designed to maximise space with sleek, minimalistic design, while a pool, library and fitness centre are available keep guests busy. Breakfast and dinner is served at the hotel's restaurant, where cocktails can also be enjoyed at the end of the day. A complimentary shuttle bus whisks guests to Walt Disney World and Orlando's outlets are also close by for anyone hoping to pick up some bargains.

Book it: A Queen Room with City View at AC Hotel by Marriott Orlando Lake Buena Vista starts from \$130 per night in September, room-only. marriott.com

ROSEN INN INTERNATIONAL

For excellent deals and a central location on the bustling International Drive, try the family-friendly Rosen outpost, located close to Icon Park entertainment complex – home to Orlando's 400ft-high observation wheel, Madame Tussauds, Sealife Orlando plus bars, shops and restaurants – and a short drive from the parks. "The resort offers large rooms with two queen beds, so is ideal for families. It also has two pools, in-house dining options and free parking," says Brian Hawe, product manager at First Class Holidays. "There's free transport to the Universal theme parks, as well as to SeaWorld and Aquatica."

Book it: First Class Holidays offers seven nights from £912 per person based on a family of four sharing, including flights from Heathrow, departing February 10, 2024. fcholidays.com

Best OF THE REST

Drury Plaza Hotel

Orlando: Officially opened in May, Walt Disney World's newest hotel offers families an affordable escape with a free hot breakfast and dinnertime snacks, plus a resort pool, splashpad and arcade. Rates for a King Bed Deluxe start from \$130 per night in September (room only). druryhotels.com

AC Hotel Orlando

Downtown: This 180-room property, which opened in 2021, is conveniently located for clients who wish to explore Downtown Orlando. The SkyBar Rooftop Terrace offers panoramic views. A Queen Guest Room starts at \$207 per night, based on a room-only stay in September. marriott.com

Avanti International Resort

USAirtours recommends this for a budget-friendly stay (below) in the heart of International Drive, with a large pool, multiple dining options and free park shuttle service. A week costs from £899 per person based on four sharing, including flights from Heathrow on February 11, 2024. usairtours.co.uk



THE GROVE RESORT & WATER PARK

For families looking to splash a little more cash, suggest The Grove Resort & Water Park in Kissimmee, offering spacious two and three-bedroom suites with their own kitchen and lounge areas, as well as three à la carte restaurants, a spa and arcade. But the crowning glory has to be the Surfari Water Park – a sprawling adventure playground featuring a FlowRider surf simulator, lazy river, kids’ activity pool and waterslides, free for all guests.

Book it: Seven nights in a self-catering Two Bedroom Suite Resort View Room costs from £1,449 per person based on a family of four sharing, including flights from Gatwick between July 29 and August 15, 2024. goldmedal.co.uk

MARGARITAVILLE RESORT ORLANDO

Direct families who want round-the-clock entertainment to this island-inspired resort, also in Kissimmee and home to a beach club, spa, two restaurants and daily events – from parakeet shows to Polynesian dancing. It sits next to the Sunset Walk, a shopping, dining and entertainment complex, where guests can find the all-new Island H2O Water Park. There are 186 rooms and suites, plus one to eight-bedroom standalone cottages that are ideal for families and groups.

Book it: A 10-night stay costs from £1,799 per person based on a family of four sharing a two-bedroom cottage, including flights from Gatwick on March 25, 2024. travelpack.com

WALT DISNEY WORLD SWAN RESERVE

For Mickey fans wanting to stay in the heart of the action with a little more cash to drop, Swan Reserve tower – opened in 2021 at Walt Disney World’s Swan and Dolphin Resort – might just be the ticket. Located a short walk from Disney’s Hollywood Studios and Epcot, this stylish, 349-room property boasts a pool, four restaurants and a fitness centre. Guests also get access to the wider resort’s facilities, which include a spa, white-sand beach, two health clubs and four pools. Golf courses are in the vicinity too.

Book it: Seven nights’ room-only in a Traditional Guest Room sleeping up to four starts at £494 per person based on a family of four sharing in September. Flights not included. swandolphin.com



Casandra Matej, president and chief executive, Visit Orlando

“At Visit Orlando, we’ve set a goal to reach 80 million visitors by 2024, and we are steadily making progress. “Orlando offers a variety of accommodation options for every budget, and it’s not only for families. Couples who want to experience Orlando like a local, Downtown Orlando or Winter Park are excellent options. “Hotels in the tourism corridor cater to adults, with amenities including world-class spas, chef-driven restaurants and adult-only pools. Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort and The Ritz-Carlton Orlando, Grande Lakes both now feature Michelin-starred restaurants. “For travel agents selling the destination, Visit Orlando offers a variety of useful resources, and the Orlando Travel Academy features interactive sales tools and an on-demand training curriculum, so I recommend making the most of them.”



Margaritaville Resort Orlando



PICTURE: Don Riddle Images; Four Seasons Resort Orlando

Four Seasons Resort Orlando at Walt Disney World Resort

NEW ATTRACTIONS

SeaWorld Coral Rescue Center, SeaWorld Orlando: See 350 coral colonies and 15 species of at-risk coral up close, meet the biologists protecting the ocean's health and learn how you can make a difference at one of the biggest public coral conservation areas in the country, which opened in June.

llumination's Villain-Con Minion Blast, Universal Orlando Resort: Opening this summer, this interactive attraction will have visitors blasting each other on a moving pathway with plenty of immersive effects; it will be joined by a soon-to-open Minion Café in the new Minion Land.

Journey of Water, Inspired by Moana, Epcot: This self-guided outdoor trail, set to open in the World Nature neighbourhood later this year, takes visitors of all ages on a Moana-style adventure, as they walk through a tropical wonderland to learn all about the importance of water.

LAKE NONA WAVE HOTEL

For a wellbeing-focused break that goes far beyond Orlando's energetic theme parks, suggest this luxury lifestyle hotel. Guests get unlimited access to the Lake Nona Performance Club, a sprawling health and fitness complex with an aquatics centre, climbing wall, spinning studio, golf putting lab and 'human performance lab', where specialists can analyse guests' metabolism and offer them tailored nutritional plans. There's also a sculpture garden, two restaurants, two bars and a pool deck, plus impressive tech credentials – from the View Smart Glass, which uses AI to adjust light in response to the sun, to sleep-boosting technology in the health-focused 'Welltech' rooms.

Book it: King Guest Rooms start at £242 per night in September, or £845 per person for seven nights based on two sharing room-only. lakenonawavehotel.com

ETTE HOTEL ORLANDO

If your clients fancy a detox, look no further than this alcohol-free hotel, where mixologists rustle up mocktails instead of cocktails. This elegant property takes its design inspiration from Tuscany and is focused on all things health and wellness. There's an emphasis on cool throughout – from the trendy music greeting guests to the rooftop restaurant with celebrity chef Akira Back at its helm. There are 126 rooms and suites, each minimalist in style, with Connecting Suites for families as well as dedicated Wellness Suites for those who are on a true health kick (think Peloton bike, Technogym bench and a 'spa butler').

Book it: A True King room starts at £279 per night in September. A seven-night holiday based on two sharing starts from £974 per person, room-only. ettehotels.com

FOUR SEASONS RESORT ORLANDO AT WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT

For couples and families looking to do Disney in true luxury, consider the park's Four Seasons Resort, says David Pointer, senior product manager for Inspiring Travel. "This is in a fantastic location and is a beautiful resort, set within impressive grounds," he says. "There's an excellent kids' programme with Disney character breakfasts, as well as a water park and lazy river." Couples can find peace and quiet at the adult-only pool and spa or tee off on the golf course, while the Michelin-starred rooftop Capa steakhouse offers a front-row view of Disney's firework display.

Book it: A week costs from £3,942 per person, based on two adults and two children sharing a Four Seasons Room, including flights from Heathrow and private transfers between March 23 and April 4, 2024. inspiringtravel.co.uk **TW**