

Orlando Tourist Guide for WCPT8 Delegates

8th World Congress on Particle Technology • April 22 – 26, 2018 • Orlando, FL

Preface

As an American with many foreign friends and colleagues, I often find myself in the role of tour guide and cultural interpreter. Since I have been to the Orlando area many times as a tourist, I volunteered to write a brief guide to the area for first-time or infrequent visitors to the U.S. This document is a substantially revised version of a guide I wrote for WCPT5, which was held in Orlando in 2006. I hope that the delegates to WCPT8 and their families enjoy the Orlando area, and return to visit other parts of the U.S. There is much to see.

Tim Bell

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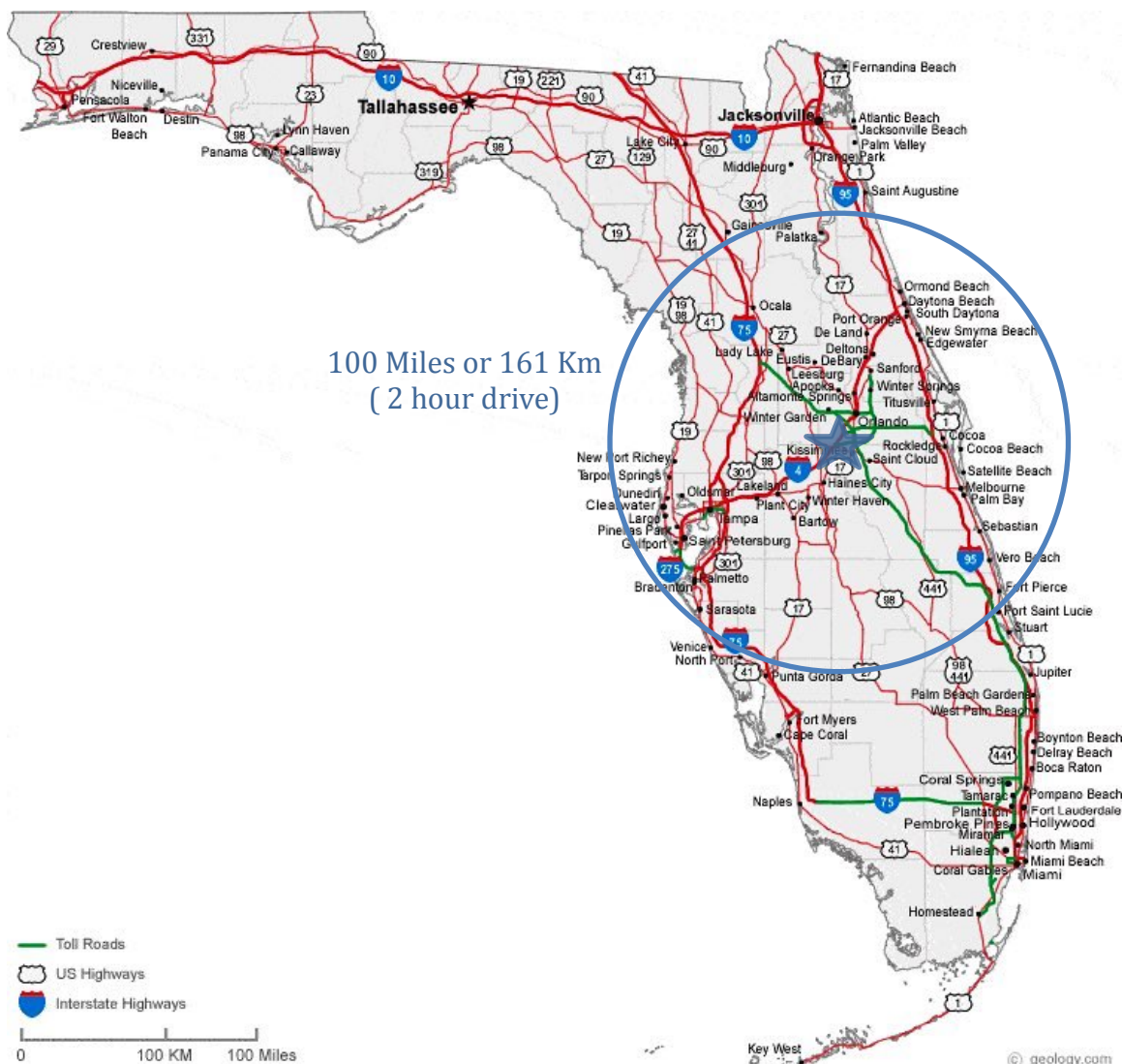
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Introduction

Note: Throughout this document prices are given in U.S. dollars. While all road signs in the U.S. are in miles, I've converted distances to km for the convenience of the readers.

The city of Orlando and its surroundings has become one of the largest tourist destinations in the United States. Most of the largest amusement ("theme") parks in the U.S. are within a few kilometers of Orlando. Discount shopping opportunities also abound, and European visitors may find bargains, especially for clothing and shoes. Ocean beaches, Gulf of Mexico beaches, Tampa and the Kennedy Space Center are easily reached in day trips. The rise in tourism and the associated infrastructure of air travel, hotels, and conference centers have made Orlando a major site for conferences and trade shows. The city has over 100,000 hotel rooms, and is busy much of the year.

The development of Orlando was precipitated by the decision of the Walt Disney Company in the late 1960s to develop a resort complex a few kilometers southwest of Orlando. As the Disney resort grew, competing attractions at Universal Studios and Sea World were developed. These large, well-financed operations drove some older, smaller area tourist attractions out of business, but led to the creation of





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other attractions. If one has sufficient stamina and ample money, it is possible to spend about 10 days in the Orlando area amusement parks without visiting the same attractions twice.

Amusement (“Theme”) Parks

About the Parks

Orlando is best known for Walt Disney World (WDW), a 120-square kilometer complex of theme parks, water parks, hotels and restaurants. The term “property” as in “on the property” refers the entire WDW estate. There are 4 theme parks on the property –the Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Disney-Hollywood Studios (DHS), and the Animal Kingdom. There are also 2 water parks, Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon, the Disney Springs shopping and entertainment complex and more than 20 WDW hotels. Disneyland in California and Disney parks near Paris and Tokyo are like the Magic Kingdom at WDW, but they are smaller and lacks the massive surrounding property.

Competing with WDW is [Universal Studios Florida](#) and [Universal Island of Adventure](#). Universal Studios Florida resembles Universal Hollywood and is themed around movies and the entertainment industry. It is larger than DHS, and due to current remodeling activities at DHS there is considerably more to do at the Universal park. Islands of Adventure (IOA) is somewhat comparable to the Magic Kingdom, but is more adventuresome and appeals more toward younger people. In recent years, Universal has added a very popular themed area based on the Harry Potter book series to IOA.

[Sea World](#) was originally a spectator-only theme park (no rides, just shows and displays) but it now includes some major rides (including big roller coasters) to compete with WDW and Universal. [Discovery Cove](#) offers visitors the experience of swimming with dolphin, snorkeling with tropical fish or just float along a scenic “Wind-Away” river. [Sea World Aquatica](#) provides a water park similar to those offered by WDW.

[Gatorland](#) offers alligator shows, zip lines, gator night shine, and an alligator petting zoo called “Rookie Wrestling.” Gatorland also host unique habitat that services as a winter nesting ground for migratory birds from February to June. Boardwalks provide birders and photographers with a close access to wide range of migratory birds.

In addition to these major theme parks, there are a multitude of minor attractions – wax museums, dinner shows, gardens, shows, parklands, etc. in the Orlando area. Most of them could be visited in a few hours each, but collectively they could occupy a few days. Most first-time visitors skip them and head for the larger parks.

Visitors can get a sampling of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture at the nearby (1 hour drive) at the [Florida Southern University](#). In 2012, the Florida Southern College Historic District was designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior for being the largest single-site collection of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture in the world. Sharp Family Tourism and Education Center, featuring the Wright-designed Usonian house and GEICO Gift Shop, was opened as part of an ongoing effort to better educate visitors to the Wright architecture at Florida Southern College. The Center provides a home for the permanent display of photographs, furniture, and drawings depicting Wright’s relationship with the College. The Center also acts as a home for visiting exhibits on loan from various other Wright sites.

The [Busch Gardens](#) amusement park in Tampa (135 km away) competes most closely with Universal Studios Islands of Adventure, but includes an animal theme and attractive landscaping different from Universal Studios. Orlando visitors typically go there after having exhausted the more local alternatives over a series of visits.

Many adults will not be interested in spending 7 or more consecutive days in theme parks and may wonder which they should visit if they were to only spend a few days. If you have not been to a Disney

park elsewhere, my first choice would be to go to the Magic Kingdom. Second choice would be Epcot. If you have children with you in the age range of 6-18 (especially Harry Potter fans), Universal Islands of Adventure would be a good choice. Sea World is a nice change of pace from the other parks, with some educational content. Disney's Animal Kingdom is an excellent sort of zoo with rides and Disney-type shows, but very expensive in comparison to a zoo. Universal Studios currently offers considerably more major attractions than Disney Hollywood Studios. Water parks from Disney (Typhoon Lagoon and Blizzard Beach), Universal (Volcano Bay) and Sea World (Aquatica) are great fun for children if the weather is good, but they are expensive and often crowded on nice days. Few people are interested in spending an entire day at one, and the balance of the day may be wasted unless you've made careful plans.

Some people may not want to visit a theme park under any circumstances. I suggest you reconsider! I have often spoken to foreign visitors in the Orlando parks, and they all have enjoyed themselves despite whatever preconceived notions they may have had. The Orlando parks are not just roller coasters and fast food (although there is plenty of both). The entertainment is at a very high standard, and the technologies and imagination is impressive. The parks also have very attractive and creative landscaping and architecture if one takes the time to look.

In addition to the rides and shows, most of the parks offer special parades, fireworks, or evening shows. These events, particularly at the WDW parks, can be spectacular and should not be missed. Experienced WDW visitors who have suitable "Park Hopper" admission tickets may spend the day at one amusement park and then travel to another to catch a special evening show.

Tickets

Visiting these parks is expensive. Admission tickets ("passes") for a day at one WDW park are approximately \$100-120 per person, with little or no reduction for children other than infants. Food inside the parks is expensive as well, typically about 30-40% more than similar meals outside the parks. There is also a charge of about \$20 per day for parking (except at the WDW parks if you are staying at a WDW owned hotel).

Multi-day passes are cheaper (per day) than single day passes, and some include additional benefits. Due to the competition between WDW, Universal Studios, and Sea World, each venue attempts to entice the visitor to commit to multi-day visits at their park(s). Sea World and Universal, while competitors, may offer combination multi-day tickets that are an excellent value if you plan to visit both anyway. Admission to a water park is sometimes included in these packages. Unless you are willing to spend 6 or 7 days in total at the various parks, you are likely to have to decide between WDW and its competitors to get the most favorable multi-day pricing.

I recommend buying tickets at a discount in advance, via the Internet. Tickets at the theme park gates are likely to be more expensive. See the reference books for more information. Large discounts or free extra days are much more common for Universal Studios and Sea World than for WDW. At times, the web site <http://www.disneyholidays.co.uk/walt-disney-world/> offers significant discounts to U.K. visitors intending to spend a week or more at WDW. Conference attendees may purchase tickets to all the parks through the "Orlando Visitor Info" link on the AIChE web site. The site offers "Park Hopper" WDW tickets on terms that are less restrictive than those available to the general public. Be aware that in the Orlando area there are offers for park tickets from companies trying to sell you vacation homes (time shares). Only buy tickets from the parks themselves, the AIChE web site link, and reputable travel agents or web sites, not third parties on the street corner. Tickets are valuable. For any tickets you buy, keep all receipts, however unimportant looking, in a safe place. Take a photo copy of documents. If you lose a ticket, the park may replace it if you have adequate proof of the purchase. Losing a ticket is easier than you would think – just ask me!

Recently, WDW instituted the use of radio frequency identification (RFID) bracelets (instead of tickets) known as MagicBands for theme park guests staying at WDW hotels. They are also available to anyone



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willing to pay a supplemental fee. Those who don't want to pay the fee will receive a simpler RFID card that resembles a credit card. The Magic Bands link to many aspects of a tourist visit, including park admission, priority lines (FastPass+), restaurant reservations, opening hotel room doors and (optionally) serving as credit card. The simpler cards are mainly for admission and FastPass+.

Most single-day theme park tickets only allow the bearer to visit a single park. WDW permits holders of "Park Hopper" tickets to visit more than one park in a day. This is useful if you plan to go to one park early in the morning, then leave for a quiet dinner somewhere and visit a different park in the evening to see a parade or special show. Single or two-day WDW tickets, other than those purchased via the AIChE web site, generally charge a significant premium for this feature.

Planning a Visit

The parks can attract huge crowds. Fortunately, WCPT8 occurs during a relatively slow period in the year, and attendance will be less than during the peak seasons. None the less, I cannot stress enough the benefits of getting to any park at least 30 minutes prior to its opening time. This enables you to park your car, purchase tickets (if not already purchased), pass through a security checkpoint and be the first in line for the attractions. You can accomplish more in the first hour than in two hours or more later in the day. If a very full day is too much for you or your family, consider going for several hours in the morning, returning to your hotel for lunch, and the coming back in the late afternoon. This is most feasible if your hotel is nearby.

Take advantage of the free FastPass+ system (see Sehlinger reference below) at WDW to reduce the time you spend in lines. This system has changed recently, and it is now possible for those that have already purchased tickets to request admittance times to specific attractions 30 days before arrival. Guests staying at WDW hotels can make requests 60 days ahead. This scheme rewards those who plan their vacation far in advance, and unfortunately penalizes those who don't, who may spend more time waiting in lines. Universal has a simpler system ("Universal Express") that moves guests directly to the head of the line at a substantial extra cost. Disney offers a mobile phone app that facilitates both FastPass+ and restaurant reservations.

All Disney parks will have random and scheduled appearances by costumed characters such as Mickey Mouse or the princesses from the movie Frozen. Meeting these characters is exciting for children, and posing for photos is fun for adults. The characters will attract significant crowds, and small children may not have the desired opportunity to interact with them. Disney offers more relaxed opportunities via "Character Dining" meals (breakfast, lunch or dinner) in theme park restaurants and selected WDW hotels. Two to four characters will mingle casually with the meal guests and graciously pose for photos. A character lunch reservation at a theme park will provide some quiet time for children and the chance to meet some characters. Reservations for character meals can be made 180 days in advance, and some sell out quickly. Online resources and the references have more information on the booking procedures and what characters will be at each meal.

Tourism Beyond the Theme Parks

Central Florida is not the most interesting geographic region in the U.S. Prior to the development of WDW and its competitors, most tourists in Orlando were passing through on their way to either the Atlantic coast or the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Visitors to Orlando wanting to venture beyond the theme parks typically will travel to the Kennedy Space Center or the Atlantic beaches about 110 km to the east. For those with cars, there are attractive state parks with natural springs and canoeing fairly close to Orlando. The multi-cultural city of Miami and the swamps of the Everglades are both about 400 km to the south. Most foreign tourists willing to travel further than this are likely to fly (rather than drive) from Orlando to other places such as New York or Washington D.C.

Transportation

Public Buses, Shuttles, and Taxis

Unfortunately, America is a land built around private automobiles. It is not feasible for tourists to travel about Orlando using public transportation. There are shuttle services that use buses to transport you from the Orlando airport to your hotel (see below), but there are no convenient buses between locations in the Orlando metropolitan area. If you want to go to anywhere you will need a car or taxi. Taxis and ride sharing services such as Uber and Lyft are readily available, but the distances can be large and you will want to check the fares before planning a trip. One exception is travel between the Marriott (conference center) and WDW theme parks – see below.

The WDW complex has an extensive internal bus system that can take you from one of the WDW hotels to one of the four WDW theme parks or between WDW parks. The buses are not useful if you are not staying at a WDW hotel. With few exceptions, the WDW property is so large that walking is impractical.

Some hotels that are located outside the WDW property (including the conference Marriott) have shuttle buses to WDW. Inquire as to the exact shuttle schedule and routing before relying on them for transportation. For example, the Marriott's shuttle takes a route that stops at all the WDW parks sequentially, instead of having separate buses for each destination. This arrangement can consume a considerable amount of time and may preclude getting to the park before it opens.

The [Mears Company](#) and [SuperShuttle](#) dominate airport transportation shuttles in Orlando. Their web site enables travelers to pre-purchase roundtrip transportation from the Orlando airport to the Marriott and back again for about \$37. One-way travel is about \$23. Transportation from the airport can be booked on arrival, but the process is streamlined for those who book in advance. Return arrangements should be confirmed with the hotel desk 24 hours in advance. The airport transportation is in shared vans or mini-buses, and vehicles may stop at several hotels en route. If booking the shuttle service, be very specific about the Marriott address (8701 World Center Dr., Orlando) as there are numerous Marriott hotels in the region.

Massive resort hotels such as the conference Marriott will have several restaurants on the premises. Due to the size of the properties, it may be impractical to walk to external restaurants or shops outside the grounds. Having a car greatly increases the dining and sightseeing options, but there are complications.

Rental Cars and Fees

Rental cars are inexpensive in Florida, but rental insurance policies are not. They are a major source of revenue to the car rental companies. Americans over age 25 who own cars will have their own insurance and often rent cars without purchasing supplemental insurance for their health or vehicle damage. However, there can be other financial liabilities, and even Americans should careful when renting cars. Most foreign visitors are either compelled or convinced to take the insurance at the car rental counter. These policies can double the cost of an automobile rental. I have often stood in line at the car rental counter watching confused tourists sign up for \$25-\$50/day worth of insurance that they may or may not need, and had not planned to purchase. If you elect to rent a car anywhere in the U.S., discuss the matter with your personal automobile insurance agent at home and check on the validity of your car insurance overseas. Some credit cards provide insurance as well. You should also check to make sure that any quotation of rental rates includes all taxes and fees associated with the rental. These fees can total as much as 25% of the rental cost. Quotations almost never include the various insurances. Get a written quotation, noting any exclusions. There is a ~\$20/day parking fee at the conference Marriott and at the theme parks that discourages casual rentals. Note that there is a Hertz car rental counter at the conference Marriott hotel – inquire about the possibility of renting a car only on the days when you need one.

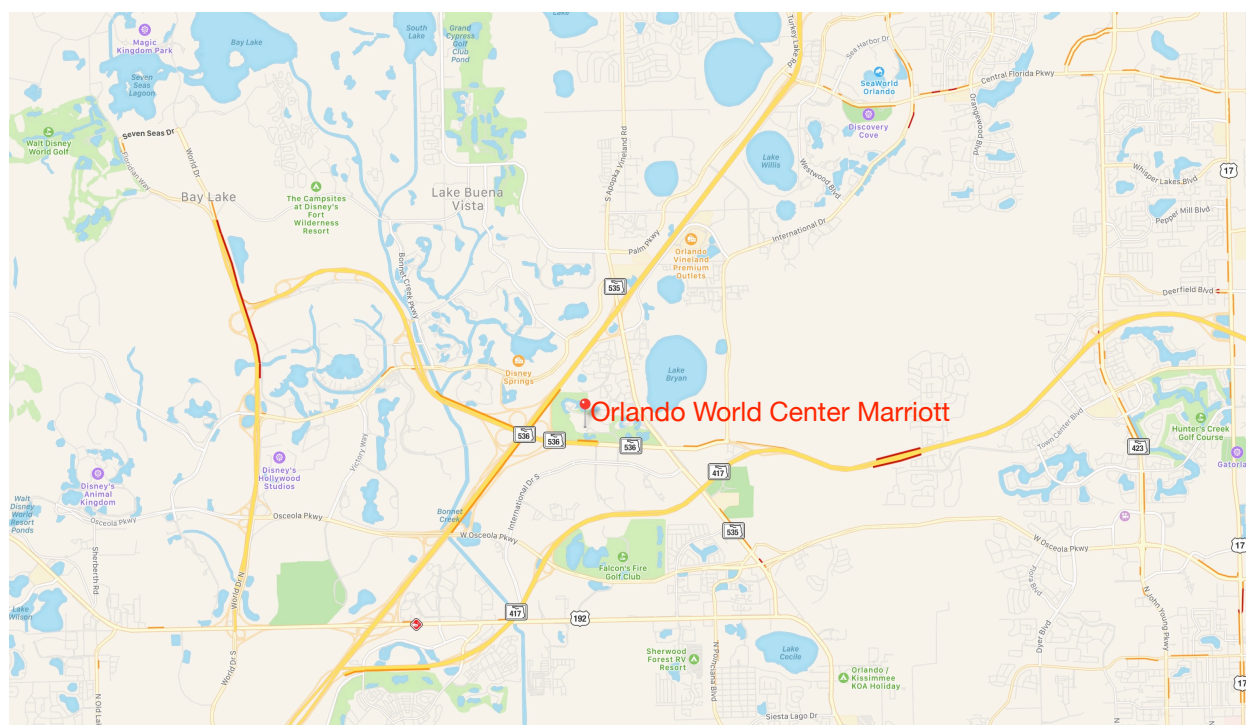
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Another way that travelers spend more than they need is on refueling options for their rental car. It is common for the car rental company to ask customers how they want to pay for the fuel. The first (and best) option is to refuel the car yourself and bring it back to the airport full. Fuel (“gas”) stations are not hard to find. The option that will be encouraged by the rental agency is to prepay for a full tank of gas at a seemingly reasonable rate. The rate (in dollars per gallon) is indeed reasonable, but if you bring the car back to the airport with more than an empty tank you are probably wasting money as there is no refund for unused fuel. A third option is for the rental agency to refill the car. The price per gallon for the fuel under these circumstances is high, and there is sometimes also a service charge. It can be expensive – perhaps double the price of filling it yourself. Ask about these charges when you pick up your car.

There are a few toll roads in the Orlando area. These roads utilize the “SunPass” automated toll collection system, but they also accept cash. Car rental companies will offer a daily rate to provide a SunPass transponder. Any tolls will be added to transponder fee. You do not need a transponder if your driving is limited to the Orlando area. Travelers going to Miami should consider it. Most Orlando visitors only encounter tolls on route 528 between the airport and the city, on their arrival and departure days. Stay in the rightmost lanes on the road for cash payments. Make sure you have U.S. currency that is \$20 or smaller. A handful of \$ 0.25 coins (“quarters”) will allow you to use automated tolls.

Automobiles are larger in the U.S. than those overseas. Foreign visitors often talk about the enormous car they rented in America. You can specify the size car you want. There is no government standard on the sizes of rental cars. One company may call a certain car a mid-size, while another describes it as an intermediate. A group of 2-3 people with a moderate amount of luggage can usually travel in a mid-size car comfortably. Full size cars (as defined by the car rental companies) are almost always adequate. Minivans are generally much more expensive than cars, but can carry 6 or 7 people. You may be asked at the rental counter if you want to upgrade to a larger car at extra cost. Do not immediately accept this initial offer – the rental agency may give it to you anyway if they don’t have your size car on hand. Gasoline (petrol) is much cheaper than it is overseas.





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Finding your way

Roads are well-marked in the Orlando area, and navigation and driving should not be a problem. Roads in WDW (and there are many kilometers of them!) are not well marked in terms of street names. They are marked, however, by the name of the hotels or theme parks. For example, you may see a sign for an exit marked “Magic Kingdom” but not the name of the actual road that leads to the Magic Kingdom. When driving in WDW, you’ll need a map of the property and must use the names of the destinations rather than the roads for directions. GPS devices can be rented from the car rental counter. Cell phone GPS systems are very effective if your phone works in the U.S. When using a GPS, have a paper map as well. Verify that the routing selected is taking you in the general direction where you want to go before setting off. When close to a theme park, follow the road signs rather than the GPS for parking directions.

Air Travel

Orlando is a very competitive market for air travel. It is generally possible to get from Orlando to almost any other large airport in the U.S. with one change in plane, and the fares are typically less than trips of similar distance would cost in Europe. Airline fare structures are complex, and wide variations in fares are typical. It pays to shop very carefully. A traveler from overseas can sometimes buy flight segments within the U.S. for a lower price than U.S. residents if the segments are purchased in conjunction with a transatlantic or transpacific fare. On the other hand, some local airlines such as Southwest or Spirit have low fares that may not show up on European travel agent computer systems.

Hotels

WCPT8 is being held at the Orlando World Center Marriott, an attractive 2000 room resort and conference center very near the WDW property. The Orlando World Center Marriott address is 8701 World Center Drive, Orlando, Florida 32821 and is off I-4 at Epcot Center Drive (Highway 536). The 93-hectare (230 acre) grounds include a golf course and lavish swimming pools. Guest rooms, at 38 m² (425 ft²) are large by European standards. There are several restaurants within the hotel. All the WCPT8 sessions and the affiliated AIChE meeting will take place in the hotel’s ballrooms and meeting spaces. The Swan and Dolphin hotels in Walt Disney World (WDW), the site of the 2006 WCPT5, are a few kilometers away.

The conference Marriott will be the most convenient location for delegates attending the congress. Those interested in extending their stay in Orlando could consider other hotels when they become tourists instead of delegates. All Orlando hotel rooms are large by European standards and will have room for several people if there are sufficient beds

Prices for the hotels will vary from day to day and week to week. The conference rate for the Marriott is very competitive for a first-class conference hotel in Orlando. See the conference web site and check with the hotel to make sure you understand the room rates and all additional taxes and fees. Note that most hotels in the Orlando area will have an optional or mandatory “resort fee” of \$5 to \$30 per day per room that is usually not included in price quotations. Ask about it if you elect to shop for hotels. The resort fee generally includes a “bundle” of hotel services whose individual prices will add up to more than the fee, but may not be useful to you. At the conference Marriott, the resort fee is optional for delegates. It includes the use of the shuttle bus to the theme parks, which otherwise is \$20 per person. It also includes internet access within the guest rooms.

Americans describe hotel rooms using different terminology than is common in Europe. Most hotels, including the Marriott, charge the same price for two people (“double occupancy”) as for one person (“single occupancy”), regardless of the number of beds in the room. Children under the age of 18 are usually free. A “twin” bed is a single bed that only one person will fit into, and such beds are never found in U.S. hotels. A double bed is a rather small bed for two persons. Many hotels will have two double beds in a room. A larger bed for two people is called a queen size, and a very large bed for two people is



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called a king size. A rollaway is folding single bed (narrower than a twin) that sometimes can be added to a room, often at addition cost of \$20-\$35/night. Some rooms may have pull-out couches that turn into beds. Be warned that these beds are often odd sizes – sometimes narrower than a double but wider than a twin, for instance. Some of them are short, also. Rooms that are described as suites may sometimes have two separate rooms, but most have one larger room with a partial divider. If you are looking for a suite for a family or a group of students, ask if there is a door between the portions of the room.

Restaurants

The terms used to describe types of restaurants in the U.S., and especially Orlando, may be confusing. Restaurants where a waiter or waitress (“server”) comes to your table, takes your order, and brings your meal are known as table service or sometimes as “sit-down” restaurants. Table service restaurants in WDW generally take reservations, while those outside of WDW may or may not take them. Restaurants where you place your order at a counter and carry your meal to an empty table are known as counter service, fast food, self-service or (in WDW) as “quick service”. Many, but not all counter service restaurants offer take-away packaging. There can be hybrid arrangements where you take food from a buffet but a server brings you beverages.

The Marriott, the WDW hotels, and other large, upscale hotels do not include breakfast and may not have refrigerators, although most have coffee makers. These hotels will have table service restaurants serving breakfast buffets at fixed prices or ala carte menus. Most smaller hotels will include a continental breakfast with the price of the room (regardless of the number of people in the room). These breakfasts always include coffee, doughnuts, and juice and are self-service. The nicer free breakfasts will also include other types of breads, toast, tea, cold cereals, fresh fruit and perhaps yogurt, eggs and sausages.

During WCPT8, it is not practical to leave the Marriott grounds for lunch and return in time for the next session. Lunch will be available at the hotel restaurants. An economical option could be to visit the concession stands that will be available for WCPT8, AIChE 2018 Spring Meeting and 14th Global Congress on Process Safety (GPSC) in the Cypress ballroom. One lunch may be provided during the WCPT8 conference – check the schedule for details. Tourists will generally eat lunch in the theme parks to save time. The parks all have a variety of counter service and table service restaurants.

Meeting delegates seeking options for dinner other than the Marriott restaurants can hire a taxi or ride-sharing service to take them to Disney Springs (formerly Downtown Disney), a massive shopping, dining, and entertainment complex located on WDW property about 10 minutes by car from the Marriott. The hotel offers a car service (instead of a taxi) for \$19 each way, and several people can share the vehicle. There are more than 20 dining options, free entertainment, and nightclubs at Disney Springs. Prices are a bit higher than what may be found outside the WDW property, but no other single place offers the convenience and the variety. Restaurants can be booked using the Disney phone app. Delegates with cars can find many dining choices along International Drive or Highway 192. Orlando has a great variety of restaurants. Central Florida does not have a particular ethnic or regional cuisine, although shellfish, fresh orange juice, and key lime pie are popular.

Restaurants in the WDW theme parks and hotels, as well as some of the restaurants in Disney Springs are affiliated with the Disney Dining Plan (DDP). DDP is an optional package of pre-paid meals for guests staying in the WDW hotels. It allows guests to reserve tables at affiliated restaurants months in advance. Casual visitors can also reserve tables in advance, but the guests using DDP can book earlier, and (as with FastPass+) are likely to be very proactive in planning their dinners. As a result, some of the most popular restaurants on the WDW property (including some in Disney Springs) can book up far in advance. Always call ahead if you intend to visit a restaurant on the WDW property to make sure you can be accommodated. The central number for calling Disney restaurants is (407) 939-3463.

Social Customs, Tips, Taxes, and Weather

Social Customs & Languages

Residents of Orlando are accustomed to international tourists, and unlike much of the U.S., a foreign accent will not attract much attention. However, the odds of finding a resident speaking foreign languages other than Spanish is extremely low. One notable cultural difference is that Americans are more informal and more likely to use a person's first (given) name than in other countries. This is not considered disrespectful between peers (such as conference delegates), although service workers (hotels, restaurants, etc) will generally use a more formal address when speaking to customers. Drivers in Florida are reasonably courteous when compared to some big-city areas. Remember that many Orlando drivers are tourists also, and they may be tentative when navigating.

Tips & Gratuity

Tips (gratuities) or service charges are a common source of confusion and concern to foreign visitors. Table service restaurants where food is brought to the customer employ servers whose income depends largely on tips. This is understood by Americans, but can be a problem in cities (especially Orlando) with significant foreign visitors from places where tips are small or nonexistent. A normal tip for a restaurant meal is 15%-17% of the bill. A generous tip is closer to 20%. However, if you are unhappy with the service and wish to make the point to the server, it is best to leave a very small tip rather than none. (The server may assume that you forgot if you leave nothing). I believe tips should be calculated based on the total cost of food and drinks, but excluding taxes. Others include the taxes in the tip calculation. Many restaurants will automatically add a 17 to 20% gratuity for parties larger than 6 or 8 people. This can be reduced if the service is unsatisfactory – ask to speak to the manager if necessary. A few restaurants in the Orlando area may automatically include a service charge with the price of the meal for parties of any size. This is not typical in the U.S., but reflects the prevalence of foreign visitors to the area.

If you are paying a restaurant bill by credit card, there may be a place to write in a tip amount. This money will go to the appropriate server, but be certain (especially if you have a large group) that the tip is not reflected elsewhere in the bill or left as cash (by a colleague) on the table. There is never more than one service charge or tip on a restaurant bill. Tips for buffets (such as breakfast buffets where the server only brings coffee) are generally 10% or less. Small carryout restaurants (such as doughnut shops) may have a jar labeled "Tips" near the cash register. Such tipping is completely voluntary, and generally consists of coins. Taxi drivers expect tips of 10% to 15% of the fare, shuttle bus drivers will appreciate \$1 or \$2 if the shuttle belongs to a hotel or rental car company. For a shuttle belonging to a private transportation company traveling between the airport and various hotels, the driver may expect up to 15% but does not always get it. Disney transportation workers and routine park employees do not accept tips, but servers in the theme park table service restaurants do. Some people will leave about \$1 per day for the hotel chambermaid, and hotel porters will expect \$1 to \$2 per suitcase if they take them to your room. If they only carry the bags from the front door to the front desk, I generally do not give them a tip.

Taxes

Published prices for almost anything in the US do not include taxes. These taxes will vary from 4% to over 10%. Tax rates may vary from state to state, town to town, and with the type of purchase. For example, one area may charge a higher tax on food purchased in restaurants than in grocery stores. The taxes are added to the bill at the time of payment and are usually clearly marked. In the Orlando area, most purchase and restaurant taxes are simply 6.5%. Hotel charges frequently include more than one kind of tax, and will be noted accordingly. Car rental costs include several taxes and assorted fees. None of these fees or taxes are negotiable.

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The weather in Orlando in April is generally warm and humid, with daily temperatures in the range of 63-81 degrees F (17-27 C). Hotter days are not uncommon, as are brief afternoon rainstorms. If visiting theme parks, you may wish to carry a light raincoat or a collapsible umbrella.

Dress Code

Due to the warm weather and tourism, dress in Orlando is very casual. Only the most formal restaurants require jackets for gentlemen, and shorts are very common. Dress suggestions for WCPT8 event might be posted elsewhere on this web site. I expect it will be “business casual” meaning no neckties and usually no jackets for men.

Suggested References

If you intend to visit the theme parks of Orlando, get a guidebook and read at least some of it. Otherwise you will waste money and valuable time at the parks. I know that some of you will not want to study (or get up early) while on vacation, but you will be sorry if you don't.

The best single guidebook to WDW and the Orlando area is “The Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World” by Sehlinger and Testa. Be sure to get the 2018 edition. This book is an engineer's dream, with 875 pages of facts, tables, rankings, and good advice on hotels, restaurants, and the theme parks (including Universal Studios and Sea World). There are many other guidebooks to the Orlando area, but if you only have one, it should be Sehlinger's. A more concise guide is Frommer's “Easy Guide to Disney World, Universal, and Orlando 2017”. This book has more information than Sehlinger on non-Disney and non-Universal activities. Useful information may also be found on the web at www.fodors.com and www.frommers.com. On both web sites, search “destinations” for “Florida” and then “Orlando”. The American Automobile Association (AAA) publishes excellent maps and guidebooks. If you belong to a motor club in your home country they may be affiliated with the AAA.

You can check the weather forecast and weather history at www.weather.com, or www.weatherunderground.com. On each web site, you should enter Orlando, FL as the area of interest. Rates for airfare, car rentals, and hotels can be checked at www.orbitz.com, www.travelocity.com, or www.expedia.com. www.tripadvisor.com provides reviews of hotels and is the fastest way to survey hotel prices. For all hotel searches, be advised that the listed prices might not include resort fees and taxes. Some of the cheapest prices require non-refundable prepayment.

Driving directions and maps can be found at www.mapquest.com and Google. While the driving directions generated by these web sites are generally good, beware of errors, particularly as you get quite close to your destination. Due to a lack of roadway names, printed route instructions are difficult to utilize in WDW. Use a GPS, or follow the overhead road signs.