

SOCIAL ALTERNATIVES

As you know, there are lots of theme parks in the Orlando area. The Disney properties (accessible by the Disney Transportation System) include Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Disney-MGM Studios and Disney's Animal Kingdom (www.disneyworld.com). Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure (about 45 minutes away) are highlighted at www.universalorlando.com. Sea World Orlando and its Discovery Cove (www.seaworld.com) (25 minutes away) are a different kind of theme park. Discovery Cove offers an opportunity to swim with the dolphins (by reservation only) or swim in rivers through an aviary, caves and waterfalls, as well as snorkel. Exploring these parks will likely more than fill the time you have available.

If you are looking for some alternatives to theme parks, we offer the following for your consideration. The Orlando area has many opportunities for bicycling, fishing, hiking (www.nature.org/florida), golf, tennis, horseback riding and shopping.

If you are looking for less physically challenging activities, the town of Orlando (about 45 minutes away) offers several attractions: Lake Eola Park, Harry P. Leu Gardens (www.leugardens.org), Loch Haven Park with the Mennello Museum of American Folk Art, Orlando Museum of Art (www.omart.org), and Orlando Science Center (www.osc.org), antique shops, City Hall with its Terrace Art Gallery and Mayor's Art Gallery, the Museum of African American History, and a Sunday jazz brunch at the Westin Grand Bohemian Hotel.

The town of Kissimmee (about 25 minutes away) has the Peabody Orlando Hotel where 5 mallard ducks march into the lobby each morning at 11am accompanied by John Philip Sousa's "King Cotton March", spend the day splashing in a marble fountain, then march to the elevators at 5pm. A World of Orchids (www.aworldoforchids.com) is located on Highway 545 (off US 192) in Kissimmee. If you want a truly Florida activity, Boggy Creek Air Boat Rides (www.bcairboats.com), located in Kissimmee, is a unique experience.

The town of Winter Park (about 45 minutes away) features the Albin Polasek Museum and Sculpture Gardens (www.polasek.org), Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art (www.morsemuseum.org), and the Cornell Fine Arts Museum (www.rollins.edu).

About 1-1/4 hours away, native wildlife can be found at Forever Florida at the Crescent J Ranch (www.foreverflorida.com) in St. Cloud.

About 1-1/2 to 2 hours away in Tampa, you can find Busch Gardens (another theme park) (www.buschgardens.com), the Florida Aquarium (www.flaquarium.org) and Ybor City, the Latin district. There is a shuttle bus to Busch Gardens that leaves the Orlando area hotels between 8 and 10:15 am each day with return trips starting at 5pm. Call 1-800/511-2450 for schedules, pickup locations and reservations.

If you prefer shopping, you might want to consider Downtown Disney Marketplace, reachable by the Disney Transportation System.

All distances are calculated from the Contemporary Resort.