



THE ULTIMATE  
*Universal Orlando*  
PLANNING PACK

# Practical Tips for Your Trip to Universal Orlando

## 1. Prepare Yourself

Universal Studios and Islands of Adventure are incredible, but can be overwhelming. Make sure to take time to prepare yourself. Hydrate, pack clothing for the current season, download your tickets, look up rides and shows, make a bucket list etc. The more you prepare before your vacation, the more you can enjoy the vacation itself.

## 2. Try to go on the Off-Season

You can find information about the off-season dates for Universal Orlando online. My husband and I went to the park on December 10th and it was moderately busy. We also went a week before Spring Break and the crowds were more manageable. The weather was also nicer at the beginning of March. To make the most of your trip I suggest choosing an off-season, non-weekend day(s).

## 3. Wear Comfortable Shoes and Clothes

If you are anything like me, you are thinking of the perfect wizard-wear that will be equal parts practical and authentic. You are probably seeing photos of people in authentic cloaks or dressed all cute. After physically going to the park, here is my advice. *Dress comfortably.* Both parks are huge and you will be doing lots of walking. I walked a total of ten miles in one day at Universal, and I could have easily done much more. Keep in mind, Florida is humid. My suggestion: don't wear too many layers.

## 4. Stay at a Universal Studios Hotel

Staying at a Universal Hotel will get you all sorts of perks, but most importantly it allows you into Universal Studios a full hour before the rest of the crowd. Shuttles are also convenient for transportation. It might cost more to stay in a Universal Hotel, but I promise it is worth every penny. My personal favorite is Adventura.

## 5. Do Not Over-Pack

My husband and I brought a backpack the first time we went to Universal and it was a mistake. A bag hinders your ability to quickly get on a ride or walk through crowds. If you need to bring a bag, because you have kiddos or want to bring your own food there are lockers available to rent.

## **6. Enjoy the Detail**

Slow down, soak it in. The detail is astounding. You will not want to miss out on any of it. Some of the highlights are on my checklists below. I'm sure there are a million more things I missed, but I hope my lists give you a head start.

## **7. Do the Busy Rides in the Early Morning or Before Close**

I would not suggest eating a big meal before climbing on a ride. Harry Potter World is notorious for having long lines, so in order to avoid the wait I suggest going on the rides first. Or you could try the lines right before closing. My husband and I were able to walk right onto the Forbidden Journey. No wait at all! Remember to research what you want to do and go from there.

## **8. Soda is Not a Wizard Drink**

You will not find any muggle food or drink in Diagon Ally, Hogsmeade or Hogwarts. My husband was slightly thrown by the lack of soda available, so if you are a Coca-Cola addict, keep in mind you will need to step out into the muggle world for that sort of drink. You can buy an unlimited refill cup in Universal as well that is definitely worth the money. Also an excellent souvenir! This cup does have to be reactivated each day, but for a lower cost.

## **9. Buy and Use a Wand in the Wizarding World.**

You can use your wand to cast spells and create real magic all around Hogsmeade and Diagon Ally. Keep a sharp eye out for those opportunities. The interactive wand is worth quite a coin, but for a true Potterhead it's worth the galleons spent.

## **10. You CAN do the park in one day.**

Although, if you want to make the most of it without completely wearing yourself out OR you would like to see other parts of Universal, I suggest two or three days. If you choose to buy a two day ticket for the parks, check to see if a season pass is cheaper. We saved a few bucks buying a season pass, which gave us almost unlimited access for the year.

## **11. Pack a Three Pronged Fanny Pack**

You can wear a fanny pack on most rides so long as it is on your waist. We heard that a three pronged fanny pack is best as it is more secure. You might be thinking a fanny pack is lame and weird looking, but there are literally hundreds of people in the parks wearing them. You will be in good company.

## **12. Ride the Hogwarts Express Both Ways**

Yup, you heard me right. The parks are connected by Hogwarts Express, and you get to ride an actual train. Be sure to ride it in both directions as each is a different experience. Even the walk through Kings Cross Station is authentic. You can ride the train as many times as you want for free. It also saves your feet from walking miles back and forth.

## **13. Purchase a Dining Plan**

A dining plan includes 1 meal, 1 drink and 1 snack. I was skeptical about the plan saving us money, but it came in handy and did save and did save a few dollars.

## **14. Take Time to Watch the Shows.**

Don't like roller coasters? There are shows happening in both parks throughout the day. You can see everything from a Trash Can Band to Frog Choir, the Blues Brothers to The Tales of Beetle the Bard. Research what shows you would like to see before you arrive.

## **15, Enjoy All the Eats and Treats**

Indulge a little! Sure, you could bring your own snacks to save a little money, but you are at Universal Studios and on vacation. Why not make the most of it? (If you do prefer to eat healthy, there are excellent options available as well.)

## **16. Shop and Ship to Your Hotel**

Thinking of stocking up on Christmas gifts or loading up on merch, but don't want to carry around a bag of goodies? Staying at a Universal Hotel comes with another perk. You can have the items you buy shipped to your hotel. Amazing, right? The convenience of it all.

## **17. Go During the Christmas Season**

There is an extra joyful air about the parks at Christmas time, as well as various special holiday productions, foods, decorations and surprises. Like I mentioned before, we went at the beginning of December and it was especially magical.

## **18. Don't Forget the Light Show**

At the end of the day there is an outstanding light show outside Hogwarts. Be sure to snag a front row spot to witness the magic.

## **19. Bring Your Own Water**

Not only is this more sustainable, but bringing your own water bottle will save you money. Theme park water is very expensive. I highly recommend filling your reusable bottle of water and bringing it along throughout the day. It's also important to drink a lot of water throughout the day. Especially if you are indulging in pop or alcohol. The sun will suck all the energy out of you, and the one way to overcome the baking heat is by being hydrated.

## **20. Don't Forget Sunscreen**

Again, the sun will suck the energy right out of you. Universal is incredibly fun, but don't allow the fun to make you forgetful. No one likes to have a sunburn on the first day of vacation. Protect your skin by applying sunscreen, wearing a hat, and drinking water.

## **21. Consider Additional Entertainment.**

The line for Hagrid's Magical Adventure was four hours long. No joke. If you are planning to conquer multiple roller coasters in a day, consider downloading the Heads Up app on your phone to play with your group, packing a crossword in your fanny pack or even a Nintendo Switch if you don't mind the extra weight.

## **22. Download the Universal Orlando App**

This app will give you show times and interactive maps as well as ride times and delays. It even stores second copies of your tickets. Download it before you go and get familiar.

## **23. Take a Break**

If you are staying at the park for multiple days, don't be afraid to take a break. Go to your hotel and take a nap, get a snack, reapply sunscreen and return to the park in the late afternoon. Remember this is your vacation. It is okay to rest!

## **24. Don't Bother with the Express Pass**

This might be a controversial opinion, but I suggest not wasting your money on an Express Pass. At no point did I wish I had it. There are some rides that don't allow you to use it, so that's also something to remember. Hagrid's Motorbike Adventure is one of those rides. Track wait times on the app, research rides before you arrive, and utilize early admission. If you do those things, you won't need the express pass.

## **25. Utilize the Single Rider Lane**

My husband enjoys roller coasters much more than I do. When he wants to try a ride he uses the single rider lane and gets on the coaster much faster than if I were with him in line. You can utilize this lane even as a couple or group, so long as you are okay with being separated. (This tip does not necessarily apply to Hagrid's ride, however. Single rider lane on that particular coaster takes longer.)

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# *Fanny Pack List*

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**Hand Sanitizer**

**Wet Wipes**

**Charger Pack & Cable**

**Hair Tie**

**Sunscreen**

**Chap Stick**

**Sunglasses**

**Rain Poncho**

**Tissues**

**Medicine**

# Universal Studios Orlando Packing Checklist



**Travel Documents**



**Travel Gear**



**Clothing Essentials**



**Toiletry Basics**



**Medicine**

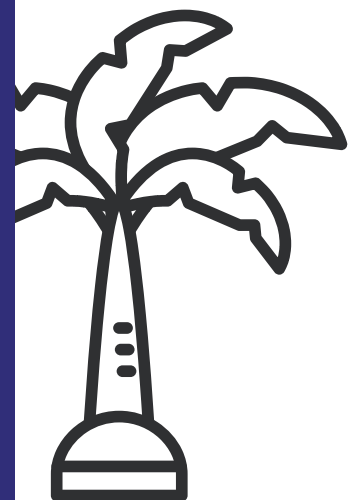
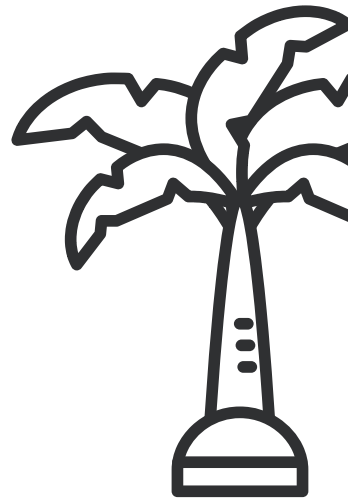
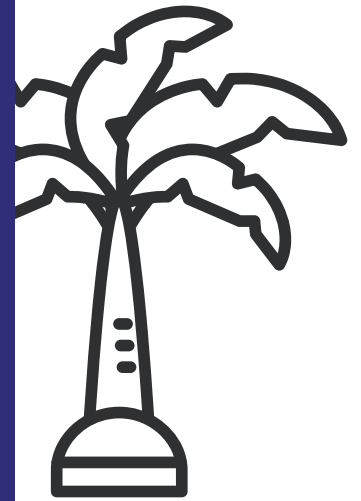


**Gadgets and Electronics**

# Universal Orlando

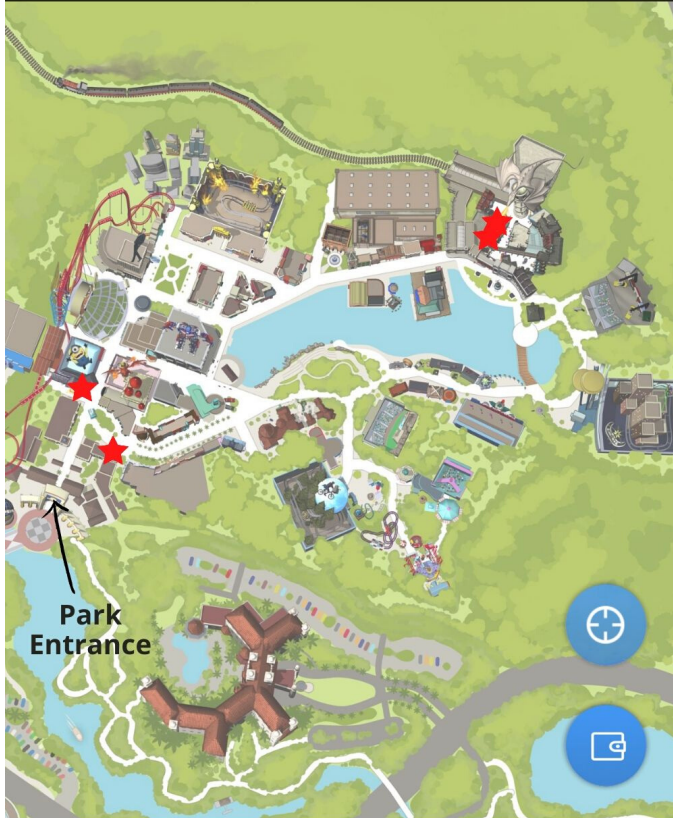
## FOODIE BUCKET LIST

- BUTTERBEER FROM HP WORLD
- BUTTER BEER OR LAVENDER EARL GREY ICE CREAM AT FLOREAN FORESCUES
- CHOCOLATE PEANUT BUTTER COOKIE FROM SNOOKERS AND SNOOKERS
- TRADITIONAL ENGLISH BREAKFAST FROM THE THREE BROOMSTICKS
- ACAI BOWL FROM THE TODAY CAFE
- TOAD IN THE HOLE FROM THE LEAKY CAULDRON
- FOOT LONG CORNDOG FROM MOOSE JUICE GOOSE JUICE
- BUTTERBEER POTTED CREAM FROM THE LEAKY CAULDRON
- MINION SMORE AT STUDIO SWEETS
- FORK, KNIFE, AND SPOON GRILLED CHEESE FROM MYTHOS
- RICE BOWL FROM THUNDER FALLS TERRACE
- MILKSHAKE FROM TOOTHOSOME CHOCOLATE EMPORIUM
- WELLINGTON BURGER & CURLY FRIES FROM WIMPY'S
- CHOCOLATE BANANA GOOEY CAKE FROM MYTHOS
- OREO DOUGHNUT AT VODOO DOUGHNUT
- CHICKEN KABAB FROM DOC SUGRUES DESERT KEBAB HOUSE



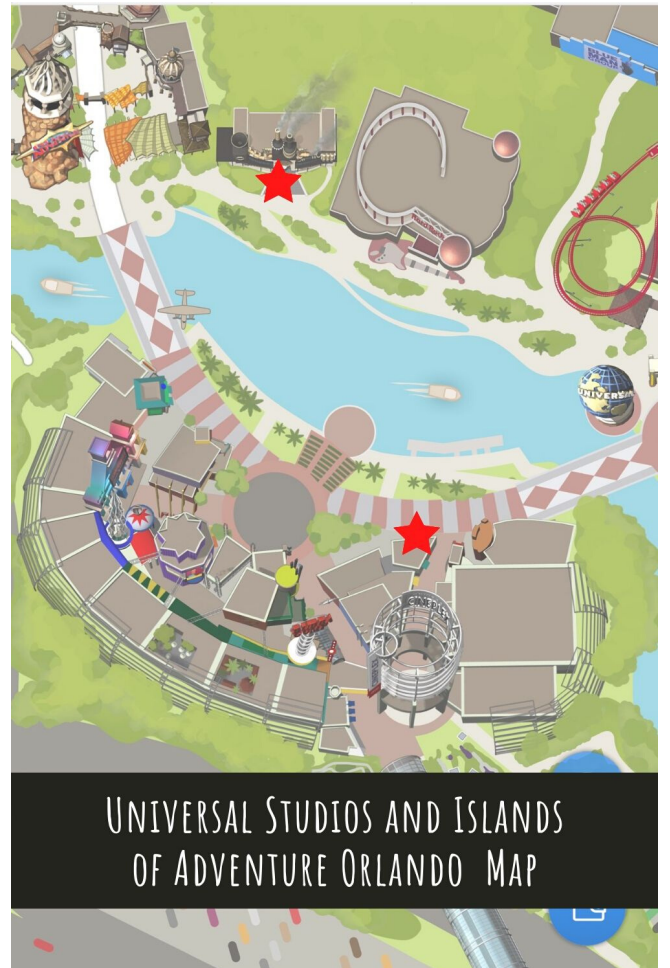
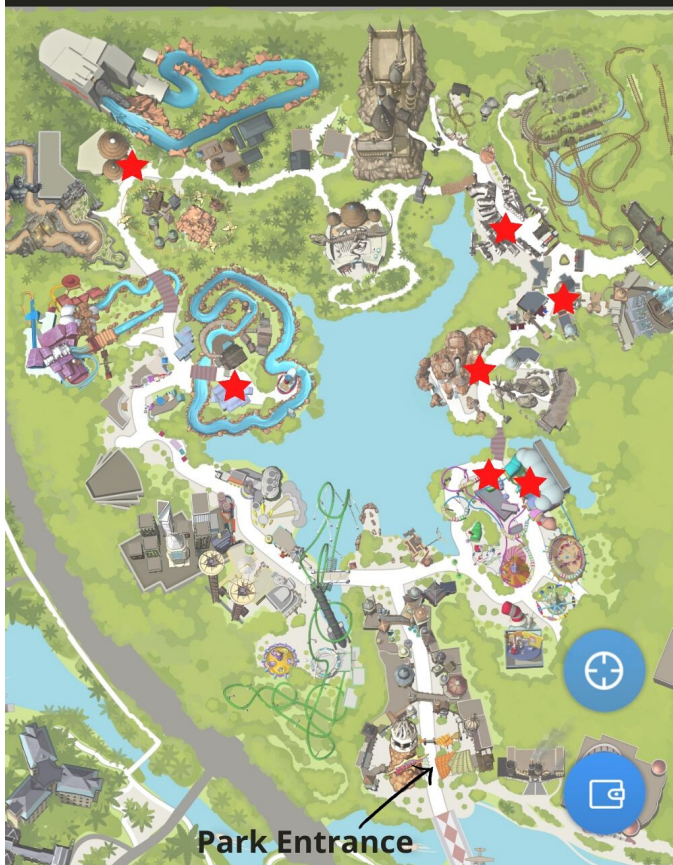


## UNIVERSAL STUDIOS ORLANDO MAP



\*I do not own rights to these maps of Universal Studios, Islands of Adventure or City Walk. These screenshots are a tool to help you on your quest for delicious food. For an interactive map, download the Universal Parks App today!

## ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE ORLANDO MAP



## UNIVERSAL STUDIOS AND ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE ORLANDO MAP

# HARRY POTTER WORLD ULTIMATE CHECKLIST

- RIDE HARRY POTTER AND THE FORBIDDEN JOURNEY
- VISIT OLIVANDERS & WAND CEREMONY
- RIDE HARRY POTTER AND THE ESCAPE FROM GRINGOTS
- FIND KNOCKTURN ALLY
- CALL THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC
- LOOK FOR KREACHER
- TAKE THE TRAIN - BOTH WAYS
- EAT AT THREE BROOMSTICKS
- EXCHANGE MUGGLE MONEY FOR WIZARD MONEY
- BUY AN INTERACTIVE WAND
- SEND LETTER BY OWL
- TRY A SCOTCH EGG
- RIDE HAGRID'S MAGICAL CREATURES MOTORBIKE ADVENTURE
- PUMPKIN JUICE & BUTTER BEER
- TAKE A PICTURE BY THE KNIGHT BUS
- SEE FROG CHOIR AND THREE BROTHERS PERFORMANCES
- BUY CANDY AT HONEYDUKES
- EAT AT THE LEAKY CAULDRON
- SEE THE CASTLE AT NIGHT

