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**Advice for the Theme Park Weary**

**By Cara Goldsbury**

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When you just can't take another day at the theme parks on your Orlando vacation consider these suggestions:

**Book a Spa Treatment** – What better way to soothe fragile nerves and sore feet than a session at one of Orlando's resort spas. On Disney property there's the Grand Floridian as well as the Saratoga Springs Spa where one of their luxurious treatments are a perfect addition to your vacation. Off property you can't do any better than the ultra luxurious Ritz-Carlton Spa or the Gaylord Palms Canyon Ranch Spa. Those staying at a Universal Resort should consider an exotic Javanese treatment at the Mandara Spa at Portofino Bay Hotel.

**Relax At Your Resort's Pool** – Orlando's resort pools are justifiably renowned for their spectacular theming. Disney offers some of the best, particularly Stormalong Bay at the Yacht and Beach Club, a 3-acre mini waterpark, or the boulder lined beauty at the Wilderness Lodge featuring waterfalls and its very own geyser. Off property, the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress' fantasyland pool is cooled by twelve waterfalls and at the JW Marriott's "Lazy River" you can float to your heart's content. And at Universal Orlando's Hard Rock Hotel is the coolest (and I don't just mean the water temperature) pool around with an underwater sound system, sand beach, and poolside cabanas.

**Spend Time On Disney's Waterways** – Disney has miles of lakes and lagoons to explore. You'll find that most Disney resorts have a marina where many types of watercraft are available for hire. Sailboats, pontoon and canopy boats, Sea Raycers, even a 48-foot yacht. Take your pick. Perhaps the biggest bang for your buck is to be had at the Contemporary Resort where in addition to the above you'll also find parasailing, waterskiing, tubing, and wakeboarding on beautiful Bay Lake.

**Cool Off at a Disney Waterpark** – Disney has two wonderful waterparks: Blizzard Beach, a perfect place for daredevils, and Typhoon Lagoon where you'll find a whopper of a surf pool along with tamer attractions. Spend your day hopping from one crazy waterslide to another or just kick back and relax

on a lounge chair for the afternoon.

**Shop Till You Drop in The Mall at Millenia** – For one of Orlando's best shopping experiences head to this fabulous new mall just minutes from Universal Orlando. Here you'll find only the best with stores such as Neiman Marcus, Gucci, Jimmy Choo, Louis Vuitton, and Tiffany. But fair warning: this trip could end up costing a pretty penny. Those with great taste but thriftier intentions will love the Orlando Premium Outlets Mall located just across I-4 from Downtown Disney where designer outlet stores such as Hugo Boss, Armani, Escada, Ermenegildo Zegna, and Burberry won't break the bank.

**Head to Downtown Disney** – For a change of pace there's Downtown Disney. Here you'll find over 70 shops, restaurants, and nightclubs plus a 24-screen theater, Disney Quest with five floors of virtual games and adventures, even a Cirque du Soleil. Adults will want to pick a great restaurant for dinner like Wolfgang Puck or Portofino Yacht Club and then head to Pleasure Island to party down until the wee hours of the morning.

**Swim With a Dolphin** – Perhaps the most unusual experience in Orlando is Discovery Cove. Spend up close and personal time with your very own dolphin friend, snorkel with tropical fish and rays, even feed birds right out of your hand. Then relax on a sandy beach with little or no crowds. Definitely a day to be remembered.

**Make the Rounds Resort Hopping** – Spend a few hours ogling at Disney's wonderfully themed resorts. And best of all, it doesn't cost a thing. Board the monorail at the Ticket and Transportation Center and hop off at each of the three Magic Kingdom resorts. First the Polynesian, a tropical wonderland, then the Grand Floridian, Disney's flagship resort, and lastly the Contemporary where you'll enjoy the Grand Concourse with the monorail silently gliding overhead. Out back you can catch a boat to the Wilderness Lodge, Disney's most beautiful resort modeled after an early 1900s national park lodge. Then catch a boat to the Magic Kingdom and a ferry to the TTC where you started. It's a grand circle that can't be beat.

Cara Goldsbury is the author of *The Luxury Guide to Walt Disney World: How to Get the Most Out of the Best Disney Has to Offer* available at 800-247-6553,

,

, or

your local bookstore. Visit her at

.

## **Save Time And Money On Theme Park Days**

**By Heywood Hall**

## Advice for the Theme Park Weary

Many people, especially families, can be put off visiting big theme parks because of the costs. Once you've added up the entry fee, the on-site catering, the travel, the souvenirs and any other expenses, it can turn out to be an expensive day out. Here are some ways you can enjoy the thrills without counting the cost:

### 1. Buy tickets online

Most major theme parks let you buy tickets online and these are often cheaper than the prices at the gate. Alton Towers, the UK's biggest theme park, charges around 20% less for online tickets than it does at the front gates, and that's a saving that can make a big difference to your day out.

### 2. Take your lunch with you

Theme park catering can be expensive, and it's not always the sort of food you want to eat. Save money by packing a picnic - there's nearly always somewhere nice to sit and eat – and your time is better spent queuing for rides than for food. Be aware that most theme parks will want to check your bags as you go through the gates, but it's worth 5 extra minutes there for the cost saving.

### 3. Think before you buy

Souvenir shops are very tempting, but stop to think before you buy something themed after every ride. Limiting your budget means that you are far more likely to buy something you really want, rather than bits and pieces that you'll never look at or use.

### 4. Stay close to the park

A lot of theme parks have hotels on site, which is handy, but expensive. Instead, try a guest house or a bed and breakfast that's close by. That way, you can stay for much less, but with the park still only a short drive away. And if you can get cheap park entry on your second day, you can make a weekend of your theme park visit for a lot less than you might think. You can also extend your stay and visit other attractions with the money you save!

Heywood Hall offers family-friendly accommodation just 2 miles from Alton Towers, the UK's biggest theme park. Visit their website by clicking on

.

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