



Relocation Guide to Orlando, FL

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IOR makes every effort to ensure the information contained in this guide is as current as possible. If you notice errors, or information which is no longer accurate, please contact us immediately so we may correct the issue.

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WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

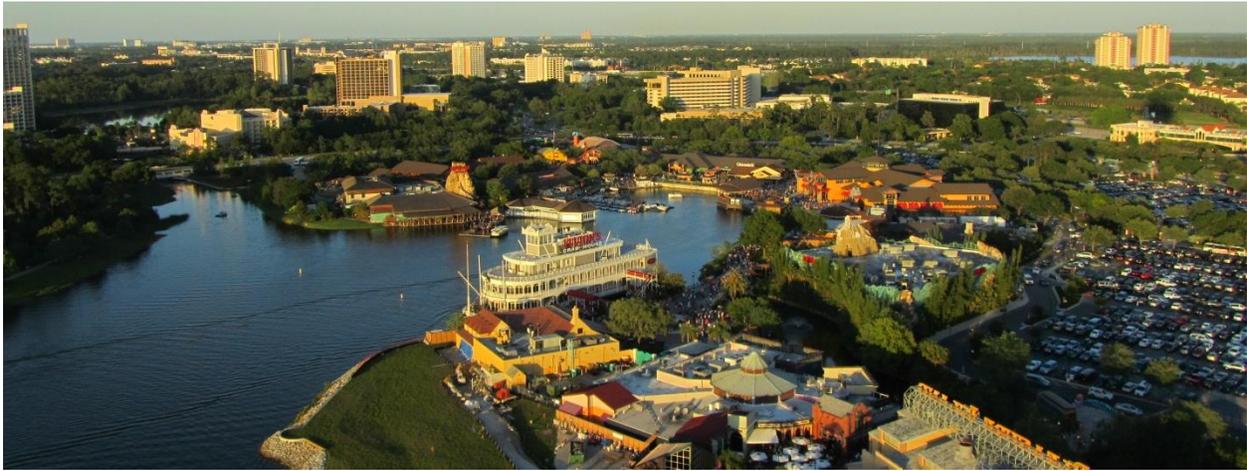


Photo courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Orlando's history dates back to 1838 and the height of the Seminole Wars. The U.S. Army built Fort Gatlin south of the present day Orlando City limits to protect settlers from attacks by Indians. By 1840, a small community had grown up around the Fort. It was known as Jernigan, named after the Jernigan family, who had established the first permanent settlement in the area. Jernigan had a post office, established May 30th, 1850.

Six years later with the settlement expanding northward, the community officially changed its name to Orlando. In 1857, the U.S. Post Office adopted the name change. The Town of Orlando was incorporated in 1875 with 85 inhabitants, 22 of whom were qualified voters.

The period from 1875 to 1895 is remembered as Orlando's "Gilded Era," when it became the hub of Florida's citrus industry. But a great freeze in 1894-1895 forced many owners to give up their independent groves, thus consolidating holdings in the hands of a few "citrus barons" which shifted operations south, primarily around Lake Wales in Polk County.

During World War II, a number of Army personnel were stationed at the Pine Castle AAF. Some of these servicemen stayed in Orlando to settle and raise families. In 1956 the aerospace/defense company Martin Marietta (now Lockheed Martin) established a plant in Orlando. In 1958, Pine Castle AAF was renamed McCoy Air Force Base after Colonel Michael N.W. McCoy.

Perhaps the most critical event for Orlando's economy occurred in 1965 when Walt Disney announced plans to build Walt Disney World. Although Disney had considered the cities of Miami and Tampa for his park, one of the major reasons behind his decision not to locate in those cities was the threat of hurricanes. As a result, tourism became the centerpiece of the area's economy and Orlando is consistently ranked as one of the top vacation destinations in the world.

Another major factor in Orlando's growth occurred in 1970, when the new Orlando International Airport was built from a portion of the McCoy Air Force Base. Four airlines began providing scheduled flights in 1970. The military base officially closed in 1974, and most of it is now part of the airport. The airport still retains the former Air Force Base airport code (MCO). It is considered a world-class facility, and it is one of the most heavily travelled airports in the world.

In addition to McCoy Air Force Base, Orlando also had a naval presence with the establishment of the Orlando Naval Training Center in 1968. Providing training to recruits as well as being a base for selected post basic training programs, the base had a prominent presence in the area. The base continued in a diminished capacity until the base closed for good with the last graduates of the base's Naval Nuclear Power School leaving in December of 1998. The former base has been developed into tracts for upscale housing called Baldwin Park.

City of Orlando Overview

- [Official Website of the City of Orlando](#)
- [Mayor of the City Orlando](#)

History of Orlando

- [Orlando's Origin](#)
- [Orlando Public Library](#)
- [Orange County Regional History Center](#)

Recommended Reading (in print)

- Day Trips from Orlando Bay: Getaway Ideas for the Local Traveler – [Purchase on Amazon](#)
- Orlando, FL: Cool Stuff Every Kid Should (Arcadia Kids) – [Purchase on Amazon](#)
- [For architecture](#)

What to See, Sightseeing Tours, Value Packages and Passes, Tourist Information

- [Best of Orlando- TripAdvisor](#)
- [Visit Orlando](#)
- [Visit Orlando's official visitor center](#)
- [Check out Disneyworld Orlando!](#)

Where to Find Arts & Entertainment

- [Official Orlando Calendar of Events](#)
- [Orlando Tourist Calendar of Events](#)
- [Theatre Productions in Orlando](#)

Where to Eat

- [List of Restaurants – Organized by Opentable \(easy reservations\)](#)
- [Official Dining Guide of Tampa](#)
- [Orlando Food and Wine Festival – Annual Festival of Food](#)
- [Orlando Magazine Dining Awards](#)

Tipping & Sales Tax

When you eat in a restaurant in America, you are expected to leave your server a tip, as it is not included. In a bar, café, or modest restaurant, 15% of the total bill is acceptable. However, in an upscale restaurant (fine dining), a tip calculated on 20% of the total bill is now the norm in Florida.

In addition, you will be paying the 6.5% sales tax in Orlando.

Map of Orlando



Photo courtesy of [LonelyPlanet Travel Guide](#)

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY
DIAL 911
FOR FIRE, POLICE & AMBULANCE**

Language line: If the person calling 911 is unable to speak English, they can tell the operator what language they speak. The 911 Operator will have an interpreter on the line within one minute to assist with the translation.

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

If you accidentally call 911, please do not hang up. The police will automatically be dispatched to your home to make sure there are no problems. Explain to the Operator the call was an accident.

- [POISON CONTROL](#) (800) 222-1222
- [ANIMAL POISON CONTROL](#) (888) 426-4435

Other Important Numbers:

CLOSEST CONSULATE OFFICE _____
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN _____
WORK PHONE NUMBER _____

[More Important Orlando Metro Numbers](#)

Hospital & Clinics

[Comprehensive list and details of all local hospitals](#) (ER wait times, phone numbers, etc.)

- [Florida Hospital Orlando](#)
- [Central Florida Regional Hospital](#)
- [Winter Park Memorial Hospital](#)
- [Florida Hospital East Orlando](#)
- [Florida Hospital Altamonte](#)
- [Florida Hospital Apopka](#)
- [Florida Hospital Kissimmee](#)
- [Florida Hospital Celebration Health](#)

Veterinary Clinics

- [Orlando Veterinarians](#)
- [Emergency Pet Hospital](#)
- [Pet Adoption](#)

Pharmacies

There are two major pharmacy chains in Orlando, found on nearly every block on commercial streets. Click on “Store Locator” and enter your zip (postal) code to find the pharmacy near you. Several pharmacies are open 24 hours. Check for hours of operation. Also the main grocery stores like Publix, Target, and Wal-Mart have full service pharmacies.

- [Walgreens](#)
- [CVS](#)

A lease is an agreement that outlines the obligations of the owner and the tenants of a house or apartment. It is a legally binding document, so it is important for you to know the exact terms of the lease agreement before you sign it. Please do not sign a lease without reviewing it with your IOR DS Consultant.

Types of rental properties

- **Apartment**
An apartment is rented from a company or individual that owns the property. Apartment buildings are usually multistory with people over, under and beside each other with common hallways or walk ways. Apartments are often rented from a company or individual in the form of an individual lease with no bearing on the other tenants of the building (besides noise complaints, property damage, etc.)
- **Studio Apartments**
A studio apartment is basically a one room apartment with sleeping, dining and kitchen all in one room plus a full bathroom. A “convertible” or “alcove” studio may have a nook or area which can be sectioned off separately for sleeping.
- **Condominium**
A condo is a communally owned estate and the owners share the ownership of the common areas such as grounds and hallways. Condominiums may be apartment style buildings or town house type buildings, but condo owners do not usually own the land. Condo owners are required to pay monthly common maintenance charges; although these might be reflected in your rental rate (it is important to clarify this with your landlord).
- **Townhouse**
A Townhouse is a kind of structure where the individual properties are flush against each other with tiny front and back “yards” and shared walls between them. Almost always they are multistory single family. Usually townhouse owners own the property under their townhouse.
- **Single Family Houses**
Single-family houses are free-standing rental properties that are habited by one person or a family. As you do not share this rental space with any other tenants, single-family homes offer the most amount of privacy. Homes also often come with a parking spot and/or garage space, but may require that you handle certain maintenance items (i.e. your lawn, minor repairs, etc.)

Rental Agents

In most situations, your IOR consultant will partner with a local realtor to have access to the most current and extensive property listings as well as the realtor's expertise in preparing and negotiating leases. This agent receives a commission for their assistance, in most US locations this commission is paid by the Landlord, not the tenant. Your IOR DS Consultant will discuss this with you.

Renter's Rights

Tenants who lease or rent property are protected against discrimination by [The Fair Housing Act](#). If you think your rights have been violated, you may write a letter or telephone the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office nearest you. You have one year after the alleged violation to file a complaint with HUD, but you should file as soon as possible.

While you can generally expect the same service from landlords, it's important to know your state's laws. Each state and most major cities have their own tenant rights, laws and protections. Here is [Florida's](#).

You can also visit the [HUD website here for a full guide to renters' rights by states](#).

If your rental property ever suffers any defects that make your place uninhabitable, your landlord has a duty to fix it. While some apartments let you make online requests for repairs, as well as provide a phone number for "emergencies," always make sure you document your request in writing. The landlord will then have a certain amount of time to make those repairs.

Privacy

You have the right to privacy. While the landlord owns the property, they can't access it anytime they want. All states have laws stating renters have a right to privacy while renting. Pretty much the only time the landlord can come into your rental without permission or notice is when they're responding to an emergency that threatens injury or property damage.

Any other time the landlord wants to enter your apartment, they need to have your permission and in most cases give you 24-hours' notice before entering.

What to expect from the landlord:

In most states, you are legally entitled to:

- Safe structural elements including floors, walls, roofs, and secure doors and windows
- Privacy as described above
- All electrical, plumbing, heating and air conditioning systems function.
- Working hot and cold water
- Exterminating infestations of rodents and other insects
- Access to trash receptacles
- Landlords cannot discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

- Water, electricity, and gas bills are up to you to pay. **Your IOR consultant will assist you with this process.**
- Apartment buildings sometimes come with laundry and dryer machines in the basement.

Utilities and Appliances

Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you or provide information on connecting your utilities. It is possible some will be included in your rent, but typically most are not.

If you are moving from Europe to North America, you might be surprised at the relatively large size of the kitchen appliances in your accommodation, especially the refrigerator! It may also surprise some expats that properties are rented **with** appliances. In the US it is standard for properties to include a refrigerator, stove, and oven. Properties may also include a dishwasher, microwave, washer and dryer depending on the location, size, and price point.

****Note that you will need a social security number in order to register and pay for utilities****

Recycling

Ask your IOR DSC about the recycling arrangements and requirements. While domestic waste disposals are common in North America, recycling bins are not always present even if such services exist.

The Lease Process

Review your housing budget with your DSC

Your DSC can help you understand what kind of property you can afford. You also need to take into account that you may be responsible for some of the utility costs of your rental.

Know what you want

What are you looking for in a property? Do you want a studio or a single bedroom? Maybe you want to rent a single family home? Do you need the property to come with appliances, including washer and dryer? Do want it to be close to school or your work? Do you want it to be within walking distance of retail, like groceries or coffee shops? Are you looking for a child friendly area?

Keep in mind that outside of the city center in major cities, there is not much public transportation and most locals drive everywhere.

Identify potential apartments

IOR offers home finding services to aid you with this process. Your consultant may work with a local broker who will help to organize appointments and visit properties. They will also assist in the rental application and the leasing process.

Common Abbreviations and Acronyms used in rental housing listings

Acronym	Meaning
24-hr mtn	24-hour emergency maintenance
AC or A/C	Air conditioning
Appls	Appliances
Apt	Apartment
BA	Bathroom
BR	Bedroom
Bsmt	Basement
CAC	Central air conditioning
DA	Dining area
Det	Detached
Dk	Deck
DR	Dining room
Dw (D/w)	Dishwasher
Eff	Efficiency
EiK	Eat-in kitchen
Fin bsmt	Finished basement
FDR	Formal dining room
FHA	Fair Housing Act
FMR	Fair market rent
FP	Floorplan
Gar	Garage
H/A	Handicapped accessible

Acronym	Meaning
LA	Living area
LR	Living room
MBR	Master bedroom
MBTH	Master bathroom
Neg	Negotiable
Ofc	Office
OSP	Off-street parking
Pkg	Parking
PM	Property manager (management)
Pvt	Private
Pwdr rm	Powder room (1/2 bath)
RE	Real estate
Renov	Renovated
Rf	Roof
Rm	Room
SF	Single-family
SFA	Single-family attached
SFD	Single-family detached
Sp, PI (S/p)	Swimming pool
Sq. ft	Square feet
Th (T/H)	Townhouse
Vw (vu)	View

H/W	Hardwood floors
Hi ceil	High ceilings
HVAC	Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning

W/A	Wheelchair accessible
W/W	Wall-to-wall carpeting

Visit

Make this process as efficient as possible by visiting as many potential properties as you can in one or two days. Try to go sometime during the week if possible. Your IOR DS consultant will work with you to set an appropriate schedule and to ensure that the properties you visit meet your needs as closely as possible.

What to do once you're there

As you look at the rental unit, be sure to ask a lot of questions. While you should keep small concerns to yourself about the unit while looking at it, feel free to ask the landlord or apartment manager any questions you might have that will help in your decision. Here are some possible questions you may consider asking:

- What's the monthly rent?
- Are any utilities included with the rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- When is rent due? Do you have auto-pay?
- What's the make-up of the other tenants? Are they mainly younger students? Married couples with families? Older folks?
- What's the parking situation like? Do you pay for a parking spot?
- Do you take care of small maintenance issues or am I responsible for some of the repairs in the property?
- Am I able to re-paint the walls or make other modifications?

Again, be friendly and polite when you ask these questions.

The Application

The next step in the leasing process for an apartment is to submit a rental application for the location you want. The manager or landlord will be able to give you the application as well as anything else that they may need to have filled out. Your IOR DS Consultant will assist with this process. For a single family home there will likely be a rental application.

You will need your passport, Social Security number, Visa, and proof of employment. Some landlords may charge you an application fee which could be between \$20 to \$400 dollars, depending on the landlord. This could be a combination of an application fee and move-in fee.

Once you've done this, it can take up to a few days to hear back from the property manager. Once your application has been approved the lease approval process will begin with IOR and likely your employer.

Signing the lease

DO NOT SIGN THE LEASE until your IOR consultant has reviewed it in full and given their approval.

The lease is a binding contract, so it is very important to pay attention as a leasing agent goes over it with you. It is perfectly normal for you to take your time and read all the fine print for yourself. If you are working with an IOR consultant, make sure to talk with them and receive approval before signing. You will also be given a copy of the lease to take with you and keep for your records, but it is very important to know everything included in your lease from the start.

Some things to look for in a lease:

- Term of the lease and any important dates such as when the rent is due
- Extra fees for parking spaces or storage, garbage collection, and pets
- Information regarding utility providers and whether you or the landlord is responsible for those bills.
- Notification requirements in case of renewal
- Requirements/responsibilities of the tenants to do routine repairs such as lawn maintenance, cleaning or notification of repairs
- Clauses that allow the landlord to change the terms of the lease after it is signed
- Restrictions that would prevent you from living normally or comfortably in the home

Sometimes landlords will ask for a security deposit before you sign the lease. This is normal, but you shouldn't pay in cash. Make sure all payments are made out as a check or money order just in case.

What to expect from the lease

Most leases in the United States include the following or a variation thereof:

- Your employer requires that all leases include a Break Clause in the case that you are transferred for work or personal needs.
- Contracts will often be for periods of a year or more.
- Minimum stay. Typically three fourths of your lease contract time. If you choose to move out before this date, you will lose your security deposit. If you move out afterwards, you are still required to give a specified number of days notice.
- Security Deposit. Landlords will expect you to leave them with a deposit (usually about one to two month's rent) that they will hold for the duration of your lease. You will receive your security deposit back at the end of the lease provided you don't break any specific clauses in

your lease, such as moving out without proper notice, not paying rent, causing damages to the property, etc.

- Landlords should not be given unchecked access to your apartment. If there isn't anything in your lease about landlord's rights to enter the leased premises, suggest the following clause:

Entry by the Landlord: Landlord or his agent will not enter Tenant's home except to deal with an emergency; to make necessary or agreed repairs; to supply necessary or agreed services; or to show the unit to potential purchasers, tenants, or repair persons. Unless there is an emergency, Landlord will give Tenant at least 24 hours' written notice of the date, time, and purpose of the intended entry and will schedule entries during normal business hours, Monday–Friday.

Most landlords will be hard-pressed to say no to such a reasonable clause. If the landlord refuses, it's a sure sign that he won't be reasonable in other respects, too. Continue on in your housing search.

Moving In

On your selected move-in date, after the lease has been signed, and deposits have been paid...you should be given your keys and more than likely a move-in form to fill out. Your IOR Consultant will assist you with an initial walk through of your apartment. Look for dings in the walls, cracked windows, or other irregularities and report them on this form. This will indicate that these things were there before you moved in and you will not be held responsible for them at the end of the lease term.

Get Renter's Insurance

Renter's insurance covers any loss to your personal property due to robbery or accidents. It also covers any damage you might cause to other tenant's property. For example, let's say your washing machine springs a leak and water seeps through the floor and ruins your neighbor's antique dresser. Renter's insurance would cover that.

Renter's insurance will cost approximately about \$15-125 a month, less if you tack it onto another policy (like auto) you have with an insurance company. A few popular options are [Allstate](#) and [StateFarm](#).

When relocating internationally, your children's education is of great concern. IOR eases this concern by exposing you to the various school options available for your child and helping you to work within the framework of options to find the best solution for your family.

I. **Overview and Philosophy of the United States Educational System**

In most U.S. locations you will have the choice of sending your children to either a public or private school. A public school must accept your child for enrollment if you live within its designated district. A private school may have a general curriculum similar to that of public schools, but may or may not accept your child depending on availability of space, your child's prior academic history, language ability in English, or the result of entrance exams. Private schools charge a fee, which can be quite high. If you are considering private school, be sure you have a clear understanding of your employer's policy regarding reimbursement. In the U.S. approximately 85% of the children attend public schools for ages 5 to 13, and approximately 93% of the children attend public school at the high school level. Many, though not all, private schools are parochial, or religiously affiliated schools.

A third option called 'charter school' is sometimes available. Charter Schools are similar to public schools in that they are free, non-religious, publicly funded, and are held to state and federal academic standards. Each charter school is governed by its own local school community, which often includes parents and teachers - rather than a district. This freedom allows teachers to be more innovative, and communities to shape their local school. Charter schools can set their own hours and adjust their curriculum to fit their student needs, and give teachers the opportunity to experiment with next-generation teaching models including technology and the virtual classroom. Charter schools typically admit students by random lottery and do not restrict enrollment based on location, academic achievement, or other factors private schools may consider.

Most Americans, regardless of their level of education and income, send their children to public schools. Because each town or community typically has its own school system funded by local municipal taxes and state revenues, residents in an area with a higher tax base can usually be assured of quality public education. IOR is very conscientious about placing assignees and their families in areas with good public school systems.

Private schools do not receive state revenue, although they may be entitled to assistance with transporting students and providing for special needs such as speech therapy and assistance of the learning disabled. Private schools are funded through tuition paid by the student's parents. Typically, there are additional fees for books, uniforms, and school supplies, and the parents are usually solicited for additional charitable donations. There may also be book or activity fees at public schools.

The public education system in the U.S. is administered by local and state government, rather than by the federal government. Each state has a board of education which sets policy for all school districts and standards which all students must achieve. In addition, each local district has a board of education which sets local policy and curriculum within the parameters set forth by the state.

School districts can provide specialized programs and services for children with special needs. The general philosophy of education in the United States is to educate the entire diverse, ethnically mixed population with equal educational opportunity for all, while serving the educational needs of the individual student.

If you choose public education for your child, the particular school your child attends is determined by the school district boundaries containing your residential address. The school may or may not be within walking distance to your home. Generally, if the distance to the school is greater than one mile, the school district provides bus transportation to and from school. For those children who do not live far enough away from the school for bus service but are too far to walk comfortably, parents may have the option of paying for bus transportation, or they may choose to drive their children to and from school. Very often parents form 'car pools', sharing the responsibility of driving groups of children.

Generally private schools do not have residential boundaries for their students' families. In most cases, parents rely on car pools to ease the burden of transporting their students to and from school. In selecting your home, consider the driving distance and time to and from the private school.

Ultimately, the school your children attend is determined by your residential address, so it is a good idea to include visits to potential schools and properties in your pre-trip visit. Your pre-trip visit will consist of selected sample houses in a variety of communities, along with information, or perhaps visits, to the appropriate schools. However, there may be a limited selection of homes available within each community. It is possible you may find a school you like, but there may not be any available housing options within that school's enrollment radius. We will show you housing in school districts with proven academic standards, but be aware there are cases when certain schools are unavailable due to housing concerns.

If you are considering a private school, you may wish to visit it as well as a public school to compare. It would be advisable, however, to first determine if the private school has space available for your child. Additionally, you will want to know the amount of tuition and fees for the school, as that may be a factor in your decision.

II. Academic Standards

A. Curriculum:

The overriding objective of elementary and secondary education, public or private, is to prepare students for higher learning and future employment. Each school district or private school will have a unique curriculum which meets the above overriding goals.

Elementary School:

The elementary years (kindergarten through fifth grade) focus on fundamental academic skills, language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics in addition to introduction to technology, art, music, physical education, and sometimes foreign languages. Students' personal development is energized through emphasizing strong work habits which provide a positive feeling toward learning.

Middle School:

Middle School helps children in early adolescence (sixth through eighth grade) transition from elementary to high school and from childhood into young adulthood. The structure of the school day includes contact with several teachers who specialize in their subject matter; students usually move from one classroom to another. Curricular content focuses on expansion of skills in math, science, reading, writing and social studies. Further exploration of foreign languages, practical and fine arts, music, health, physical education and computer literacy are also provided. Middle school students are able to enhance their formal education by participation in school sponsored adult supervised competitive athletics and a variety of clubs and special interest groups.

High School:

The premise of elementary and middle schools is to prepare students for the academic, social, and physical challenges of high school. All high schools maintain defined academic requirements for graduation, however great flexibility of classes is usually available within this framework. Most schools provide more challenging academic courses entitled honors or advanced placement which award college credit to successful students. High school extracurricular and athletic activities are more competitive than those found at lower levels and often provide talented students with opportunities continue this activity in college or university.

B. Grading Systems/Assessment of Child Progress

Schools typically report students' progress to parents with written report cards, which may be either mailed or carried home by the student. Many schools also set one or two days aside each semester for parent/teacher conferences. These conferences are an opportunity for parents to meet with their children's teachers and hear the teacher's evaluations of their student's performance in school. At the elementary school level, where children usually have one primary teacher, a teacher conference may last from fifteen minutes to an hour in length. At the middle school and high school levels, you may meet with your child's teachers for a period of five or ten minutes. If you need additional time with the teacher, you may schedule a follow-up visit

allowing time for a more complete discussion. It is a good idea to participate fully in teacher conferences. Your children's teachers may be able to provide valuable insight regarding your children's academic and social adjustments. Should there be concerns, they may be able to assist you with helpful suggestions of additional resources to contact.

C. Standardized Testing

Challenged to prepare students for higher learning and future employment, all school districts and private schools utilize standardized testing to measure student progress over time and compare themselves to national standards. Such tests are prepared by national groups of parents and educators as well as business and academic leaders. Tests vary from state to state, but typically students in prescribed grade levels (for example, grades 3, 6, 8 and 10) are tested in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing science and social science. Colleges and universities use the ACT and SAT tests to measure incoming student abilities; the results of these tests are nearly as important as high school grades when students apply for entrance into US colleges and universities.

III. Definition of School Groupings

A. Pre-School or Nursery School

In the U.S., 3, 4 and some 5 year olds have the opportunity to attend a pre-school under a private system. These schools can be located in a local school, a church, or an independent free standing building. Pre-school is not publicly funded and is fee-based. Typically children are grouped by age. Most of the schools are play-based, although different philosophies of formal education can be found. Typically, 3 year olds attend 2 half days a week and 4 year olds may attend 3 half days a week. Some preschools also serve as day care centers for families in which both parents work. Typically reading is not taught in pre-school, although a few programs can be found which include reading fundamentals. Concentration of learning is on small and gross motor skills, and basic academic readiness skills. Some pre-schools offer a full-day Kindergarten option for those parents who work. The public school kindergarten programs are typically only half day programs with no before or after school care. If a Kindergarten program is offered it follows the state curriculum guidelines, and teaches pre-reading and math skills.

B. Elementary School

Elementary school provides education for children ages 5 to 11, Kindergarten and Grades 1,2,3,4 &5. While kindergarten at age 5 is not required, most families send their children to kindergarten. Elementary school is the beginning of publicly funded school. In the U.S. children are grouped by age and advanced in school by age. There are usually opportunities within the grade for different levels of learning, with opportunities for advanced learners and remedial learners. The public elementary school is usually neighborhood based and the source of playmates for your child. In the U.S., pre-reading skills are introduced in kindergarten (age 5) along with early math skills. Formal reading begins in the 1st grade (age 6). Studies have shown that while children learn to read at different ages, the difference between early and late readers is not a predictor of reading skills by about the age of 8 or 9 years old. In addition to reading

and math, elementary school also has a broad base of writing, science, social studies, art, music, computer, personal development and physical education. Only in a few schools will a 2nd language be introduced at the elementary level. English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered starting at the elementary level in the public school. Parents are allowed to visit the schools, and there are many opportunities for parents to volunteer their skills, particularly at the elementary school. Parents may approach teachers and administrators with suggestions and concerns with their child. Usually the personnel are willing to consider changes if they feel it would be in the best interests of the child. With a child coming to a new country and sometimes starting a new language, feel free to talk to the school if you think something could be done to ease your child's adjustment. The school day is from approximately 8:30a.m. to 3:00p.m. with recess (playtime break) and a lunch break at the school.

C. Middle School

Middle school provides education for children ages 11 to 14, grades 6, 7 & 8. The children attend school in a different location and in the public school system several elementary schools will combine into the same middle school. A middle school is usually 2-4 times the size of the elementary school. Middle school is considered the transition between elementary school and high school and from childhood to young adulthood. Because of this philosophy, U.S. students at this age level are all introduced to the same academic curriculum. The school day is structured differently with the children changing class rooms and teacher with each subject. There are 6-8 different class periods daily. Within the grades children may be separated by academic ability in classes, particularly math and English. Often an introduction to foreign languages is offered. For those who choose, the student may have the option to complete one year of high school foreign language during middle school. If your home country requires more advanced language development at this age, you may want to consider outside supplemental language instruction. Middle school is a time when extracurricular activities such as theatre, music, sports and clubs become important activities in adolescent life.

D. High School

High school provides education for children ages 14 to 18, grades 9, 10, 11 & 12. It is the final level of education before the university, community college, or trade school. The terms Freshman (9th), Sophomore (10th), Junior (11th) and Senior (12th) are also used to identify grade level. At the high school level the student has more specific choices of course work. Each district has a set of minimum graduation requirements, which will include courses in English, math, science, social studies, physical education and a combination of foreign language, fine arts and practical arts. Within this framework the student has various choices from more remedial levels, average levels, and more advanced levels. If a student is prepared for the material, by the 11th or 12th grade a student may have the opportunity to take a college level course for advanced credit in the U.S. university system. In high school competitive sports are offered along with theatre, orchestra, instrumental and vocal music and clubs. Your child will have an opportunity to meet more U.S. children by participating in a school extracurricular activity. Each school district has 1-2 high schools with 800-2500 students. A student's high school

performance may determine the type of university or higher education program they pursue upon graduation. During high school national tests are given to determine the student's potential to advance to various higher education levels.

If your child anticipates returning to your home country to continue higher education within your university system, you might want to consider the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This program is recognized internationally for entrance to universities. In contrast to the typical high school college preparatory curriculum, the IB semester consists of fewer subjects, studied in greater depth and with a bilingual proficiency. Developed in Switzerland, the curriculum was intended as a secondary education program which could be utilized and accepted worldwide. Not all US schools will offer an IB curriculum.

E. Post-Secondary Education

While most families on international assignment do not bring their older children (19 years+) for education in the U.S. we include a brief description of the US university system. Some form of post-secondary education is available to those U.S. students who seek it. Each state offers a public university system which the tuition is partly subsidized by the state for state residents. Residency of at least 1 year is necessary. Some are medium to large institutions (with undergraduate and graduate level programs). Some can be quite competitive for admission while others may not be competitive at all. Student's admission to the university is in part determined by their high school academic performance and course selection and as well as the results of a national standardized test (SAT or ACT). Post-Secondary is the educational level that students in the U.S. study subjects in great depth and select their majors and career choices. Graduate level programs on the master level, professional level, and PhD level are pursued after completing the 4 years of undergraduate studies.

IV. Life in Schools

A. Atmosphere

It is valuable to visit your child's school to understand the academic and non-academic atmosphere that prevails. Administrators or counselors are happy to serve as tour guides and should always be contacted in advance. Do not be alarmed if your visit takes place during the lunch hour if the children seem a bit rambunctious. Students in American public schools generally enjoy a great deal of personal freedom in the cafeteria, on the playground, and in the halls before and after class. They are supervised by teachers or members of the school staff, but they generally are more relaxed in the lunch room and in the halls. If you are visiting on a rainy day, you may observe "indoor recess" in the gymnasium which could be noisy. Rest assured that when they are in the classroom, students do settle down and work quietly and diligently. Some classrooms are more informally arranged than others. For instance, some teachers prefer to have the children's desks in a circle rather than in rows. Teachers will sometimes assign group projects, where several students work together and are thus not seated at their desks during a part of the classroom period. Teachers are expected, however, to have good control of their classrooms. Private school policy regarding these issues of personal freedom varies. Some

private schools function as the public schools do, while others may have a more closely supervised approach. Again, it is always a good idea to visit the school so that you are comfortable with that particular school's management style.

B. Parental Involvement

In addition to participating in parent/teacher conferences, most American schools encourage parents to become involved in the volunteer activities of the school. Most schools have a "PTA" (Parent Teacher Association) or "PTO" (Parent Teacher Organization). These organizations usually work with the school administration, dealing with issues such as student safety, communication to parents, academic concerns, etc., as well as fundraising and planning special programs to enhance the school experience for the student population.

Getting involved with the PTA or PTO is a great way to become well informed about your child's school. It also provides you with an opportunity to meet and really get to know other parents. There will probably be a choice of committees on which you could work; you do not have to commit to a leadership role. Some volunteer opportunities may involve actually working in the school, volunteering in the school library on day a week or one day a month for example. Be sure to alert the school administration that you would like to get involved, and ask for the name and phone number of the head of the parent volunteer organization at the school. Parent volunteers are usually welcomed and encouraged at all levels at all schools, both public and private.

C. Extracurricular Activities

A well-rounded education requires that students learn their academic subjects as well as develop socialization skills and learn nonacademic skills. Belonging to a group can be a rewarding connection with peers and a good way to develop self-confidence. These are the reasons that schools, public and private, provide numerous extracurricular activities from which their students can choose to participate. At each level of education the opportunities and choices increase. For example at the elementary school level, all students are introduced to art, music, drama and a variety of athletic experiences. At the middle school level students have required courses in some of the above areas but are provided opportunity to participate in after school activities of their choice. For example, competitive football, soccer, swimming, track, lacrosse, basketball etc. In addition many clubs allow students to pursue other interests, for example, computers, drama, fine arts, forensics, jazz band, photography, yearbook and student council. Almost universally, each activity or club is sponsored by adults, using specialized instruction, who demonstrate a working knowledge of the activity and a desire to teach children. An even greater variety of extracurricular experiences are available at the high school level, many of which help students identify strengths, talents and interests which may direct them to future colleges, vocations or avocations.

D. Facilities

All schools maintain facilities other than classrooms which enhance or support their educational mission.

Libraries and Media Centers

Libraries are universally available and are accessible to students throughout the day and often after hours. Libraries often contain a “media center” which maintains and makes available other types of educational materials including computers and software, audio and video tapes, slides, sound sequences, projectors and recorders of various types for use individually or in groups. The wide availability of computers and access to the internet has provided almost unlimited opportunities for students and teachers to obtain information that can enhance and facilitate learning.

Fitness Facilities/Gymnasium

Fitness facilities or ‘gyms’ as they are typically referred to, are supplied by almost all schools in the United States. Gyms often consist of a large indoor court with various sports equipment. They are open during lunch hours and for specific hours before and after school for athletes or students who wish to exercise. Many gyms will be accompanied by a weight room and a locker room with a shower. Students are sometimes expected to use these communal showers following Physical Education classes or general use of the gym’s facilities.

BANKING

Banks and other financial institutions, such as, credit unions, and savings and loan Associations offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- credit cards
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

Banks in the United States are insured by the Federal Government for deposits up to \$250,000 per depositor per bank. The bank or credit union will display the letters FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) as proof.

Checking and Savings Accounts

To open a checking or savings account you will need the following information:

- Two forms of picture identification including but not limited to your passport, driver's license, or work ID.
- Social security number. If you have not yet received your social security number, the bank can open an account with a W8 Temporary Tax ID form (available at the bank). You will need to call the bank with your social security number once it arrives in the mail.
- Local mailing address. You may use your office address as your mailing address, but be prepared to call your bank branch as soon as you have your permanent address.
- Letter of Employment
- Cash for the initial deposit can range from \$25-\$150 dollars.

Checks

More businesses and banks are offering online or automatic bill paying options. However, you may still need to pay some bills by mail. **NEVER SEND CASH!** You will want to order at least the minimum quantity of checks. This will cost a set fee that the bank will charge you. The checks will be pre-printed with your name, address, telephone number and account number and will be mailed to your home.

ATM or Debit Card

The most popular way of obtaining cash is by using an ATM (Automated Teller Machine) card, also referred to as a debit card. ATM's are located in most banks, malls, airports, grocery stores, and in many other public places. You will be given a PIN (Personal Identification Number) for using your card. It is

important that you memorize this number and not keep written record of it with your card in order to protect your account. Most ATM's will take all cards, but many banks will charge a service fee for using another bank's ATM. Through the ATM you may deposit, transfer, and withdraw funds. There will usually be a limit to the amount of money you can withdraw in any 24-hour period.

Credit Cards

For many international transferees, the lack of a US credit history can be a challenge. In most cases, you will not be approved for a US credit card initially. One suggestion to assist in building your US credit history is to open a **secured credit card**. With approval from the bank, you can put a certain amount of money in a savings account that will remain in the account. The secured credit card would have a credit limit equal to the amount deposited in the savings account. You will need to use your secured credit card and make the minimum monthly payments; you may also pay in full the amount due. After 9 months or so, if the bank sees that you have a good payment record, they may approve you for a regular credit card.

Security

Always pay attention to the other people around you at an ATM. Do not use the machine if you are suspicious of someone's behavior. It is safer to find another ATM or to come back later. Do not put your PIN number in with anyone close enough to see it.

Credit card theft is another increasing problem. In order to protect your card from being abused, never give your credit card or credit card number to a service provider you have not called. Another precaution is to destroy or shred copies of receipts and bills. Criminals will not hesitate to dig through the trash to find a copy of your credit card number.

Major US Banks

Below is a list of links to some of the larger US banks. Not every bank is represented in all US locations; in some cases you may find that the local bank is a better option for you than some of the larger banks. Your IOR DS Consultant can help you in selecting a bank by sharing the various options available locally as well as the products they offer to support expatriates.

- [Bank Of America](#)
- [TD Bank](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [CHASE](#)
- [Wells Fargo](#)
- [HSBC](#)

By Car

The car is omnipresent in Orlando and is a very easy and convenient (if congested) way to get to your destination. Orlando is a sprawling city with most attractions lying far to the south of downtown and into adjacent cities like Kissimmee and Lake Buena Vista (this section includes those areas). The roads are all wide and easy to drive on with all major attractions well signed, but traffic jams around downtown are common in the afternoons, and around the touristy areas on Friday nights and all day Saturday.

Orlando ranks 8th in the nation in terms of traffic congestion, and there are numerous ongoing construction projects on area expressways (all aimed at alleviating this, but only causing congestion in the meanwhile). Traffic information is available from new Dynamic Message Signs, most local radio stations, and also by calling 511 (a free, automated service which provides current traffic info collected from hundreds of traffic cameras as well as police reports.)

Aggressive drivers are abundant in the Greater Orlando area not only on major highways but also on surface streets in the downtown district. Speed limits are for the most part ignored in and around the city, even though on I-4 the speed limit is only 50 mph (80 km/h) in the downtown area and ranges between 55 and 65 mph (90-105 km/h) near the attractions, it is not uncommon to be tailgated if you travel less than 80 mph (129 km/h) in the left lane. If you are unfamiliar with the area, it is much easier and safer to drive in the far right lane, as road signs will direct.

Caution: Started in the early 2000s, open road tolling is used along Orlando's toll roads. A driver with a [Sun Pass](#) or E-Pass transponder and a prepaid account continues straight along the road at the speed limit, with the toll accounted for electronically; drivers paying cash must follow signage that diverts them to toll booths constructed off the right of the highway. Drivers who do not have transponders and continue going straight past the toll booth are photographed and ticketed.

By Bus

Orlando's public transportation is the LYNX bus service. Approximately 60 routes serve the metro Orlando area and costs \$2 per ride (transfers included) except for the free [Lymmo](#) bus service downtown.

Check out [GO LYNX](#) for more information:

By Trolley

The [I-Ride Trolley](#), +1 407-248-9590, primarily serves tourists in the attractions area, operating daily from 8am to 10:30pm. While the service is advertised as a trolley, the trolleys are in fact modified buses traveling in traffic with many stops, which makes for a slow ride. There are 85 stops along the main (Red) route on International Drive and 22 stops on the (Green) route that serves less congested Universal Blvd.

However, because of the very limited route coverage of I-Ride — it goes nowhere near Disney -- the better choice for many visitors is to use LYNX buses (e.g., bus 8, 42, 50, or 111).

By Taxi

Orlando is visited by millions of tourists each year and there are dozens of taxi companies that are operational in the region. It will not be a problem to find transportation from The Orlando Airport to your hotel or from the hotel to a theme park, restaurant or mall. Unfortunately, some of those companies do not have any license or insurance, and operate illegally.

By Sun Rail

The [Sun Rail](#) is a full service rail line that has 12 stations starting in DeBary, FL and heads south ending in Orlando, Florida. This is an affordable, safe, and easy way to get around central Florida. The Sun Rail is equipped with restroom facilities, free Wifi, power outlets, and bicycle accommodations.

Map Websites

- [Google Maps](#)
- [Expedia](#)

AAA Travel Protection

[AAA](#) is a membership organization that offers benefits such as roadside service and towing, discounts on car products and services, maps, reference materials, etc.

Call 1-800-352-5382 for additional information and cost

Social Security and Tax ID Information

Social Security Procedures

[United States Social Security Administration](http://www.ssa.gov)

1-800-772-1213

Upon arrival in the United States, employees holding work visas will be required to apply, in person, for a Social Security number. The Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) can be used by anyone who has never been issued a card, needs a replacement card or has changed his or her name. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process and can answer any questions you might have.

THIS SERVICE IS FREE.

To get an original number and card, you'll need to complete an Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5) <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf> , and show the following documents IN PERSON at the local social security office.

- Passport
- I-94 obtained from www.cbp.gov/I94 web site
- Work Visa
- Any other documents received by US Immigration

If all of your information is confirmed, your Social Security card will arrive in the mail in approximately 2-4 weeks. Several days after you have successfully completed the application process, you may take your identification with your receipt, back to the Social Security office to inquire about your Social Security number before you receive your card.

L-2 Visa Employment Opportunity Law Changes

The L-2 visa allows the dependent spouse and minor, unmarried children of qualified L-1 visa holders to enter into the U.S.

Changes took place on July 27, 2006 that apply to spouses of L-1 Visa holders in the US on an L2 Visa. Prior to that date, spouses on L-2 Visas were not permitted to obtain a social security card and were denied the right to be employed in the US. The law change now permits L-2 Visa holders (spouses only, not dependent children) to work on a full-time basis in the U.S. with proper employment authorization from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The L-2 Visa holder must apply for a social security card in addition to applying for an Employment Authorization Document before they can begin employment.

Social Security Numbers

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has issued guidelines, which permit E-1, E-2, and L-2 spouses to obtain Social Security Numbers without having to first obtain employment.

Authorization Documents (EADs) from the CIS. They must show proof that that their spouse is in E-1, E-2 or L-1 status, and present an original marriage certificate, in the native language. However, before they are authorized to work, they must obtain an EAD. [The new SSA guidelines are online here.](#)

Employment Authorization Document (EAD): L-2 Visa holders can apply for this document utilizing USCIS Form 1-765, Application for Employment Authorization. They must provide the following forms of identification: valid passport, 1-94 Arrival-Departure Document, Marriage Certificate from home country, two identical, and color photographs taken within 30 days of application. Currently, the process from application to EAD issue takes 3 to 4 months. The L2 Visa holder may also engage in full-time study in the US. A dependent child still may not apply for an EAD card except in cases of severe hardship. Local offices are open Monday thru Friday 9am to 4pm.

****Notice**** Social Security offices are closed on all US Federal holidays.

Obtaining a Driver's License/State ID Card

In the US, a driver's license or ID card is issued by each individual state and not by the federal government. Since there is no national identity card in the USA, and many Americans do not have a passport or carry around a birth certificate, a driver's license issued by your state is often the only official piece of identification for many citizens. Since 9/11, you will need to show a valid driver's license or State ID card to enter many big office buildings.

For information on how to obtain a driver's license, see:

[The website of Florida's DMV.](#)

[General Information about driver's licenses](#)

[Special information for drivers from other nations](#)

[DMV Locations](#)

Your Destination Services Consultant will assist you with the proper procedure.

TV, Cable, Telephone, and Internet

There are three main service providers in Orlando for TV cable, landline telephone, and internet. They all offer combination packages. They are in stiff competition with each other, so special offers change monthly, sometimes even weekly.

- [Brighthouse](#) is the main provider in Central Florida and has 75% of the market share.
- [Xfinity](#)
- [Cox Communications](#)
- [AT&T U-verse](#)

Mobile Phones

There are four major wireless carriers in the US.

- [AT&T Wireless](#)
- [Verizon Wireless](#)
- [Sprint](#)
- [T-Mobile](#)

Ten digit dialing is in effect in the Orlando area. All calls from or within the area, even local calls, require dialing the area code. There are some public pay phones scattered around the city, but they are becoming increasingly rare with the predominance of cell phones. It is not safe to assume you will be able to find a pay phone at any given time.

Computers, Electronics, Cameras

- [Best Buy](#) is a national chain: Apart from sales, their [Geek Squad](#) repairs PC computers.
- [Apple Stores](#) are an alternative to PCs. Mac Books, iPods, and iPhones can be bought here.

Housewares and Furniture

- [Bed Bath & Beyond](#)
- [Cort](#)
- [Ikea](#)
- [Home Depot](#)
- [Crate and Barrel](#)
- [Furniture Envy](#)
- [Pottery Barn](#)
- [Williams-Sonoma](#)
- [Rooms to Go](#)
- [The Container Store](#)

Food Shopping

Orlando's biggest grocery chain is [Publix](#), and you'll find them in almost all the neighborhoods. Other options consist of [Whole Foods](#), [Home Grown Coop](#), and many others.

A wide variety of restaurants can be found in [CityWalk](#) at Universal Orlando. See cost for parking [here](#). You can also find many restaurants in [Downtown Disney](#), including Rainforest Cafe, Planet Hollywood, and Wolfgang Puck Cafe.

Orlando also has a massive [Food Truck](#) culture which many locals frequent. They are often used not only as a dining experience for meet-ups and social purposes as well.

RECREATION

Gardens & Parks

- [Arboretum](#)

University of Central Florida, 4000 Central Florida Blvd
Its cultivated areas currently include a Conservatory Compound, a Bromeliad Sanctuary, Cycad Garden, Fern Garden, Palm Collection, Rose Garden, Swamp Habitat, and Wetland Plants Display. It is also free.

- [Harry P. Leu Gardens](#)

1920 N Forest Ave
Beautiful landscaped gardens and lakes set in nearly 50 acres of land, featuring flora gathered from around the globe since 1936, including the largest rose garden in Florida and America's largest camellia collection outside of California. Admission is \$7 (free Mondays, 9AM-noon).

- [Bok Tower Gardens](#)

1151 Tower Blvd, Lake Wales
The Bok Sanctuary features acres of intricately landscaped gardens filled with an exotic array of flowers and trees. Admission is \$10.



Photo courtesy of [Exploring Orlando](#)

Museums

- [Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art](#) — Houses the world's most comprehensive collection of the works of Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933) including Tiffany art glass, leaded-glass windows, lamps, jewelry, pottery, paintings, and the chapel interior he designed for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

- [Cornell Fine Arts Museum](#)

1000 Holt Ave, Winter Park
This museum features items from Cornell's renowned permanent collection.

- [The Orlando Museum of Art](#)

Have ongoing exhibitions of American portraits and landscapes, American impressionist works, and art of the ancient Americas.

- [Ripley's Believe It or Not! Orlando Odditorium](#)

8201 International Dr
Located in a building artfully constructed to appear as if it were collapsing to one side. Visitors can explore bizarre artifacts, strange collections, weird art/hobbies (for example, check out the 3/4-scale model of a 1907 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost automobile made entirely of matchsticks and glue), and interactive exhibits in sixteen odd galleries.

Activities

- [Revolution: The Off Road Experience](#). Offers 4-wheeling, 4x4, dune bugging and more
- [Enzian Theater](#). A cinema for the indie/alternative crowd. The theater also offers food and alcoholic beverages.
- [Discovery Cove](#). A 30-acre tropical retreat with beaches, snorkeling and relaxation.
- [Universal Orlando Resort](#) includes two theme parks, three hotels and a large shopping district. SeaWorld Orlando is a marine theme park featuring Kraken, the biggest rollercoaster in the Orlando area, as well as Believe, the new Shamu adventure. About 35 minutes southwest of downtown Orlando is Walt Disney World. Comprising four theme parks, two water parks, dozens of hotels, two shopping and dining districts, five golf courses, and much more, it is the largest privately managed tourist destination on the planet.
- [Walt Disney World](#): the acclaimed gold standard of theme parks on the planet.
- [Universal Studios Orlando](#): a theme park owned largely by NBCUniversal
- [SeaWorld Adventure Park Orlando](#) is a more laid-back alternative to Disney and Universal, including beautifully landscaped 200-acre marine theme park featuring fantastic shows, thrilling rides, and fun exhibits. Variety of discounts may be available by purchasing tickets online.
- [Aquatica](#), a water park by Sea World.
- [Holy Land](#), is a biblical-themed park is designed to look like Jerusalem. Discount on tickets purchased online.
- [Gatorland](#) is a small alligator and reptile themed park.
- [Wet 'N Wild](#) is another water park.
- [Basilica of Mary, Queen of the Universe](#) is an extravagant Catholic church which has become a tourist attraction in itself, thanks in part to the millions of Catholics from around the world who visit it and the rest of Orlando every year.
- [Florida EcoSafaris at Forever Florida \(Zipline Safari\)](#). Reservations required. Journey deep into Forever Florida, a 4700 acre eco-ranch and wildlife conservation area, preserved just as nature intended. This beautiful site boasts 9 distinct Florida ecosystems and an endless array of natural flora and fauna including alligators, black bears, nearly two hundred species of birds and the endangered Florida panther. Choose your own fully-guided adventure: Coach Safari, Horseback Safari, or soar through the treetops on the Zipline Safari.
- [Orlando Watersports Complex](#) is a cable park for water sports. Offers lessons and two separate cable systems, a beginner and an advanced. A perfect way to experience Orlando's reputation as the water sport capital of the world



Photo courtesy of [iClarified](#)

Sports

- [Orlando Magic](#) (NBA Basketball)
- [Orlando Predators](#) are an Arena Football League team based in Orlando.
- [Orlando City Soccer](#)
- [Daytona International Speedway](#)

Volunteer Opportunities

- [Volunteer Match](#)
- [United Way](#)

Parent & Children Resources

- [Mom's Clubs](#) - social groups offering events and outings with mothers and their young children.

Smart Phone Apps for Travel:

- [Uber](#) : Similar to a taxi service but all web based. Payment also handled online, do not pay or tip driver directly. Uber driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS.
- [Lyft](#) : Wherever you're headed, count on Lyft for rides in minutes. The Lyft app matches you with local drivers at the tap of a button. Just request and go.
- [Apple Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Map Quest](#) : Map by direction
- [Waze](#) : Community based traffic & navigation with alternate route suggestions
- [CityMaps2Go](#) : The #1 travel app lets you discover exciting new places. Beautiful photos and insider tips at the touch of a button. You will receive stories about places you like and can instantly save and find them on your maps and in your lists.

Smart Phone Apps for Communication:

- [WhatsApp](#) : Free local & international Real Time messaging
- [Line](#) : Exchange free instant messages with friends whenever and wherever with one-on-one and group chats. LINE is available on all smartphone devices (iPhone, Android, Windows Phone, Blackberry, Nokia) and even on your PC.
- [Viber](#) : Free text, calling, photo messages and location-sharing with Viber users. No registration, alias or invitations required. Instantly integrates with your own contact list. Best-quality mobile calls using 3G or Wi-Fi.
- [Skype](#) : Stay in touch with your family and friends for free on Skype. Download Skype today to chat and call on desktop and mobile.

Smart Phone Apps for Local Information/Reviews:

- [Angie's List](#) : Referrals for doctor, dentist, child care, maid, mechanic, painter, plumber, etc.
- [Yelp!](#) : Find local businesses, restaurants, bars, clubs, events, etc. with map, lists, and reviews
- [Next Door](#) : Neighbors share community events, items for sale, recommendations for babysitters, doctors and handymen, crime reports, ideas about how to improve their neighborhood and more.
- [Meet Ups](#) : Meetups are neighbors getting together to learn something, do something or share something. Cultural groups advertise gatherings here as well.

Smart Phone Apps for Weather:

- [Weather Channel](#) : National and international time, temperature & weather
- [Tornado](#) : Set up tornado alerts & siren

U.S. IDIOMS

Idioms are words, phrases, or expressions that are not taken literally- they have meaning beyond a literal translation of the words. Idioms are generally used in casual, familiar conversation but can also come up in certain business settings. Here are some examples of commonly used American English idioms

- | | |
|--|---|
| better off - in a more fortunate position | (to) lose one's touch - to no longer be able to do something well |
| Big deal! - So what? That doesn't really matter. | made of money - very rich |
| (to) blow things out of proportion - to exaggerate; to make more of something than one should | needless to say - obviously |
| (to) call it a night - to stop an activity for the rest of the night | piece of cake - very easy |
| dime a dozen - so plentiful as to be nothing special; common | (to) pitch in - to help |
| (to) do the trick - to achieve the desired results | (to) pull an all-nighter - to stay up all night to do work |
| (to) give someone the cold shoulder - to ignore someone on purpose; to snub someone | rule of thumb - a useful principle |
| (to) get the ball rolling - to get started | (as) sharp as a tack - very intelligent |
| (to) go back to the drawing board - to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning | (to) sit tight - to wait patiently |
| happy camper [slang] - a happy person; a satisfied participant | (to) stab someone in the back - to betray someone |
| (to) have a heart of gold - to be very kind and giving | (to) tell someone off - to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks |
| (to be) head over heels in love - very much in love | When pigs fly! [slang] - never |
| (to) hit the nail on the head - to be right | (to) twist someone's arm - to persuade someone; to convince someone |
| (to) learn the ropes - to learn the basics | (to be) up in the air - not yet determined; uncertain |

Many common American idioms come from sports, here are some examples:

strike out- to fail or to do poorly at something (*baseball*)

(to) call the shots- to make the decisions; to be in charge (*basketball*)

ballpark- a guess or an estimate (*baseball*)

down and out- lacking money or prospects; penniless or destitute (*boxing*)

down to the wire- to the very end or last minute (*horse racing*)

drop the ball- to make an error, to miss an opportunity (*football, baseball, rugby*)

hands down- with great ease; unconditionally; often (and originally) in the phrase “to win hands down” (*horse racing*)

(to) have someone in your corner- to have the support or help of someone (*boxing*)

(to) hit it out of the park; home run- to be wildly successful, to do a great job (*baseball*)



To learn even more idioms, visit the following links:

- [Everyday American English Idioms](#) - with example sentences.
- [Useful Idioms for Lower-Intermediate to Advanced Students \(Teacher's Resource\)](#)
- [Idiom Site A-Z](#)
- [Sports Idioms](#)
- [English Language Learning: American English Idioms](#)

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be confusing as there are national (federal) holidays, bank holidays, state holidays. Verify those in your area with Human Resources at your place of business, especially before planning vacations or weekend get-aways!

[Federal Holiday list](#)

[Florida Holidays](#)

The following are legal holidays and need to be treated as such by employers:

- New Year's Day January 1*
- Martin Luther King Day Third Monday in January
- Memorial Day Last Monday in May
- Independence Day July 4*
- Labor Day First Monday in September
- Columbus Day Second Monday in October
- Veterans' Day November 11*
- Thanksgiving Day Fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day December 25*

*If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the day following is observed as the legal holiday.