

Orlando beyond the theme parks

FLORIDA

10 fun things you can do in the city, from arts to wildlife

Mark Stachiew
For Metro Canada

Many Canadians never venture beyond the walls of Orlando's famous theme parks, but those who do will discover an exciting range of experiences in the Florida city that just might surprise them.

1 Ride the Orlando Eye

It only opened last year, but this gigantic Ferris wheel has become an instant Orlando icon. Take a sunset ride on this engineering wonder and marvel at the panoramic views below.

2 Look for gators

You don't have to go all the way to

the Everglades to see alligators. Just 30 minutes from town, you can take an airboat tour that will let you see gators and other wildlife in their natural habitat.

3 Ride an Amphicar

At the Boathouse Restaurant in Disney Springs, a sprawling shopping, dining and entertainment district, you can take a one-of-a-kind tour of the nearby lake in an Amphicar, a 1960s-era amphibious car of which only a few hundred remain in the world.

4 Enjoy fine dining

Foodies love Orlando's restaurant scene. It attracts celebrity chefs from around the world and is home to some local chefs who are making names for themselves. Whether you prefer Southern barbecue, Asian fusion or farm-to-fork, just about any type of cuisine you can think of can be found here.



The Orlando Eye has become an instant icon of the city. HANDOUT

5 Go up in a hot-air balloon

The Orlando Eye is not the only way to get a bird's-eye view of the sprawling city and the area around it. Visitors can experience a sunrise ride in a hot-air balloon that transports them above the ground at a leisurely pace.



6 See the fishes

SEA LIFE Aquarium is the perfect place to bring the kids on a rainy day or on those days that it's so hot that you want to do something inside. This colourful aquarium is a lot of fun and children won't even notice that it's educational.

7 Get close to celebrities

Madame Tussaud's Wax Mu-

seum lets you get up close to their celebrity figures. You'll be amazed at their resemblance to the real thing and may even be surprised at just how tall (or short) some of them are. Selfies are encouraged!

8 Peek into the backyards of the rich

For a century, the swanky Or-

lando neighbourhood of Winter Garden was the winter home to many rich, northern industrialists. Their stately waterfront homes are still favoured by the rich and famous and ordinary folks can get a peek by taking a boat tour that passes by their properties.

9 Go to a show

The newly opened Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts is a stunning, state-of-the-art concert venue in downtown Orlando that hosts live music, Broadway musicals, theatre, comedy and much more. Check their schedule to see what's playing when you are in town.

10 Admire some Tiffany glass

The glass masterpieces of Louis Tiffany are preserved at the Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art in Winter Park. It is the most important collection of this art nouveau master best known for his colourful lamps.

The writer was a guest of Visit Orlando, which did not review nor approve the story.

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