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CELEBRATING YOUR VACATION LIFESTYLE



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With the explosion of attractions that have grown up around the theme parks, it's probably hard for many of you to picture the many smaller ones that characterized Orlando for decades.

However, if you've been an owner with us for a good portion of our over 30 years here in Central Florida, I'm sure you can think back to your favorites. Do you remember Circus World? Boardwalk and Baseball? King Henry's Feast? Now all long gone, it's more about remembering the fun you had visiting these offbeat attractions.

For my wife and kids, when school got out it was time to hit the road as soon as we could for a vacation. We visited places like these or little family-owned attractions that included petting zoos, go-karts and other charming attractions. I remember them fondly and they are all great memories.

In this issue, we take a look at a few of those "off-the-beaten-path" attractions found near our family of resorts. These have stood the test of time and continue to be a great value for family fun. Plus, if you have yet to experience some of our newer resorts, I highly recommend you take a look. I'm sure you'll enjoy these new destinations.

It all starts here in Orlando with a visit to Gatorland. After all, who could resist seeing their "Jumparoo" show or a 15-footer up-close again? This renowned favorite goes back decades before Disney's arrival in Central Florida and is still great fun. We also highlight a few updates here on property I'm sure you'll enjoy, plus touch on summer events and more.

Welcome to another great summer! Drop by for a visit soon.

Sincerely,



Don Harrill
CEO



Sink Your Teeth into GATORLAND

An off-the-beaten-path Orlando original

There wasn't always a land of witchcraft and wizardry, a showcase of aquatic creatures or even the castle of a storybook princess in Orlando. And you don't have to tie your next Orange Lake Resort vacation to the well-known theme parks that dominate the area's headlines. For a fun day of wildlife and wonder that's off the beaten path, take a bite out of **Gatorland**®—a true Florida original that's one of a kind.

1 | Thrilling theater

You'll be on the edge of your seat as you watch the hair-raising stunts of the wranglers in the *Gator Wrestlin' Show* or the amazing alligator acrobatics in the *Gator Jumparoo Show*.



No scaling back

Opened as a roadside attraction in 1949, Gatorland is a toothy, low-tech triumph of Americana that still delights visitors from around the world after more than six decades. There's no denying its Old Florida charm, but this family-friendly park continues to add exciting new animals and exhibits to its 110 acres.

For example, Gatorland recently announced the acquisition of more than 70 new animals from Everglades Wonder Gardens, another family-owned Florida park that is now closed. New residents from the Bonita Springs animal sanctuary feature giant alligators (including the 14-foot-plus-long "Bonecrusher") and American crocodiles, as well as raccoons, bobcats, pythons, boa constrictors, rattlesnakes and white-tailed deer.

Fun times ten

Perfect for families and guests of all ages, Gatorland offers a host of ways to proceed through the park. You can spend a leisurely day simply wandering the grounds and enjoying the awe-inspiring views of scales, teeth and tails. Regularly scheduled shows full of humor and thrills are perfect for breaking up the day.

And for those with a real taste for adventure, special experiences can have you feeding live alligators, zipping through the treetops over crocodiles and more. Many of these exclusive activities require advance reservations and additional fees, so be sure to visit gatorland.com to help you plan.

In the meantime, sink your teeth into this sampling that will help prepare you for a powerful park visit. Whether you spend a morning, an afternoon or a whole day, you're sure to find **plenty of fun among these 10 choices** (just remember that some require more bravery than others!).



2 | Express Experience

Hop aboard the *Gatorland Express* for a relaxing, old-fashioned train ride through the park, where you'll see a variety of animals from an entirely different point of view.

3 | Gators & Crocs

Take your time admiring the thousands of larger-than-life, swampy specimens throughout the park. And don't miss the world's largest collection of giant white alligators.

4 | Seeing red

Night Shine is a thrilling after-hours event that lets you tempt hungry gators with hot dogs and use a flashlight to see hundreds of their red, glowing eyes coming toward you. (Additional fee and reservations required.)

5 | Feeding frenzy

For an up-close view to remember, venture into the *Alligator Breeding Marsh*. You'll come within a few feet of giant alligators, give them a snack and pose for pictures. (Additional fee and reservations required.)



6 | Feathers & fur

From beautiful parrots and other exotic birds to a full-fledged petting zoo with docile, adorable animals waiting to be appreciated, it's clear Gatorland isn't just about reptiles.

7 | Crossing the line

Clip onto the *Screamin' Gator Zip Line* and soar through the air, directly over many of the park's largest and most intimidating animals—including Cuban and Nile crocodiles. *(Additional fee and reservations required.)*



8 | Swamp stroll

Enjoy a little quiet time along with plenty of scenic views and photo opportunities when you leave the main attractions and explore the paths and bridges of the *Swamp Walk*.



Gatorland Show at Orange Lake Resort

Even if visiting Gatorland isn't in your vacation plans, you can still get a toothy taste of it at the resort. Every Wednesday at 10 a.m., park professionals stop by *Swampy's Adventure Club* to inform, entertain and even let you hold a live alligator. So be sure to bring your camera! *(Additional fee required.)*



9 | Let's get wet

Summers in Florida can get pretty hot (surprise!), but luckily, Gatorland has the perfect place for your kids to cool off: the waterlogged wonderland of *Gator Gully Splash Park*.

10 | Super souvenirs

Don't end your visit without browsing the award-winning gift shop, where the walls highlight the park's past and present-day presents include gator heads, t-shirts, toys and more.

With a unique blend of history, thrills and genuine Old Florida charm, Gatorland is the perfect way to bring a different flavor to your vacation. Whether it's your first park adventure or you need a refresher on all the new additions, you're sure to find fun for the whole family. Next time you visit Orange Lake Resort, consider taking a break from the major theme parks and going off the beaten path to a real Orlando original—you might get a scare or two, but you won't be sorry. ■



Image courtesy Wheels of Yesteryear

From the Novel to the Nostalgic

Explore lesser-known sights in other locales

If you get the chance to visit our other resorts, you'll have no trouble finding popular, time-honored attractions and activities. From Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the shores of Myrtle Beach to the world-famous Las Vegas Strip and more, there are plenty of easy choices.

But just like in Orlando, sometimes the fun lies in finding those less-publicized sights—especially during the crowded summer season. It would be impossible to highlight them all in one place, but here is a small sampling of what you might discover once you start looking.

Classic cars

Take a step back in time at [Wheels of Yesteryear](#), a museum that showcases over 50 classic American-made automobiles. Open seven days a week, the museum is conveniently located just a short drive from South Beach Resort. In addition to vintage cars, the museum also has a gift shop featuring die cast collectibles, t-shirts, tin signs and nostalgic souvenirs. It's a memorable experience for classic car fans or curious traveling families.

Shore thing

You'd expect to find beaches in Myrtle Beach and Panama City Beach—after all, the word is right in their names. But for a different experience this summer, try visiting [Lake Geneva Beach](#), near Lake Geneva Resort right in the heart of Wisconsin. Open daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day, this pleasant stretch of sand is perfect for visiting families. So bring a snack, grab some sun and enjoy the surf.



Above: Rare diving helmets at the Man in the Sea Museum. Courtesy Man in the Sea Museum

MAN IN THE SEA MUSEUM

Dive down

If you're visiting Panama City Beach Resort or Bay Point Resort near the Gulf Coast of Florida, consider a stop at the [Man in the Sea Museum](#). Its large collection of rare diving equipment highlights past successes in developing ways to live in underwater habitats for weeks at a time, including the famous SEALAB-1 used by the United States Navy. This unique attraction is open Wednesday – Saturday, so plan accordingly.

Full tilt

Imagine a 10,000-square-foot museum where you can actually play with every item on display. Slide into the [Pinball Hall of Fame](#) just minutes from Desert Club Resort in Las Vegas, and that's just what you'll find. This unique, not-for-profit attraction is filled with classic pinball machines from the 1950s through the 1990s. It stays open late into the evening, so give the slot machines a rest, stop in and have fun.

Florida frontier

Head south from Sunset Cove Resort through Everglades City, and in less than an hour you'll come to a unique place called the [Historic Smallwood Store](#) on Chokoloskee Island. It was open as a trading post from 1906 to 1982 and when it closed, 90% of the original goods remained in the store. It has since reopened as a museum, so visitors can learn the history of the pioneers of southwest Florida.



Courtesy Rovio Entertainment



Galveston Beach Resort

Space out

You know the Kennedy Space Center is less than an hour from Orange Lake Resort in Orlando, but did you know that [Space Center Houston](#) is less than an hour from our new Galveston Beach Resort? Experience the adventure and history of NASA from a different perspective this summer—and have fun trying out the first attraction in the United States based on the smartphone game Angry Birds.

A real estate

Set off for a leisurely drive through the Vermont countryside from Ascutney Mountain Resort, and in less than an hour and a half you could be eyeing the grandeur of [Wilson Castle](#). The 32-room architectural masterpiece was built in the middle of the 19th century to stand as a monument to the past. In addition to hosting weddings and private events, this majestic castle estate offers guided daily tours.



An apple a day

Located just over half an hour from Smoky Mountain Resort in the quaint town of Cosby, Tennessee, [Carver's Orchard & Apple House Restaurant](#) is a rustic, family-owned retreat that offers tours and sells fresh apples, peaches, grapes, honey, apple butter, apple cider and hot fried apple pies. And whatever time of day you visit, you can stay for a delicious meal because the restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.





Tiki Express



Above: Marketplace Fudge.

Fresh Resort Offerings Add Fun and Flavor

There's always room for new experiences, especially when you're working with over 1,450 acres. Get ready for fresh new flavors during your next visit to Orange Lake Resort, starting with **Marketplace Fudge**. This sweet addition is being made by hand in the *Marketplace* in the West Village and is already a big hit. With almost 20 different varieties to choose from, you can tempt yourself with new tastes every day of your trip.

Another rollout to watch for is the *Tiki Express*, a new mobile bar that offers frozen cocktails, frosty smoothies and other tasty treats. Guests love its selection of alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks. Along with regular stops at each pool area and outside the *West Village Clubhouse*, you might even see the *Tiki Express* rolling with the FUN Team for impromptu activities.

Finally, the *River Island Fun Zone* was recently updated to make it more enjoyable for kids and parents alike. In addition to a refreshed version of The HIPPO™ (the world's largest inflatable waterslide) and new playground equipment, picnic tables and water misters have been added for greater comfort, especially during the warm summer months.



Above: The HIPPO.



Above: Roseate spoonbill.

Get Back to Nature with Environmental Explorers

This issue is all about going off the beaten path, but you don't even have to leave Orange Lake Resort to do it. Thanks to the resort's **Environmental Explorers** program, you and your family can experience the wonder of natural Florida through guided walking tours. These nature walks can cover everything from animal tracks and insects to beneficial plants, birdwatching and much more.

Conducted by wildlife experts and longtime resort employees Shirley and Sheila Bolin, the comprehensive tours generally last two hours, but shorter sessions covering specific topics are also available. In addition to pointing out interesting plants and animals, they'll also teach you about the history of the area and other fun facts, as well as providing helpful safety tips.

For more information during your next visit, refer to your copy of *Vacation News* or call ext. 2292.



Top: Environmental Explorers nature walk. Above: River otter.

New Cartoon World Comes to Legoland® Florida

If your children or grandchildren haven't been to the new **Legoland Florida** yet, this summer may be the perfect opportunity. The largest Legoland park in the world is adding a major expansion to go hand-in-hand with the new product line launch of Lego® Legends of Chima™. Both are based on the popular show *The World of Chima*, presented by Cartoon Network™.

This elaborate new park land will include an interactive water ride experience called the Quest for CHI, which will take children and families on a journey in search of a mystical energy source. Guests can also meet the cartoon characters in person, try their hand at the action-packed Speedorz™ Arena, enjoy a brand-new 4D movie and more.



Laval, star of Legends of Chima
Courtesy Legoland Florida

A Trip Around Our Resorts



In case the off-the-beaten-path attractions weren't enough to whet your appetite for other resort locations, there are always special summer events to enjoy. In Panama City Beach, Florida, **Pier Park** is offering the free weekly **Summer Concert Series** each Sunday from June 2 – August 4 with country, bluegrass, 80s, funk, jazz and more. Down the coast near Galveston, Texas, **East Beach** (the largest in the state) features many live music acts, including major outdoor concerts regularly through August.

Meanwhile in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, the Celebrity Square nightclub district at **Broadway at the Beach** features **Summer Party in the Street** with free live bands and DJs every Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m. through September 1. And Gatlinburg, Tennessee brings back the annual **Smoky Mountain Tunes & Tales Fest** April 5 – August 10 with live costumed street performers every Friday and Saturday night.

Up in Vermont, don't miss the **Harpoon Championships of New England Barbecue** at the Windsor microbrewery. Teams from all over the region compete July 27–28 to see who makes the best barbecue. And over in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, other tasty treats and entertainment will be waiting at the 164-year-old **Walworth County Fair** August 28 – September 7.

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Gatlinburg, TN

(865) 908-1700

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(262) 248-8811

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