Your Theme Park Guide

Presented by

ELITE EXPLORERS

WHERE ADVENTURES BECOME REALITY

GATEWAY TRAVEL

PARTNER

A checklist from booking to your last park day

Walt Disney World • Universal Orlando • SeaWorld Orlando



Start planning and protect your trip

A little planning leaves more time to enjoy your vacation. Use this checklist to organize tickets, reservations, transportation and park days. Elite Explorers can help you match the choices to your family, budget and pace.

This guide focuses on Orlando parks. Suggested timelines are planning recommendations; your booking terms and the parks' current rules control actual deadlines. Other destinations, including Disneyland in California, may have different requirements. Rules checked October 5, 2026.

As soon as you book

- ☐ Verify traveler names, travel dates, hotel, ticket types and confirmation numbers. Record deposit, final payment and cancellation deadlines; tickets and upgrades may have different refund rules.
- ☐ Tell us your must-do rides, characters, shows and meals. Share children's ages and heights, walking tolerance, accessibility needs and dietary concerns so we can plan realistically.
- ☐ Create the required park accounts and download the official apps. Link tickets and hotel reservations when supported. At Disney World, connect your travel party through Family & Friends.

Travel insurance at your first trip payment

- ☐ Review coverage immediately after your first payment. Ask about time-sensitive purchase windows for a pre-existing condition exclusion waiver or optional Cancel For Any Reason coverage. Eligibility varies by policy and state. [7–8]
- ☐ Compare covered cancellation reasons, interruption, travel delay, baggage, emergency medical care and evacuation. Include pre-trip and post-trip stays and ask how to add later purchases.
- ☐ Read limits and exclusions. Do not assume rain, a ride closure or a change of mind is covered. Save the policy number and emergency assistance contact; the policy governs reimbursement.



Choose tickets and build your park schedule

Soon after booking

- ☐ Confirm the number of admission days, valid dates, included parks and expiration rules. A park ticket, hotel booking and dining reservation are separate items; one does not automatically provide the others.
- ☐ Decide whether you will visit one park per day or change parks. Compare the added cost with the time needed to travel between parks and your group's energy level.
- ☐ Choose three priorities for each day, then leave room for breaks, meals and unexpected favorites. For a longer stay, consider a pool or rest day.

Important differences by destination

- ☐ Disney World: date-based tickets generally do not require park reservations. Other admission types may require them. Confirm your exact ticket type and dates before finalizing plans. [1]
- ☐ Universal Orlando: verify which parks your ticket covers, including Epic Universe and any water park. To ride Hogwarts Express between Universal Studios Florida and Islands of Adventure, you need valid Park-to-Park admission for those parks. [4–5]
- ☐ SeaWorld Orlando: check whether your ticket includes only SeaWorld or additional parks, and whether admission dates must be selected. Tours, animal experiences, dining and line-access products may cost extra. [6]
- ☐ Buy any separately ticketed holiday or evening events early if they are a priority. Check age suitability, entry hours and whether a separate event line-access pass is needed.
- ☐ Check published park hours and scheduled closures. A park may close early for a special event; adjust your daytime plan before buying upgrades.



Reserve dining and choose useful upgrades

About 60 days before arrival or when booking opens

- ☐ Disney World dining: reservations generally open 60 days ahead. Guests with a valid Disney Resort hotel reservation can book for their stay, up to 10 nights, starting 60 days before arrival. Other guests normally book 60 days before each dining date. Confirm your eligibility. [2]
- ☐ Reserve priority restaurants, character meals, tours and experiences when their own booking windows open. Universal and SeaWorld do not share Disney's reservation timetable.
- ☐ Check cancellation deadlines, deposits and no-show charges. Allow transportation time and confirm that you can enter the park where an in-park meal is booked.

Is the additional cost worth it

- ☐ Compare paid line access with your planned rides, crowd expectations, number of park days and budget. Check participating attractions, repeat-ride rules and eligibility for every traveler.
- ☐ Disney World offers Lightning Lane options with different coverage and booking procedures. Universal Express and Express Unlimited are different products. SeaWorld Quick Queue and reserved seating have their own inclusions. These upgrades do not replace admission. [3–4, 6]
- ☐ Verify the exact benefits of your hotel. Some Universal hotels include Express Unlimited for specified parks; do not assume every hotel or Epic Universe is covered. Early entry may cover only selected attractions and still requires admission. [4]
- ☐ Compare dining plans or meal bundles with what your family will actually eat. Check eligible venues, redemption intervals, drinks, taxes and gratuities. Add the full cost for everyone who must participate.
- ☐ Consider photo packages, parking and Wi-Fi only after checking what your reservation already includes. Avoid buying overlapping benefits.



Finish reservations and prepare to travel

One to two weeks before departure

☐ Confirm final payment, flights, hotel, transfers or rental car. Check parking and resort fees, child-seat needs and the hotel's check-in and luggage-storage options.

☐ Complete online hotel check-in when available. It can save time, but it does not guarantee that your room will be ready when you arrive.

☐ Recheck reservations, tickets and your party's account connections. Confirm accessibility procedures directly with each park well before your visit; services and eligibility vary.

Disney World Lightning Lane purchase dates

Eligible Disney Resort and select hotel guests can generally buy 7 days before their resort stay, for up to 14 days. Other guests with date-based tickets can generally buy 3 days before the ticket start date, for valid admission days. Other ticket types follow their own eligibility rules. Purchases start at 7 a.m. Eastern on the first eligible day. Confirm current details in My Disney Experience. [3]

☐ Set a reminder for your personal purchase date. Have linked admission, connected travelers, payment details and a ranked ride list ready. Availability is limited; line access does not guarantee every attraction.

Plan your arrival day

☐ If your first park day or a costly event is fixed, consider arriving the day before. This is our recommendation to reduce delay risk. Unlike a cruise, many park trips allow flexibility, but ticket and event terms still apply.

☐ Keep arrival day light if traveling far. Avoid a prepaid meal or event immediately after your flight. Confirm how long the airport transfer takes and leave time for hotel check-in.



Pack for a comfortable park day

One week before departure

☐ Review each park's current bag, stroller, cooler, food, beverage, costume and prohibited-item rules. Airline rules are separate. Do not assume policies are the same at all three destinations.

☐ Pack broken-in walking shoes, lightweight layers, sun protection, ponchos and spare socks. For water rides or water parks, include suitable swimwear and a change of clothes.

☐ Keep medications and essential medical supplies in your carry-on. Arrange any equipment or refrigeration needs with your hotel and park in advance.

☐ Arrange home and pet care. Verify payment methods and save travel documents, insurance details and advisor contacts offline.

Your daily park bag

Tickets or admission credentials • phone • portable charger and cable • payment card and identification • essential medications • sunscreen • hat • light rain gear • tissues • a refillable water bottle where allowed • child essentials and spare clothing as needed.

☐ Check locker requirements for rides before carrying a large bag. Bring only what you can comfortably carry all day, and secure loose items as directed.

One to three days before departure

☐ Check weather, flight status, park hours and event notices. Update the apps, charge devices and confirm that everyone can access their tickets. Keep a backup record of confirmation numbers.

☐ Review the day's first reservation and transportation plan. Decide what time to leave the hotel, allowing for parking, security, walking and entrance queues.



Enjoy your park days at your own pace

The night before each park visit

☐ Confirm opening hours, any eligible early entry, dining times and ride return windows. Check whether virtual queues or other same-day procedures apply to your desired attractions.

☐ As a planning target, consider reaching the entrance 30 to 60 minutes before your eligible opening time if early rides matter to you. Allow additional time for transportation and security; entry procedures vary.

Inside the park

☐ Start with your priorities and use the official app for current wait times, maps and show schedules. Recheck plans if weather or an attraction closure changes your route.

☐ Take water, shade and rest breaks. Schedule meals before everyone becomes tired or hungry. A midday hotel break can help, but include travel time and re-entry requirements.

☐ Follow posted height and safety restrictions. Ask staff about rider swap or child swap when appropriate; procedures differ by attraction and park.

☐ Set a meeting location if your group separates. Make sure children know how to find park staff and have a parent's contact information accessible.

☐ Allow time to reach shows and restaurants. At large parks, a short distance on a map may still require substantial walking.

☐ For lightning or severe weather, follow staff instructions and move to a safe location. Outdoor attractions may pause; use indoor options or adjust your schedule.

☐ Review daily spending and upcoming cancellation deadlines. If you need medical or travel assistance, contact the appropriate service and your insurer as required, keeping supporting receipts.



Your vacation plan and return home



Before your last day

☐ Reconfirm airport transportation, flight check-in and hotel checkout. Leave enough time for traffic, returning a rental car and airport security.

☐ Check room charges and pack souvenirs securely. Look through drawers, the safe, bathroom and outlets. Keep documents, medications and valuables in your carry-on.



Your important dates

Traveler _____ Travel dates _____
Hotel _____ Advisor _____
Final payment due _____ Insurance deadline _____
Policy number _____ Insurance assistance phone _____
Dining booking opens _____ Line-access purchase date _____
Airport transfer _____ Hotel check-in time _____



Your park day plan

Date _____ Park _____ Hours _____
Leave hotel _____ First reservation _____
Top priorities _____
Meal plans _____
Rest break _____ Evening event _____

Repeat this park day plan for each day of your vacation. Keep your schedule flexible and bring your questions to Elite Explorers before departure.

Helpful contacts and official resources

Thank you for allowing Elite Explorers to be part of your journey. If you have questions before you leave or need assistance while traveling, please give us a call.

Your Next Adventure Starts with One Conversation.

Elite Explorers is here to help

Picayune, MS (769) 242-1527 • Covington, LA (504) 390-2934
Slidell, LA (504) 495-5810 • Boston, MA (203) 641-6447
www.elite-explorers.com • info@elite-explorers.com

Where Adventures Become Reality

Official planning resources

Use these resources and your booking confirmation to recheck requirements close to travel. Product names, availability, prices and procedures may change.

1 Disney World park reservation requirements Open resource
2 Disney World vacation planning and dining Open resource
3 Disney World Lightning Lane passes Open resource
4 Universal Orlando Express passes Open resource
5 Universal Orlando rider guide Open resource
6 SeaWorld Orlando rides and show upgrades Open resource
7 Allianz existing medical condition coverage Open resource
8 Travel Guard optional cancellation coverage Open resource

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