



## Orlando: How a Theme Park Capital Reshapes Travel Behaviour

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Orlando, Florida, isn't just another popular US destination — it's a masterclass in purpose-built tourism. Home to some of the world's most iconic theme parks, including Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando Resort, and SeaWorld, the city has transformed from a mid-sized Floridian town into a global magnet for families, fun-seekers, and multi-generational groups.

Unlike gateway cities such as New York or Los Angeles, where tourism is a blend of business, culture, and leisure, **Orlando is unapologetically single-minded**. It is an ecosystem engineered around imagination, storytelling, and attractions — and this focused model fundamentally alters how people plan and experience travel.

### Theme parks drive demand — and decision-making

A review of recent Google Trends data confirms that travel intent for Orlando is overwhelmingly centred on theme parks. Search queries such as “*Disney World tickets*”, “*Universal Orlando packages*”, and “*best rides in Orlando*” dominate interest. In contrast, cities like Los Angeles — while home to theme parks like Universal Studios — see far less theme park-specific search activity, revealing how deeply embedded attractions are in Orlando's tourism identity.

This hyper-focus on attractions also means that **travel to Orlando is rarely impulsive**. It's highly structured, often revolving around school holidays and pre-booked experiences.

## Lead times reflect anticipation, not flexibility

Our flight search data shows that **42% of international visitors to Orlando in August 2024 searched for their trip more than 90 days in advance** — a figure that surpasses Los Angeles (40%), New York (35%), and Chicago (34%). The longer planning window is no accident. From park tickets and dining reservations to queue-skipping ride passes, families are booking far in advance to secure the full experience.

This behaviour reveals how **the nature of the destination shapes not only who travels, but when and how they do it.**



## Families make up the majority

Theme parks also influence **group composition**. In Orlando, families (groups of 3–5 people) account for **62% of total international arrivals** in August 2025 — compared to just 42% in New York, 38% in Los Angeles and 28% in Atlanta. This has significant implications for accommodation preferences, with demand skewing towards larger rooms, villas, and vacation rentals that can comfortably house a full family.

It also influences ground transport, meal planning, and ticket bundling — all tailored for groups rather than individual travellers.



## A Global Effect: Paris Behaves Like Orlando

This phenomenon isn't confined to Florida. In Europe, **Paris — home to Disneyland Paris and Parc Astérix — shows similar patterns**, with 40% of international visitors in August 2025 travelling as families, according to traveller profile data. Compare that to Rome (29%) or Athens (28%), and it's clear that theme parks have a measurable impact on the type of tourists a destination attracts.

Paris, in this context, behaves more like Orlando than its cultural peers — proving that major attractions can reposition even the most historic destinations as family travel hubs.

## Orlando as a Blueprint for Purpose-Driven Tourism

What sets Orlando apart isn't just its scale of tourism infrastructure — it's **how clearly its purpose drives behaviour**:

- Longer booking lead times
- Higher proportion of family-sized-groups
- Larger group sizes
- Strong alignment with school holiday periods
- Purpose-led trip planning

For many, Orlando isn't a casual weekend away — it's a bucket-list experience, planned months (if not years) in advance, often treated as a once-in-a-decade holiday.

As destinations across the globe — from Abu Dhabi to Tokyo — continue to invest in branded attractions and mega-theme parks, **Orlando stands as the global benchmark** for how these developments can reshape tourism flows, traveller profiles, and booking behaviours.