



Universal CHOICES

By Lisa Sands

UNIVERSAL'S CABANA BAY BEACH RESORT

Driving up to the registration center at **Universal's Cabana Bay Beach Resort**, we notice other cars parked at the curb: a 1960's-era woody, a vintage four-door sedan and a retro tow truck. We're greeted by a friendly bellman wearing Bermuda shorts and Ray-Bans and are whisked into the lobby, where the vibe is kitschy-cool. Happy tunes of carefree days mesh with the sounds of splashing and laughter from the nearby pool. Shades of aqua and tangerine fill the expansive sun-drenched lobby and the adjacent Swizzle Bar. We've been transported back to the days of family road trips and roadside motels.

TIP Got babies? Save packing space and get formula, diapers, and more delivered to your room. Go to GardenGrocer.com for info.



BIG VALUE BIG FAMILIES

The family-oriented Cabana Bay Beach Resort is the fourth hotel on Universal Orlando's property, and the first "value" hotel in the lineup, giving a new high standard to the term. This is the only Universal resort that sleeps six to a room. Ask your AAA travel agent about current special rates for AAA members.

Our family suite at this new resort sleeps six and is anything but "retro," with two flat screen TVs, free Wi-Fi, an Internet-wired living room with bar area and charging station, a bathroom cleverly divided into three enclosed spaces (a toilet to the left, dressing area with sinks in the center, and shower with toilet to the right). A sliding partition between the bedroom and the living area provide a little extra privacy. Even with these modern amenities, details in the room still manage to keep us feeling as if we're in a time warp, including an old-school alarm clock like the one I had in high school, Zest soap and V05 shampoo.

Back in the lobby, a larger-than-life mermaid holds court at the spacious Starbucks. On the other side of the resort, twin towers overlook the zero-entry swimming pool with a sandy beach surrounded by a lazy river (tip: bring your own inflatable floatie). With two huge swimming pools, the 10-lane Galaxy Bowl and the Jack LaLanne Physical Fitness Studio, you may find so much fun at the resort that you may not want to pull yourself away for the free shuttle bus to the theme parks.



THEMED EVENTS AT UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

The attention to detail at each of Universal Orlando’s themed resorts gives guests the feeling of having a vacation within their vacation. The design and ambiance at each of the resorts transport guests to another world. Planning a vacation around the resort’s special event schedule can enhance that experience even further.



HARD ROCK HOTEL

The **Hard Rock Hotel** has an eclectic vibe, and the pool is hopping with live entertainment daily. You can even hear the music while you swim, thanks to the pool’s underwater speakers. The resort’s Velvet Bar lounge features big-name bands playing for small crowds on the last Thursday of the month (January through October). Each limited-admission Velvet Session includes pre-show cocktails and finger food, followed by live music. Past performers have included Joan Jett, The Romantics, Eddie Money, The Tubes, The Fixx, ABC and Foreigner. Prices start at \$29 per ticket.



LOEWS ROYAL PACIFIC RESORT

Experience the allure of a tropical paradise at **Loews Royal Pacific Resort**, with its lagoon-style swimming pool and sprawling sandy beach featuring a “Royal Pacific Airlines” propeller plane. If your kids love dinosaurs, ask about the Jurassic Park-themed suites. Complete the South Pacific fantasy at the Wantilan Luau, held every Saturday night, which features Hula dancers, knife twirlers and fire dancers performing to live Polynesian music. Tickets for the luau, which start at \$63 for adults and \$35 for children ages 3 to 9 (complimentary admission for children under age 3), include an all-you-can-eat buffet, entertainment, nonalcoholic beverages, wine, beer and, of course, Mai Tais.



LOEWS PORTOFINO BAY HOTEL

Vacationing at **Loews Portofino Bay Hotel** is like staying in an authentic Italian village complete with cobblestoned piazza, nightly live music and opera singers, and quite possibly the best pizza I’ve ever had (try the made-to-order Margherita pizza at Sal’s Market Deli). Plan your visit around Portofino’s Harbor Nights, a wine tasting and jazz event held quarterly on the resort’s harborside piazza. Prices vary depending on the season; tickets starting at \$35 gets you samples of select wines, gourmet food, live jazz and complimentary hand-rolled cigars.



AAA MEMBERS GET MORE AT UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

As a AAA member, you get even more savings and benefits from your membership when you travel. Ask your travel agent about AAA Vacations, which is an identifier for special savings, added values and unique benefits that you can get with the most popular cruise lines, tour operators and resorts when you book your vacation with AAA. Exclusive features of AAA Vacations include lower pricing, shipboard spending credits, “members-only” experiences, VIP priority check-in, pre-paid gratuities and more.

AAA VACATIONS AMENITIES AT UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT

- \$50 per vacation package credit voucher toward an activity purchased at the Universal Parks & Resorts Vacations Destination Universal Desk during your vacation of three nights or more
- Universe of Savings coupon book good at shops, entertainment venues and restaurants
- Priority seating at select theme park shows
- Savings on pre-purchased theme park tickets or vacation packages at Universal Orlando Resort hotels

Terms and conditions apply. Go to AAA.com/Universal for details or visit your AAA travel agent.