

Orlando

Mickey Mouse & Much More

by Rebecca Trammell

Say "Orlando" and what immediately comes to mind? Disney World of course. But there's much more to Orlando, Fla., than Mickey Mouse — and we want to help you find it when you attend the 2002 AALL Annual Meeting this July in Orlando.

Your first introduction to the magic of the central Florida area will be International Drive, where the Orange County Convention Center and the Annual Meeting hotels are located. Known as "I-Drive" to central Florida residents, it has something for everyone, including easy transportation via the I-Ride Trolley. This trolley runs from 8 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and has a variety of fare options. Check the AALL 2002 Annual Meeting Web site at <http://www.aallnet.org/> events or the Conference Hospitality Desk in Orlando for more information. Remember, you can explore all of International Drive on the I-Ride Trolley, and kids 12 years old and younger ride free.

I-Drive offers every **restaurant** you could ever want, from your favorite fast food stops to upscale locations, including the Pirate's Dinner Adventure and the Mystery Sleuth's Mystery Dinner show. The world's largest free-standing McDonald's restaurant and playground is located just off I-Drive. It stands two-stories tall and looks like a gigantic box of fries!

If **shopping** is your goal, I-Drive is home to more outlet stores and specialty shops than any other place in the country. With more than 170 stores, the Belz Factory Outlet is the largest outlet in the United States. The Belz Designer Outlet Centre offers more than 45 stores. The Orlando Premium Outlet on south I-Drive includes 110 high-end discount shops. Pointe*Orlando offers a variety of upscale shops, including the irresistible toy store FAO Schwarz, which appeals to the child in all of us. For all of you outdoor enthusiasts — be it fishing, camping, canoeing/kayaking or hunting — the 140,000-square-foot Bass Pro Shops' "Outdoor World" is a must.

International Drive hosts some of Florida's most notable attractions, including **Universal Studios Florida** and

Universal Islands of Adventure, SeaWorld of Orlando and **Wet 'n Wild**. Wet 'n Wild was the place to cool off in central Florida before Disney opened its water parks and is still the "I-Drive" water-park attraction. It is especially appealing to teens and young adults, but it includes an elaborate children's playground, providing fun for the whole family.

July in Orlando is HOT. But central Florida is geared for the heat. Everything is air-conditioned, including the I-Ride Trolley.

To escape the heat, consider a movie or an Imax attraction at one of the three stadium-style movie cinemas on I-Drive, with more fun per mile than almost any place else in the country. Some of these "don't miss" I-Drive attractions include:

- Ripley's Believe-It-or-Not, aka Orlando's Odditorium, features 16 strange and unusual galleries like the Pranks of Nature, Illusions, Dinosaurs and more.
- WonderWorks, with more than 85 interactive events, includes dining and shows. You can create your own roller coaster or play the world's largest laser tag.
- Fun Spot Action Park is the place for thrilling go-kart rides on its world-famous, multilevel tracks, plus more than 130 games in the 10,000-square-foot arcade — the largest arcade on International Drive. Free parking and free general admission.
- Pointe*Orlando is a premier shopping, dining and entertainment complex.
- Magical Midway is a go-kart track and thrill park combined.
- Skull Kingdom, located across from Wet 'n Wild, is full of fun and fright. Visit this haunted castle with live actors and special effects.
- Check out the I-Drive Guinness World Records Experience, which promises to prove that Orlando is "not a one-mouse town."



- Visit the Mercado, home of the Titanic exhibition and more than 60 specialty shops, an international food court, six restaurants, an English Pub and free nightly entertainment.
- Try Pirate's Cove for "adventure" miniature golf.
- I-Drive also hosts a Trolley and Train Museum and the World Bowling Center.
- Sky Venture skydiving wind tunnel is the perfect distraction for the VERY adventurous.
- For a "birds-eye view" of Orlando, Air Orlando Helicopter Rides, located on the southern end of I-Drive, is the answer.

Remember, all of this fun and excitement is adjacent to the second largest convention center in the United States, the Orange County Convention Center, host to AALL's 2002 Annual Meeting.

We will say it again: We're "not a one-mouse town." There are lots of other things to see and do in Orlando.

Visit the **Orlando Science Center**. Experience the CineDome, the world's largest Imax domed theatre, the Digistar II planetarium and observatory, as well as permanent and rotating exhibits and adventures. This is fun for kids and adults — a not-to-be-missed part of Orlando.

Orlando has both culture and history for all ages. The **Morse Museum of American Art** in Winter Park houses what is believed to be the world's largest Tiffany collection. The **Orlando Museum of Art** is home to permanent collections of 19th- and 20th-century American art, pre-Columbian art, and African art as well as a children's interactive gallery. The **Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Fine Art** honors Hurston, an African-

American culturalist and author. The museum is located in Eatonville, a suburb of Orlando, and America's oldest black municipality.

Activities aren't limited to Orlando. The outer areas of central Florida also boast attractions that shouldn't be missed.

Florida's Space Coast, just 35 miles east of Orlando, is home to the **Kennedy Space Center**. Be sure to visit the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, Port Canaveral and the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame. While there, don't miss the nearby Cocoa Beach Pier and one-of-a-kind Ron-Jon's Surf Shop.

Billed as central Florida's "original attraction," **Silver Springs** is worth the trip. Located 90 miles north of Orlando, Silver Springs includes glass-bottom boat rides, beautiful grounds and parks. *Sea Hunt* and early Tarzan movies were filmed here.

About the same distance south of Orlando is **Cypress Gardens**, a family park with lots to see and do. It's another example of a quieter, simpler time in Florida. Check out the Southern Belle Experience, available for children ages 3 to 12.

Splendid China, located just southwest of Orlando in Kissimmee, is an attraction not to be missed. This quiet 76-acre park includes replicas of the Great Wall and the Forbidden City. Live entertainment, including acrobats, dancers and a tiger show, make it a hit with everyone.

Gatorland is the old-time central Florida, pre-Disney attraction that welcomes visitors through the giant jaws of an alligator. The 35-acre attraction contains more than 5,000 live alligators and crocodiles and includes activities such as Gator Wrestling and Gator Jumparoo.

Central Florida also includes more than 1,000 **lakes and rivers** for fishing, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, snorkeling,

tubing and skiing — that's water skiing, for you Yankees! There are many opportunities for walking, biking, hiking and horseback riding. Don't forget golf. Almost any level or type of course is available in the Orlando area. Air-boat rides are available around the area to get up close and personal with the wildlife in and near the water. In fact central Florida offers an opportunity to experience just about everything except mountain climbing and snow skiing. So plan to take advantage of one or all of these central Florida adventures.

Information on all the attractions and sites discussed in this article is available on the AALL 2002 Annual Meeting Web site <http://www.aallnet.org/events>, including current hours of operation and pricing. Take advantage of AALL member discounts for many Orlando theme parks and attractions. When ordering your discounted tickets, use the order form at http://www.aallnet.org/events/02_attractions.pdf. Discount coupons for a variety of attractions, restaurants and shops will also be available at the Conference Hospitality Desk in Orlando. American Automobile Association members can purchase discounted tickets to a variety of area attractions and restaurants in advance from their local AAA offices, while other discounts may be obtained at the time of purchase by presenting a valid AAA membership card.

If you are bringing children of any age to the Annual Meeting, plan to attend the Family Social Hour and Carnival on July 20 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. We'll be providing additional information on what to do and see for children of all ages, as well as door prizes and discount coupons.

Don't miss any of the fun that central Florida has to offer. See you in July.

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