

The Orlando Eye - Seeing Orlando from Above: An Orlando-Area Attraction Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

For those of us who are die-hard Disney fans, sometimes it's hard to remember that there is life outside of the parks in the greater Orlando area. While some may head to Disney's greatest rival, the Universal Orlando parks, and perhaps even places like SeaWorld, there are also much smaller attractions to visit and enjoy. On our most recent trip, we got to enjoy one of those that allows you to see the city from above: the Orlando Eye.

First, let me take you back in time… it's the start of a new millennium and that brings various new tourist attractions to London, including the London Eye. Eventually this passed into the hands of the British based Merlin Entertainments Group, responsible for, amongst others, Madame Tussauds. Their reach expanded vastly when they purchased the LEGOLAND resorts around the world, including Florida's, and it was perhaps only time before they would decide to make more of an inroad into the Orlando market, especially given how many British tourists it attracts each year.

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□ In 2015, the Orlando Eye arrived in a complex along International Drive that's also home to Madame Tussauds Orlando, and SEA LIFE Orlando. Of course, that means you can also get combination tickets to more than just one. General tickets on the day are \$25 (\$5 cheaper online), and add in one more attraction and that will go up to \$39 (\$34 online) or \$49 for all three (\$41 online). You can even add in a visit to LEGOLAND Florida.

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□ The first pleasant surprise was when we arrived at the Orlando Eye parking lot. Not only was the parking itself free, but there was also complimentary valet parking. Sadly we didn't realize that, and missed it, but in future, it's definitely something we'd do.

Tickets in hand, you head through, but it is a slow process to actually get into your capsule on the Orlando Eye, as first you have to have your obligatory photo taken. We weren't too impressed with ours, so didn't bother to purchase them.

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□ Next there's a pre-show film, which is cute, but you may end up with a bit of a wait, as we did. That can be frustrating, particularly if you weren't expecting it, as it does eat into your time. We found that the

film showed you lots of Florida from above, which was lovely, but of course it wasn't truly representative of what you'd actually be able to see. Let's face it the Kennedy Space Center is hardly going to be visible, even on a good day! It does give you an idea of what to expect, just in case you didn't know beforehand, but in truth, my husband and I both came out wondering what the point of it was, apart from spacing groups out over busy days in the summer.

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□ Once we emerged back into the Floridian heat and humidity, we were the first out of our small group that numbered maybe a total of 15 people. I assumed we'd all be put into the first capsule that came along, but we were very pleasantly surprised to discover that each individual group would get their own. This is something that never happens on the London Eye, well unless you pay for the privilege! It was a really nice treat and did make for a very special journey. Of course, I can't guarantee they'll do the same for you if you're visiting at a busier time.

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□ So what was the journey in the Orlando Eye actually like? It lasts a total of 23 minutes, and you get to see some wonderful views that change constantly as you climb and then descend again. One thing I do need to say here is that although you're transported 400 feet into the air, you don't get any form of close-up view of any of the theme parks. You get to see the city skyline, from above which was neat, as that's not something I've seen before, and a lot of the surrounding areas, but the theme parks aren't that close. You can work out landmarks from Universal, Disney, and SeaWorld, but that's about as much as you'll see. If you have a very good zoom camera, or perhaps you bring a pair of binoculars with you, you can then focus in on some familiar icons, such as Spaceship Earth, but they are quite a distance away.

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□ What struck us as we rotated around the wheel of the Orlando Eye was firstly how much construction was going on. That didn't come as that much of a surprise, given there's always work here, with new things constantly opening, but it brings it home to you from up here. Secondly, we were shocked at how much spare land there still appears to be. Whether the greenery you see is swamp land and can't be built on, I don't know, but it was something I wasn't expecting.

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□ We both really enjoyed our ride on the Orlando Eye, as it gives you a fascinating view of Orlando from the air, but I'm not sure it's for everyone in all honesty. If you have kids who want to get a bird's eye view of the theme parks, then they're likely to be disappointed, and I'm not sure there's not enough to keep their interest throughout the whole time you're on board.

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□ The Orlando Eye is usually open from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm, although

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hours can be longer. It can close due to weather conditions, and if it does, your ticket will be valid for 30 days. If you really enjoy your ride, then you can get another one for just \$10. The Orlando Eye is located at 8401 International Drive. You can find out more at <https://www.officialorlandoeye.com/>

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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