

# TRAVEL



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# ROARSOME!

Orlando is ready to knock it out of the park for the rest of 2021 with a host of new attractions, says **Nigel Thompson**

**MONSTER**  
Jurassic  
World fast  
new ride at  
Universal



The world's theme park capital never rests on its big-hitting holiday laurels. Even in the face of a pandemic, Orlando is not standing still and is raring to go as restrictions ease across the Sunshine State.

If it wasn't already a feast of Florida fun, it's seriously upping its game for the rest of the year with a host of new family-friendly action and adventure attractions and more relaxed events.

Cassandra Matej, president and CEO of tourist board Visit Orlando, said: "We know that people are ready to travel and want to feel safe while not sacrificing the fun and magic of an escape from their daily routine."

"In Orlando, travellers will find a destination committed to safety alongside an incredible collection of new experiences, from thrilling rides and attractions to brand new resorts, creating the perfect summer vacation that people have been dreaming about for a while."

Here we look at the 2021 debuts – or just opened – that await UK visitors once travel to the US opens up again...

## THEME PARKS

■ Jurassic World VelociCoaster: due to debut in June at Universal's Islands of Adventure, it will be Florida's fastest and tallest launch coaster.

It will showcase an original velociraptor ride storyline with intense manoeuvres sending riders catapulting

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### BIG DEAL

Canaries from £335pp: save 33% on a seven-night self-catering getaway at the three-star Elba Lucia Sport & Suite Hotel in Nuevo Horizonte. Includes flights from Birmingham on November 29. Book at [olympicholidays.com](http://olympicholidays.com)

### Cruise news

BY MARJORIE YUE

The safety measures considered most important to travellers on cruises have been highlighted by cruise.co.uk.

The UK's leading cruise specialist quizzed 6,500 customers on what would give them peace of mind.

No1 on the Covid safety wishlist, at 88%, is proof of vaccination, followed by health screening at embarkation

(87%), while modern air conditioning to filter out viruses (86%) was third.

The restaurant buffet, a mainstay on most ships, remains popular with less than half (45%) wishing to see table service only, and 46% calling for compulsory face masks.

Tony Andrews from cruise.co.uk said: "Cruisers have spoken and, understandably, tangible health and wellbeing measures are the priority as they anticipate stepping back onboard again. The good news is, we know

cruise lines are actively putting these in place, so the additional levels of reassurance passengers want to see are being prepared for.

"Interestingly, some of the more traditional features of a cruise, such as the restaurant buffet, remain comparatively popular and will be missed by many loyal passengers if they are removed."

With almost 90% having booked, or likely to book, a cruise again, Covid hasn't curbed the appetite for cruising.

### BIG DEAL

St Lucia from £899pp: depart Gatwick on October 13 for a week on all-inclusive at the three-star Bay Gardens Inn at Gros Islet. Saves 50%, includes transfers and room upgrade. Book by May 31 at [bluebaytravel.co.uk](http://bluebaytravel.co.uk)

# TRAVEL

## Buy of the week

BY NIGEL THOMPSON

If you're keen to be green, are really travelling light and want to lose the electric toothbrush then try this featherweight eco-friendly number.

The handle is made of 100% recycled plastic, the multi-height bristles are made from renewable plant-based materials and it comes in recyclable packaging.

Colgate RecyClean Toothbrush, £4, ocado.com



The wonders of the Land of Ice and Fire are getting a boost this autumn and winter from Jet2.com and Jet2CityBreaks.

The firms are launching Iceland flights and getaways from Manchester and Birmingham, starting in early September through to late April and including school holidays, with opportunities to hunt for the Northern Lights, visit Reykjavik or relax in geothermal lagoons.

### BIG DEAL

Blackpool from £100pp: a two night break at the four-star Imperial Hotel on the Golden Mile includes breakfast and a three course dinner on the first night. Available on selected dates from May 25 to December 22, book by May 25. Customer will donate £10 per booking to a charity of their choice. Book at [charitable.travel](http://charitable.travel)



# SAGA

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**FLIPPED** Mindblowing Museum of Illusions



**ARCADE FIRE** The Game, ICON Park



**BAFFLING** Immersive Museum of Illusions



**HOOKED** Brickbeard adventures

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 53

up to 70mph and over 150ft in the air – with the swiftest of prehistoric predators on the loose. With a barrel roll over the theme park's lagoon, superfast launches and an 80-degree plunge on the 4,700ft of track, it's a monster! [universolorlando.com](http://universolorlando.com)

■ Down at LEGOLAND Florida Resort, in Winter Haven, the new Brickbeard's Watersports Stunt Show features a new female Lego pirate, original music and stunts such as wakeboarding and waterski pyramids.

An all-new 4D movie will also premiere. [legoland.com/florida](http://legoland.com/florida)

■ Walt Disney World Resort has been busy too, with a transformation of EPCOT featuring a reimagined entrance fountain in front of Spaceship Earth.

Over at Disney's Hollywood Studios, Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway is the newest attraction and uses state-of-the-art trackless technology to bring the mice's cartoon world to life. Disney say it's a "whirlwind ride through a world where the rules of physics don't apply". Already open. [disneyworld.co.uk](http://disneyworld.co.uk)



**LAUNCH** Slingshot ride at ICON Park

exhibits based on maths, science and psychology. Already open.

■ The Game ICON Park is a family entertainment centre and arcade featuring 70 games, virtual reality experiences, themed escape rooms and more. Get your game face on! Already open.

■ ICON Park Slingshot debuts this summer and will be the world's tallest slingshot ride at 300ft. The two-tower attraction launches riders out of an



**A whirlwind ride through a world where the rules of physics do not apply**

# Orlando blooms



**HAVE A BLAST** ICON Park

**Two-tower attraction launches riders out of an exploding volcano**

Terrace with 360-degree city views. From £120 a night. [marriott.com](http://marriott.com)

■ The first phase of the Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando Lake Buena Vista is due to open soon and is half a mile from the dining and retail at Disney Springs. [druryhotels.com](http://druryhotels.com)

■ Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin resort complex will open a new 14-floor tower this summer. Named the Walt Disney World Swan Reserve, it will feature a new restaurant, health club and 90ft pool. [swandolphin.com](http://swandolphin.com)

### STAR STRUCK

■ Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, east of Orlando, has a new experience for junior astronauts. Planet Play is an indoor activity area with numerous interactive gaming and artistic components. [kennedyspacecenter.com](http://kennedyspacecenter.com)

### MORE INFO

Find out more about Orlando's seven theme parks, 450 hotels and attractions at [visitorlando.com](http://visitorlando.com)

### COVID AWARE

Masks are required for everyone over the age of two while in public areas of Orlando and Orange County and social distancing measures are strictly enforced.

'exploding volcano' 450ft straight up, reaching 100mph. Sounds magma-nificent!

■ ICON Park Drop Tower also opens this summer and will be another world-beater – at 430ft, it's the tallest freestanding drop tower. Riders tilt forward, face the ground, then plummet nearly 400ft at 75mph in a white-knuckle freefall. [iconparkorlando.com](http://iconparkorlando.com)

There's more coming, or now open, on International Drive...

■ The new Dezerland Park indoor attraction includes the longest indoor dual go-karting tracks in Florida, a trampoline park and car museum.

At 800,000 square feet, it's Florida's largest indoor attraction. Already open. [dezerlandpark.com](http://dezerlandpark.com)

■ WonderWorks, a science-focused indoor amusement park known for its upside-down building, opens a new STEM exhibit exploring Earth's layers.

Visitors get the NASA treatment and experience zero gravity or dare to try lying on the bed of nails. Already open. [wonderworksonline.com](http://wonderworksonline.com)

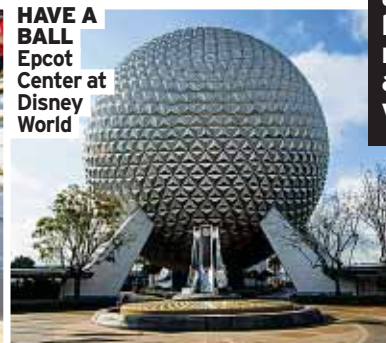
### SOUND IDEA

■ Frontyard Festival, the first socially distanced cultural event in the US, is on at Dr Phillips Center for the Performing Arts until the end of May.

The outdoor festival covers comedy, pop and opera with the audience in private pods for up to five people, with takeaway food and



**AHOY THERE** Brickbeard's Watersports Stunt Show



**HAVE A BALL** Epcot Center at Disney World



**REST EASY** Swan Reserve and AC Hotel



drink delivered straight to you. [drphillipscenter.org](http://drphillipscenter.org)

### NEW HOTELS

It's not just the attractions that keep expanding in Orlando, so does the property portfolio... ■ Universal Orlando Resort's new

coastal-themed Dockside Inn and Suites is already open and offers theme park on-site value at \$55 per night. [universolorlando.com](http://universolorlando.com)

■ AC Hotel Orlando Downtown has just opened in central Orlando and has a sleek European-inspired design and the showpiece SkyBar Rooftop

## Travel test

BY ISOBEL DICKINSON

**WHAT:** Five star Hilton Bankside in Southwark, London. Rooms now from £135 a night. [hilton.com](http://hilton.com)

**WHERE:** The hotel is in a great location. The Tate Modern, the Globe Theatre, Millennium Bridge, Borough Market and the Shard are nearby and St Paul's Cathedral is a short stroll away.

**EXPERIENCE:** This is a Hilton on a different level to any I've stayed at in the UK before. We could have been in a trendy part of New York with the wood panelled decor, steel clad hanging lights and minimalist style.

It felt new, design led and contemporary – and if this is a sign of future Hiltons then it's a big thumbs up.

The friendly staff went through Covid compliant check-in procedures that were quick and easy over a free glass of fizz.

Our deluxe King room was huge with loads of space for two people and carried on with the minimalist, wood panelled theme.

There was also a desk, an area with a sofa to watch TV and an enormous serenity bed that was so comfy getting out was a struggle. The industrial chic bathroom was sleek, sexy and



stylish and had a huge shower and bath which is rare these days.

The Distillery Bar pays tribute to its roots as a former perfume factory with a range of signature cocktails made with homemade aromatics, infusions and bitters – as well as some amazing gins.

For dinner we ate grilled sirloin steak, with wild rocket and French fries in a tasty chimichurri sauce.

The next morning we had a buffet breakfast in main restaurant Oxbo, which was closed for dinner during our stay.

All the usual options were available and the happy team of chefs whipped up omelettes, eggs and pancakes to order in front of guests in the open kitchen concept.

There is also a gym and indoor heated pool, where we booked a 45-minute slot as per Covid rules during our September stay.

**QUIBBLES:** A strange complimentary Bento Box that was brought out with drinks that consisted of packs of soggy crackers and chewy almonds.

**VERDICT:** Totally unexpected decor for all the right reasons. A modern, cool hotel in a great part of town. **8/10**