20 Tips For Brits Driving in Orlando

This is a PDF version of the information on https://www.thepurplepumpkinblog.co.uk/20-tips-for-brits-driving-in-orlando/

1. Try and obtain directions to your accommodation before you fly out to Orlando.

You can check out the route on Google Maps and it will help you to familiarise yourself. We hired a satnav in the UK to take with us on our first trip, and have since bought our own. You can hire them from car rental companies, but they can be expensive! Or see if you can buy maps for your current satnav.

A regular paper map is also handy – just in case! We found Mapman’s Orlando Map - http://www.orlandomaps.co.uk/ - to be invaluable on our first trip in 2011, when our satnav got it wrong!

It’s also good to have a navigator in the car with you – the first few times you drive, you may be nervous of the unfamiliar surroundings and taking in the road signs etc, so someone else to point out a turn is very handy.

2. Familiarise yourself with the car before driving off for the first time.

Adjust your seat, the steering wheel, the mirrors. Learn how to use the air-con, lights, wipers, radio etc. You will also be sat on the left side of the car, which may throw you off for a moment, but you get used to it very quickly!

Even on my very first time driving in Orlando, by the time I had pulled out of the car parking spot in the airport, and driving out onto the main roads, I was fine. Just relax, and take your time!
3. [Most] American cars are automatic.

They are very simple to drive. You use your right foot to control both the accelerator and the break – tuck your left foot out of the way.

Move the gear stick to D to drive off. R to reverse and P to park.

Not all cars have a handbreak – some have a foot pedal in the left corner of the wheel well which you can depress when parking your car.
You can use the brake pedal to creep forward if you need to – for example, when in traffic - a bit like clutch control in a manual car.

4. Carry your driving license and car rental agreement with you at all times.

You need to carry both parts of your driving license (paper and plastic card) if you still have this type.

At the time of writing this, UK driving licenses are changing, check the DVLA website - [https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing-agency](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing-agency) - for up to date information.

If you are pulled over by the police, or are in an accident you will need to produce these dc.

5. You drive on the right hand side of the road!

This will seem a bit strange at first, but you will quickly get used to it! The roads in Orlando are huge and wide, but you may find yourself driving to the far right of the lane, keep an eye on this as you may not be as far away from the car in the next lane to you as you think.
6. Overhead road signs show the road you are crossing.
The photograph below shows what I mean! You may think we are on the US 27, but that is the road going across the front of us. We are on Florence Villa Grove.


There are tolls on some of the roads in Orlando. It will depend on where you are going as to how many you will have to go through.

They range in cost from 50c to $1 or $2. Have some quarters (25c coins) in the car to pay the 50c tolls, and dollar bills for the other ones. This is just in case the booths are unmanned. If there is an attendant, you will be able to get change.

Some car hire companies do have pre-pay toll machines in their cars, which you can enquire about, but it may not be worth the cost if you aren’t going through many of them.

If you do not pay a toll, you may end up receiving a bill!

Going through the tolls, in our experience is very quick and no hassle at all!
8. You can turn right on red.

Unless a road sign tells you otherwise, and the coast must be clear.

When turning right, you must first come to a complete stop and check for oncoming traffic from the left. When it is safe to go, turn right smoothly and purposefully, and do not stop – you shouldn’t turn if it is not safe to do so.

Don’t feel pressurised by drivers behind you. If you are really not sure, then wait. It is better to be safe than sorry. You may get honked at, but don’t worry. This happened to me at a very busy junction on our first visit to Orlando, but I had my family in the car, I'm not taking chances.

9. Turning left.

It can be scary turning left the first few times! But most left turns – at busy junctions, have their own filter lane and you can only go when the light is green. There are often lane markers as you go around the turn, so follow them into the correct lane.

There are some signs that say “LEFT TURN YIELD ON GREEN” this lets you know that you are allowed to turn left if the lights are green – you do not have to wait for a green left arrow - but if there is oncoming traffic you must yield (give way) to them before turning.

I found left turns threw me off a bit until I got used to them. Left turns in minor roads are easier, look both ways before pulling out, as you would a right turn here in the UK.

There are some places where you may need to do a left turn, without traffic lights, crossing busy traffic. In my experience, American drivers do not want to let you pull out, and it may well be easier to just turn right and then do a U-Turn to get back on the correct side of the road.

10. U-Turns.

You can do a U-turn at the end of most junctions – it will be marked if you are not allowed to do so. U-turns are so much easier with American cars – they have a great tight turn!
11. Main routes to the theme parks are well sign posted.

In fact, everything seems to be well signposted on Orlando’s roads. Once you are on Disney property, it is very easy to follow the signs to the theme parks and resorts.

DO NOT stop to take a photograph of the Walt Disney World sign (there are signs telling you not to!) but you can get a decent photo on the move! Get the front seat passenger to take it (obvs!)

12. Always stop at a STOP sign.

Even if the junction appears to be clear, you must come to a stop before continuing.

BONUS TIP!

If you come across a 4-way stop (ALL WAY) sign, then the vehicle that arrived at the intersection first has the right of way. If two (or more vehicles arrive at the same time) then the furthest left vehicle has right of way and you always yield (giveway) to the right. This website explains things well - https://www.topdriver.com/education-blog/4-rules-4-way-stops/
13. Do NOT drink and drive.

It is illegal in the State of Florida to visibly carry alcohol in your car, or have an opened container of alcohol in the vehicle. So put that booze stash you bought from the store in the trunk of the car and wait till you get to your holiday accommodation before cracking one open.

These rules are strictly enforced, and if you are caught driving whilst under the influence you will be charged and spend the night in the police cells.

It goes without saying to bare this in mind if you plan on drinking on your flight or on a night out.

BONUS TIP!

Do NOT use your mobile phone and drive.

Talking on a mobile phone while driving is not illegal (at time of writing) in Florida, however texting is illegal.

My view is that calls, texts, and other activities using your phone can wait until you have stopped driving. It is against the law in the UK, so just carry that mindset with you to Florida.

14. Keep to the speed limit.

Road signs will tell you what the correct speed is for the road you are driving on.

I was over the speed limit, and was caught on our 2014 holiday in Orlando. My own fault, as I wasn’t concentrating properly, sped up to overtake to pull off at the next off-ramp (slip road), so I wouldn’t miss it... then the lights of a Sheriffs car was behind me indicating for me to pull over. It was the only time I have ever driven over the speed limit (I knew they were strict!) and I was pretty scared and upset too. After checking my driving license details and seeing my clean driving record, he let me off with a stern warning not to speed, but also said if I was caught again I would be fined.
BONUS TIP!

Check out the road laws, rules and regulations online - [https://www.dmvflorida.org/florida-traffic-laws/](https://www.dmvflorida.org/florida-traffic-laws/)

There are rules you must abide by such as stopping when there is a school bus, sticking to a strictly enforced speed limit, and the move over law; as well as rules for child safety restraints in vehicles. I can’t cover them all here, so be sure to know before you go.

15. Stay in the vehicle if pulled over by the police.

If you are signalled to pull over by the police, do so as quickly and safely as possible. Pull over completely onto the grass verge – the officer may indicate to you how far to pull over.

Do not get out of the vehicle – stay in the car and wind down the window.

Follow the officer’s instructions. You must have your driving license and your car rental agreement.

16. Most gas (petrol) stations require payment first.

Go into the station, make your payment, then return to fill up the car. If you don’t use the full amount, you can get a refund.

17. Overtaking/Undertaking.

Unlike in the UK, you can overtake (pass) on both sides in Orlando, or as we call it, undertaking.

This might seem a bit weird at first, but it can be a God send if you need to progress past the car in front of you.

Check all of your mirrors, ensure that it is safe to overtake, then make your manoeuvre.

If you are worried or nervous about passing, then don’t. Stick to the speed limit, and if someone behind you wants to pass, then let them.
18. Freeway driving.

I figure that since I can deal with the craziness that is the M25, then I can deal well with driving on the Freeway in Orlando.

Just like you have your crazy drivers here in the UK, you will have them over in the US too.

Generally, I tend to stick to the right hand lanes, that way I’m in the correct position when I need to take an off ramp.

Sign posts indicate well (in my experience) where you need to be for the location you are driving to, with a arrow pointing to the lane.

19. If you have an accident you MUST call the police (ring 911).

You must not leave the scene of the accident. You must ask for a report of the accident to provide to your car rental company. You must phone your rental company to advise them of the situation.

20. You must turn on the headlights in the rain.

In very heavy rain downpours, it is likely that you will have to greatly reduce your speed as visibility will be very low. Take extra care when driving in the rain. I have slowed to a 5mph crawl in heavy downpours in Orlando before. If it is extremely heavy, I have seen cars pull over and stop until it passes.

BONUS TIP!

Confidence is key!

I appreciate, now that I’ve written all of these tips, that I may have made things sound a lot more daunting, but honestly, it really isn’t!

If you are a confident driver at home, then that confidence will translate well to Orlando’s roads. Stay cool, calm and collected.

Take your first few drives easy – especially that first one from the airport.
If you’re worried about driving after a long flight, there are other options:

- Disney’s Magical Express -  
- Use a cab on your first journey and then pick up your hire car the next day. Disney Car Care Center near Magic Kingdom handles rentals from Alamo Rent-A-Car and National Car Rental. You can use the following taxi cab companies around Walt Disney World too.
  - If you have an Uber account your account will work in Orlando too. We have used Uber several times.
  - You can also use a similar app called Lyft (I don’t think we have that in the UK yet) to request cabs.
  - Yellow Cabs operated by Mears Transportation are in a similar vein to Black Cabs in London.
  - The new Minnie Van Service -  
    [https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/en_GB/guest-services/minnie-van-service/](https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/en_GB/guest-services/minnie-van-service/) - from Disney cannot be used (yet) from Orlando Airport, but can be used to return to it. Prices are expensive though!
- Use a service like Car On The Drive -  
  [http://www.caronthedrive.com/](http://www.caronthedrive.com/) - that will drop off your rental vehicle to your accommodation.
- If you need a mobility vehicle I can personally recommend Florida Van Rentals as I have used them on previous trips to Orlando -  
  [https://www.floridavanrentals.com/](https://www.floridavanrentals.com/)

I hope you’ve found my tips useful! I LOVE driving in Orlando, and I hope you do too!

*This PDF version as created July 2018 and information was correct at time of publication. Please check official websites for up to date road laws and information about Orlando’s roads.*