

## **A kingdom built on magic? One destination's phenomenal success certainly requires an explanation**

Submitted by patricia on Fri, 25/05/2018 - 13:24

There's no beach, it rains frequently and there's even a hurricane season. Hardly an obvious candidate for one of the most visited destinations on the planet?

Nonetheless more than 70 million people visit Orlando, Florida every year. To place that in context, a similar amount of people each year visit Spain, itself one of the most visited *countries* in the world. These tourists spend around 33 billion dollars in the destination.

When in the early 1960s Walt Disney chose the site to open an East Coast version of his popular Anaheim, California theme park the Orlando area was little more than wetlands in the interior of Florida. But land was cheap and plentiful, allowing for ambitious plans and ceaseless expansion without concerns for planning permission limitations.

Fast forward a few decades and the lure of Walt Disney World had not only attracted tourists in their hundreds of millions, but also other theme park competitors: not least Universal Orlando Resort, Sea World, and most recently the LEGOLAND Florida, with more parks and attractions to come!

Golf courses and just about every activity imaginable under the sun of the Sunshine State complement the offering for tired parents who have enough energy (and money) left over to relax after white-knuckle ride rollercoasters and endless hours waiting in line.

Today the main airport in Orlando (MCO for the airline buffs out there) ranks amongst the top 30 busiest airports in the whole world with around 44 million passengers a year. That is almost the same as London Gatwick and ahead of even Miami.

At Hotelbeds Group we are very proud to have a considerable presence in the city of Orlando. As a destination we have an experienced local sourcing team working hard to secure the most exclusive theme-park and accommodation products on the best available terms.

But additionally the city of Orlando operates as our hub office for the whole of the Americas, collectively employing around 500 people following the integration of Tourico Holidays and GTA into our business last year. Where better to recruit travel talent than in a city built on tourism?

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