

# *Living in Orlando* *Guide & Directory*

**The Complete International Student Guide**  
**Celebration Language Institute**

# *Welcome to Orlando*

## **Welcome to Central Florida!**

Orlando is one of the most diverse and internationally friendly cities in the United States. Known worldwide for tourism and entertainment, it is also a growing center for education, healthcare, technology, aviation, and business.

As an international student, you will discover a multicultural community, international restaurants and markets, faith communities in many languages, warm weather year-round, and strong student support networks. This guide was created to help you transition smoothly, stay safe, and make confident decisions about daily life.

Moving to a new country is an exciting step, and while it may feel overwhelming at first, you are not alone. At Celebration Language Institute, we are honored to be part of your journey and are committed to supporting you academically, personally, and professionally throughout your time here.

Welcome to our school, our community, and your new home.

**With warm regards,**  
*The Celebration Language Institute Team*

# 1. *First 30 Days Checklist*

Your first month is very important. Here is what you should prioritize:

## **Housing**

- Carefully read your lease before signing.
- Confirm what utilities are included.
- Document apartment condition with photos.
- Understand deposit refund policies.

## **Utilities**

- Electricity (Duke Energy or OUC depending on area)
- Water (city-based provider)
- Internet (Spectrum, AT&T Fiber, etc.)

## **Communication**

- Get a U.S. SIM card (T-Mobile, AT&T, Verizon).
- Consider prepaid plans if no credit history.

## **Banking**

- Open a checking account.
- Avoid overdraft fees.
- Learn how to use Zelle safely.

## **Transportation**

- Learn bus routes.
- Understand toll roads.
- Budget for Uber/Lyft if needed.

## **Health**

- Identify nearest urgent care.
- Understand difference between urgent care and emergency room (ER is much more expensive).

## 2. Safety & Emergency Guide

### Emergency Number

- Dial **911** for police, fire, or ambulance.

### Non-Emergency Police

- Each city has its own non-emergency number.

### Common Scams Targeting International Students

- Fake immigration calls
- Fake police threats
- Apartment deposit scams
- Job offer scams requesting fees

### Never:

- Wire money to someone you have not verified.
- Share passport or visa copies without purpose.
- Pay apartment deposits without seeing the unit.

### Weather Safety

- Hurricane season: June – November.
- Afternoon thunderstorms are common.
- Lightning is dangerous — go indoors immediately.



## ***3. Transportation Guide***

Orlando is car-dependent in most areas.

### **LYNX Bus System**

- Single ride: \$2
- Monthly pass: approx. \$50
- Limited coverage compared to large cities.

### **SunRail Train**

- Connects north suburbs to Downtown.
- Good option if you live near stations (Winter Park, Maitland, Altamonte).

### **Rideshare**

- Uber and Lyft widely available.

### **Driving**

- Florida requires proof of insurance and vehicle registration.
- Florida issues Driver's License for F1 students

## **Obtaining a Driver's License - Step-by-Step Process**

### **1. Study for the Written Test**

- Prepare for the **Class E driver's license knowledge exam** (road rules and signs).
  - The official Florida Driver's Handbook helps you study and practice before visiting.

# 3. *Transportation Guide*

## 2. Gather Required Documents

Bring the following (originals only):

- Passport
- I-94 Form / Visa documentation
- I-20 or DS-2019
- Proof of residential address in Florida
- Social Security Number (if applicable)
- Proof of full legal name & date of birth

## 3. Visit a Driver License Service Center

Not all DMV offices provide every service (some only handle vehicle registration or tax services). Make sure the office you choose offers **driver's license services** (ID card, written test, driving skills test, etc.). Many require you to **make an appointment online** before arriving.

## 4. Take the Written (Knowledge) Exam

At the office, you'll take a written knowledge test. Study guides are available on FLHSMV's site.



## ***3. Transportation Guide***

### **5. Take the Driving Skills Test**

After you pass the written exam, you may need to take the **road test**. In some locations, a separate appointment is required. Weighted vehicles (like motorcycles or commercial licenses) have extra requirements.

### **6. Pay the License Fees**

Typical fees include:

Original/first-time driver license (~\$54.25)

Replacement (~\$31)

(Fees set by the state; cash, card, and check accepted in many offices).

### **7. Get Your Photo Taken & Receive License**

Once you pass tests and provide documents, your photo will be taken and your license issued.

### **Important Note on Language:**

As of early 2026, the written and skills exams are only offered **in English only**, without interpreters. This means preparation in English is important for international students.

\* Because rules sometimes change, always check requirements online before your visit

# ***3. Transportation Guide***

## **8. Local DMV / Driver License Service Centers (Orlando Area)**

**DMV Orlando** – Driver license & motor vehicle services (Sand Lake Road, near Florida Mall). Appointments recommended.

**Orange County Tax Collector Scott Randolph (University Blvd)** – Offers licensing and DMV services.

**Orange County Tax Collector (Rosalind Ave) / Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles (Rosalind Ave)** – Downtown Orlando office providing driver and vehicle services.

### **Other Driver License / Motor Vehicle Centers**

**Orange County Lee Vista DMV** – Another DMV location that can provide many driver services.

### **Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles**

**(Clarcona-Ocoee Rd)** – DMV office serving the western side of Orlando.

**Orange County Tax Collector – West Oaks Mall** – DMV services near Ocoee (good for west Orlando residents).

### **Nearby Options (Greater Orlando Region)**

**Seminole County Tax Collector – Winter Springs** – Useful for students living north of Orlando.

**DMV in Casselberry** – Alternative in Seminole County.

### **Additional Support**

**Drivers Academy U.S.A.** – Driving instruction and preparation services

## 4. *Cost of Living Overview*

The Orlando Area is moderately expensive compared to other Florida cities.

### **Average Monthly Costs 2026 (Estimated)**

Rent (1-bedroom): \$1,500–\$2,200

Room in shared apartment: \$700–\$1,100

Utilities: \$100–\$200

Groceries: \$250–\$400

Transportation: \$100–\$400

Phone plan: \$40–\$80

Lifestyle and neighborhood strongly affect your total expenses.



## 5. *Neighborhood Guide*

### **Winter Garden**

Average Rent: \$1,700–\$2,200 (1BR)

Pros:

Beautiful historic downtown

Farmers market

West Orange Trail access

Family-friendly

Cons:

Higher rent

Car required in most areas

Best for: Students who prefer quieter suburban charm.

### **Windermere**

Average Rent: \$1,800–\$2,500+

Pros:

Lakes and luxury homes

Safe and quiet

Cons:

Expensive

Very limited public transport

Best for: Higher-budget shared housing.



## 5. *Neighborhood Guide*

### **MetroWest**

Average Rent: \$1,350–\$1,900

Pros:

Central location

Many apartment complexes

More affordable options

Cons:

Quality varies by complex

Traffic congestion

Best for: Students seeking balance between cost and location.

### **Clermont**

Average Rent: \$1,600–\$2,000

Pros:

Hills and lakes

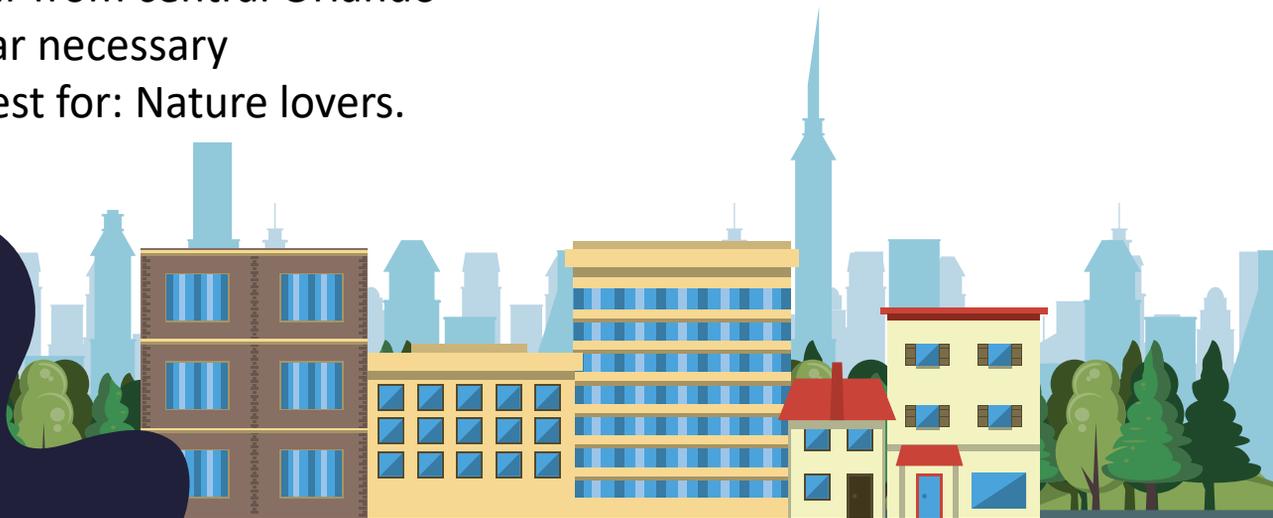
Calm environment

Cons:

Far from central Orlando

Car necessary

Best for: Nature lovers.



# 5. *Neighborhood Guide*

## **Ocoee**

Average Rent: \$1,700–\$2,100

Pros:

Growing suburban community

Close to Winter Garden

Cons:

Limited nightlife

Car required

## **Downtown Orlando**

Average Rent: \$1,700–\$2,300

Pros:

Walkable

Nightlife

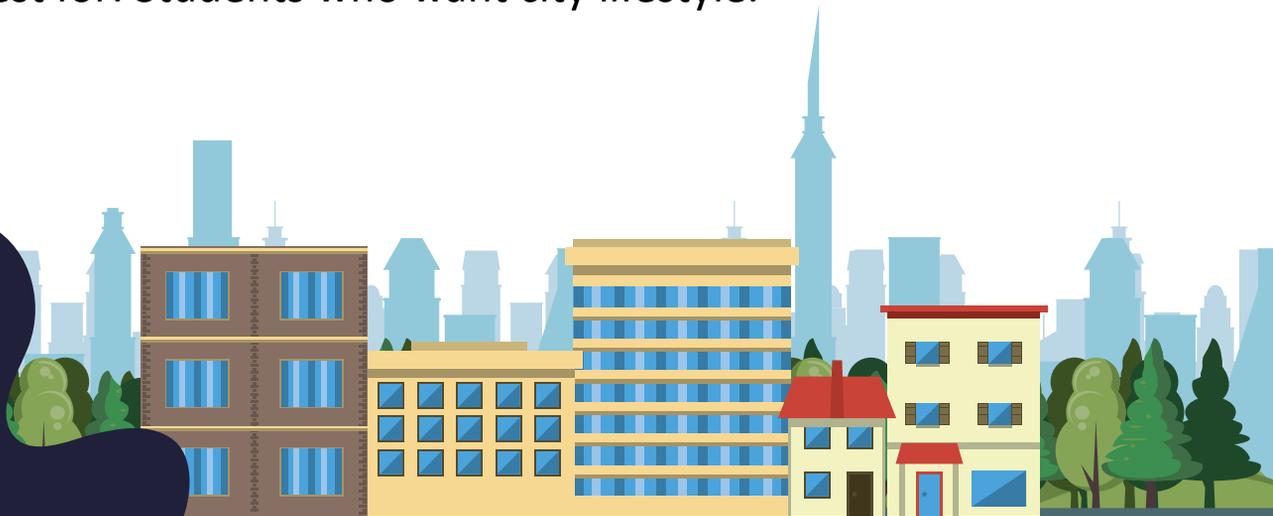
Lake Eola

Cons:

Parking expensive

Noise

Best for: Students who want city lifestyle.



## 5. *Neighborhood Guide*

### **Winter Park**

Average Rent: \$1,800–\$2,400

Pros:

Beautiful parks

Upscale dining

SunRail access

Cons:

Higher prices

### **Lake Nona**

Average Rent: \$2,200–\$2,800

Pros:

Modern buildings

Medical City

Clean, planned layout

Cons:

Expensive

Spread out



## ***6. Supermarkets & Grocery Shopping***

### **Budget-Friendly**

- Aldi
- Walmart
- Target
- Costco
- Sam's Club

### **Convenient**

- Publix

### **Specialty / International**

- Trader Joe's
- Bravo Supermarkets
- Patel Brothers (Indian groceries)
- Asian markets in Mills 50 area
- Seabra market (Brazilian market and restaurant)

## ***7. Pharmacies***

- CVS
- Walgreens
- Walmart Pharmacy
- Publix Pharmacy

# ***8. Top Rated Shopping Malls & Outlets***

## **Malls**

- The Florida Mall
- Mall at Millenia
- Disney Springs

## **Outlet Malls**

- Orlando International Premium Outlets
- Vineland Premium Outlets

## **Furniture & Home**

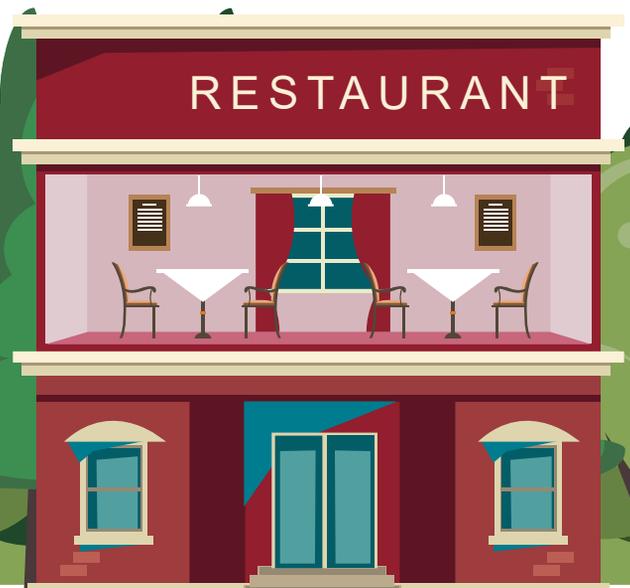
- IKEA
- Rooms to Go
- City Furniture

## **Discount Stores**

- Ross
- Marshalls
- TJ Maxx
- Burlington
- Dollar tree
- Five & Below

## 9. *Top 20 Restaurants in Orlando*

1. Domu
2. Hawkers Asian Street Food
3. Kadence
4. 4 Rivers Smokehouse
5. Pig Floyd's Urban Barbakoa
6. The Ravenous Pig
7. Prato
8. Black Rooster Taqueria
9. Reyes Mezcaleria
10. Se7en Bites
11. Gideon's Bakehouse
12. Café Tu Tu Tango
13. Columbia Restaurant
14. Luke's Kitchen & Bar
15. Armando's
16. Border Grill
17. Susuru Ramen
18. Lineage Coffee
19. Foxtail Coffee
20. Adega Gaucha



## ***10. Coffee Shops & Study Spots***

- Lineage Coffee
- Foxtail Coffee
- Framework Craft Coffee
- Deeply Coffee
- Bernie's Coffee (Winter Park)

## ***11. Parks, Lakes & Outdoor Life***

Outdoor activities are very popular in Orlando, especially during cooler months (November–April).

- Lake Eola Park
- Mead Botanical Garden
- West Orange Trail
- Wekiwa Springs State Park
- Lake Baldwin Park
- Bill Frederick Park
- Shingle Creek Regional Park
- Little Econ Greenway
- Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive
- Kelly Park / Rock Springs

# ***12. Churches & Faith Communities***

## **1. Catholic Churches**

- St. James Cathedral (Downtown Orlando)
- Basilica of Mary, Queen of the Universe
- Holy Family Catholic Church (Dr. Phillips)

## **2. Hispanic / Spanish-Speaking Churches**

- Iglesia Fuente de Vida Orlando
- Casa Sobre la Roca Orlando
- Iglesia Cristiana El Sendero de la Cruz

## **3. Brazilian / Portuguese-Speaking Churches**

- Lagoinha Orlando Church
- Assembleia de Deus Brasileira em Orlando
- Igreja Batista Brasileira de Orlando

## **4. Evangelical / Non-Denominational (Multicultural)**

- First Baptist Orlando
- Calvary Orlando
- Discovery Church (Orlando & Winter Garden)
- Faith Assembly of God

## **5. African & Caribbean Churches**

- New Covenant Baptist Church of Orlando
- Mount Sinai Seventh-day Adventist Church
  - Caribbean American Baptist Fellowship

# ***12. Churches & Faith Communities***

## **6. Korean Churches**

- Orlando Korean Baptist Church
- Orlando Korean Presbyterian Church
- Central Florida Korean Church

## **7. Hindu Temples**

- Hindu Society of Central Florida (Casselberry)
- Shri Krishna Vrundavana Temple

## **8. Buddhist Centers**

- Wat Florida Dhammaram (Thai Buddhist Temple)
- Chua Huong Dao (Vietnamese Buddhist Temple)

## **9. Sikh Community**

- Sikh Sangat gatherings in Central Florida

## **10. Muslim Community**

- Islamic Center of Orlando
- Masjid Al-Rahman (Muslim American Society)
- Islamic Society of Central Florida

## **11. Jewish Community**

- Jewish Community Center (JCC of Greater Orlando)
  - Congregation Ohev Shalom
    - Temple Israel

# 13. Health & Medical Services

## 1. Urgent Care\*

Urgent Care centers treat **non-life-threatening illnesses and injuries** that need quick attention but are not emergencies. They are walk-in clinics (no appointment usually needed). Urgent Care is MUCH cheaper than the ER.

Go to Urgent Care for:

- Minor cuts or stitches
- Sprains and small fractures
- Fever or Flu symptoms
- COVID, cold, or virus symptoms
- Ear infections, Urinary infections
- Minor burns or Allergic reactions (mild)
- Vomiting or diarrhea (without severe dehydration)
- Pink eye or Skin rashes

Facilities:

- AdventHealth Centra Care
- Orlando Health Urgent Care
- CareSpot Urgent Care
- CVS MinuteClinic (for minor issues only)

\*Many locations are open evenings and weekends.

Typical visit cost without insurance:

\$100 – \$250

With insurance:

Often \$20 – \$75 copay

# ***13. Health & Medical Services***

## **2. Emergency Room\***

The Emergency Room is for **life-threatening or very serious medical conditions**.

\*ERs are located inside hospitals and are open 24/7.

Go to the ER immediately if you have:

- Chest pain
- Trouble breathing or Severe abdominal pain
- Head injury or Major car accident injuries
- Heavy bleeding that will not stop
- Broken bones with severe deformity
- Seizures or Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Stroke symptoms (face drooping, arm weakness, speech difficulty)
- Severe allergic reaction (throat closing)

Facilities:

- AdventHealth Orlando Emergency Room
- AdventHealth East Orlando Emergency Room
- Orlando Health - Health Central Hospital
- Orlando Health Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children

Cost Without insurance:

\$1,500 – \$10,000+ depending on tests

Cost With insurance:

Still may cost \$300 – \$1,000+

# 14. *Banking*

Recommended Banks:

- Chase
- Bank of America
- Wells Fargo
- Truist

Tips:

- Avoid overdraft fees.
- Use Zelle carefully.
- Build credit slowly with secured credit card.



# ***15. Important Contacts***

## **911 - Emergency:**

Police, Fire, Ambulance

(Call immediately for life-threatening emergencies)

## **211 – United Way Helpline**

Free 24/7 help for:

Housing assistance

Food resources

Mental health support

Crisis counseling

Domestic violence support

## **988 – Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

Free, confidential emotional support (24/7)

## **(407) 246-2470 - Non-Emergency Orlando Police**

Use for:

Noise complaints

Non-urgent reports

Minor incidents

## **347 - Roadside & Traffic Florida Highway Patrol (FHP):**

For traffic accidents and highway assistance

# ***15. Important Contacts***

**1-800-222-1222 - Poison Control Center:**

(Call immediately if someone swallows harmful substances)

**1-800-375-5283 - USCIS National Customer Service Center:**

For:

Immigration case questions

General immigration information

**(407) 815-5888 - Celebration Language Institute**