

mini Golfing

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For family fun away from the parks, swing by one of the area's themed miniature golf courses.



YO HO, A GOLFER'S LIFE FOR ME: Dark caves and other seaworthy scenery are found at Pirate's Island Adventure Golf

For more than two decades, Orlando's themed miniature golf parks have stayed busy, providing families with a rest in between visits to the theme parks. Here are some of our favorite locations, most of which are located on the tourist-friendly streets of International Drive or Irlo Bronson Highway, aka U.S. Highway 192.

the pirates are coming!

Orlando is crazy for pirates – there are five pirate-themed courses throughout the area. While they all offer stunning waterfalls and courses named after Black Beard and Captain Kidd, each provides their own special spin such as pirate sing-along music and a full-sized fog-billowing pirate ship that guests can play through at **Pirate's Island Adventure Golf** in Kissimmee, or “jailed” pirate

animatronics and a boat helmed by a pirate skeleton at **Pirate's Cove** in the Crossroads Shopping Center off state Route 535.

For true high seas swashbuckling, however, **Pirate's Cove** on International Drive may be your best bet. Although the oldest mini golf course in Orlando, it's arguably

the most beautiful with 36 holes amongst gorgeous landscaping, stone bridges, and multi-level waterfalls. Pirate replicas dot the area, hang from a boat mast, lounge in hammocks above the course, and sing to guests playing through the caves under its falls. The two courses also provide information on their

buccaneer namesakes at each hole. Just be aware that there are many stairs and hills throughout. But if you've got the stamina, the top of Captain Kidd's course gives a stunning three-story view of the entire area.

“I think we've stayed popular for so long because we're at a great location and really stand



A CAP'N AND HIS SHIP: Common decorations among most pirate-themed mini-golf courses are waterfalls and beat-up, old pirate ships, like this one at Pirate's Cove.

out with our falls and flowers and foliage,” said Alyce Vogel, the course’s manager for 21 years. “Plus the pirates have always been popular. Kids love it, though sometimes they think they’re a little spooky.”

LOCATIONS

- **Pirate’s Cove Orlando**
8501 International Drive
- **Pirate’s Cove Lake Buena Vista**
12545 state Route 535
- **Pirate’s Cove Kissimmee**
2845 Florida Plaza Blvd. (next to Old Town, off U.S. Highway 192)
- **Pirate’s Island Adventure Golf**
4330 W. Vine Street (in Kissimmee)
- **Pirate’s Island Adventure Golf**
7792 Irla Bronson Highway / U.S. Highway 192

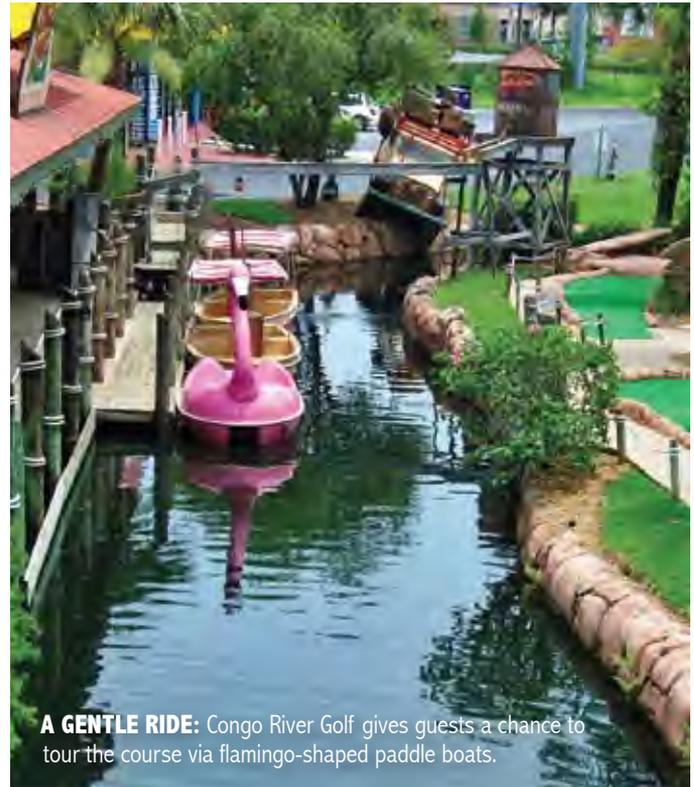
looking for adventure

If you’re an adventurer at heart, check out the African huts and swinging bridges at **Congo River Golf**, or the roaming dinosaurs, fiery volcano, and live talking parrot at **Tiki Island Volcano Golf**.

A full-sized bush plane (crashed into the side of a cliff) sets the scene at all five of the area’s extremely popular Congo River courses, along with live baby alligators that guests can feed for a small fee. Fun and challenging holes in either the Stanley or Livingstone courses wind along and over waterfalls, around huts and totems, and through caves. An added challenge is a scavenger hunt that rewards guests who find hidden objects throughout the course with discounted merchandise and future games.

The course on U.S. Highway 192 also offers paddle boats (including one shaped like a pink flamingo) and a beached adventure boat that guests can play through, while the smaller 18-hole course on International Drive also provides basketball hoops.

Vice President of Development Tyson Vozza said there are many reasons why guests have kept mini-golf



A GENTLE RIDE: Congo River Golf gives guests a chance to tour the course via flamingo-shaped paddle boats.

popular all these years. “People are always looking for something to do while vacationing in Central Florida. Miniature golf provides a fun activity where virtually all ages can interact and compete with one another. Plus, it’s an experience that is

relatively inexpensive and doesn’t take the entire day.”

If you’d rather have dinosaurs with your jungle adventures, Tiki Island is chock full of them as they fly overhead, watch guests next to the courses and even stand on some of the greens. This fun place also has dino facts at almost every hole, dinosaur-shaped paddle boats, a large volcano that erupts every 30 minutes (and whenever guests win a free game with a hole-in-one on the 19th hole), and offers photos with its most popular employee – a very funny parrot named Ziggy. Both of its courses play through the volcano, which glows in the dark at night, and one (named Tiki Falls) is wheelchair accessible with pathways instead of stairs leading up its hills.

General Manager C.J. Singh said the dinosaurs and the volcano make Tiki Island especially popular with families. “People from all over come and



PREHISTORIC PUTT PUTT: Playing a round of miniature golf at Tiki Island Volcano Golf means having close encounters with a fire-spewing volcano and course-crossing dinosaurs.

talk about how unique it is and challenging. And kids love trying to erupt the volcano themselves on the last hole."

LOCATIONS

• Congo River

6312 International Drive
(next to Wet n' Wild)
5901 International Drive
12193 E. Colonial Drive (near
the University of Central Florida)
4777 West U.S. Highway 192 /
Irlo Bronson Highway
531 West state Route 436
(in Altamonte Springs)

• Tiki Island Volcano Golf

7460 International Drive

disney's spin on things

If it's a little Disney magic you crave, Walt Disney World's **Fantasia Gardens** and **Winter Summerland** courses can more than deliver with dancing hippos and a musical soundtrack, or crazy weather gone amuck.

Located in the Epcot resort area, Disney's Fantasia Gardens has two very different options.



FANTASY MEETS FAIRWAYS: Fantasia Gardens includes two distinct types of mini-golf courses, allowing for traditional as well as character-filled play.

The Gardens Course is more dynamic with a colorful homage to the Disney movie classic, *Fantasia*.

While classical music plays, large statues of the movie's characters stand on pedestals, spin or slowly rise up and down. Playful surprises abound such as water sprays and musical tones for good shots, and rhymes posted at each hole offering tips on how to get the best score. Between the calm music, sweet characters and flat area with no stairs, this is one

relaxing spot for all ages. "This might be the funnest place I've ever seen!" exclaimed one child visiting from North Dakota after hitting a ball into a crocodile's mouth.

For something a little more challenging, check out the Fairways Course. It's designed to look like a full sized golf course, with rolling hills, water hazards and roughs.

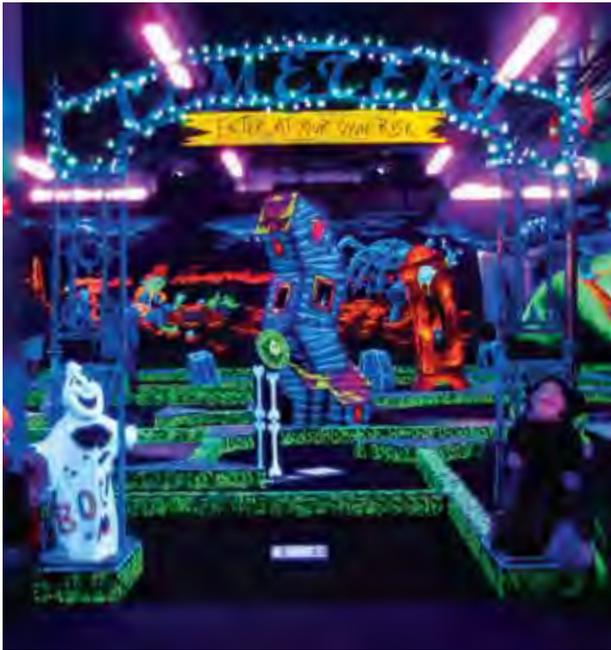
If you'd rather exchange calm and peaceful for wild and wacky, Disney's Winter Summerland

may be for you. The back-story of this place, located next to Blizzard Beach water park, is that one night Santa discovered an enchanted place in Florida with snow and decided to turn it into a vacation destination for himself and his elves, complete with two very different courses.

The Snow Course was supposedly built for the elves who preferred the cold of the North Pole and features the Magic Kingdom's castle made out of "snow," Squirty the Snowman



ALWAYS A HOLIDAY: Both of Winter Summerland's courses feature non-stop loops of Christmas music, perfect for getting stuck in your head.



FAMILY FUN: Monster Mini-Golf's fright-level is more "Monster Mash" than "Tales from the Crypt." Children of all ages will enjoy playing there without a scare.

(who lives up to his name) and statues of Disney's most popular characters frolicking in the cold. The Sand Course is said to be built for the elves who like the sun and includes water-spouting fish, a Magic Kingdom sand castle, and a sleeping (and snoring) Santa buried under a mound of sand.

Both courses end in Santa's workshop, where the last shot goes into a giant computer with a special message from the jolly guy himself via the Winternet. While both the summer and the winter courses are very cute, they're not especially

challenging and can get a bit clogged up on busy days. However, like Fantasia Gardens, Winter Summerland is flat and easy to navigate.

At the end of play for all Disney courses, each guest receives a free golf ball, which are changed out with a new Disney character every three months.

LOCATIONS

- **Fantasia Gardens**
10000 Lake Buena Vista Drive (In front of the Swan and Dolphin Hotels)
- **Winter Summerland**
1500 West Buena Vista Drive

fun in the dark

Take a break from the Florida heat and wear something white to take full advantage of the unique indoor glow-in-the-dark world of two area courses – one with a fairy-tale theme, and the other full of monsters.

It's Halloween every night at **Monster Mini Golf**. Although this one has an out-of-the-way location inside the West Orange

Business Center mall in Winter Garden, it is ghoulishly fun and worth the trip. The course is packed with glow-in-the-dark neon gargoyles, skeletons, ghosts, tombstones, aliens and even an oversized animatronic swamp monster. Plus the 18th hole features the thing that scares this writer the most – a giant scowling clown. Yet, the whole place has a family-friendly party



PARTY TIME: Whether it's for Halloween or a birthday, Monster Mini-Golf's private party rooms are a unique way to celebrate.





GOLF IN THE DARK: Putting Edge's contrast of bright decoration colors and pitch black courses is visually exciting.

vibe with music playing from the adjacent DJ booth, impromptu dance contests breaking out and an entryway game room featuring neon air hockey, skeeball and basketball. There are also two very cool and creepy private party rooms for rent, with dining areas straight out of an old-time haunted house movie, skull chandeliers and mirrors made from "bones."

Owners Jane and Wayne Carrigan just opened their franchise in July. "Monster Mini Golf is 9,000 square feet of glow-in-the-dark excitement," explained Jane. Her husband added, "It's indoors, there's great artwork on the walls,

and there are black lights. It's air conditioned mini golf – how can you go wrong?"

For milder glow-in-the-dark fun, check out the **Putting Edge Fun Center's** 18-hole course inside the Festival Bay Mall. This course is much bigger than it first looks, opening up into a cavernous back room full of colorful and whimsical scenes of dragons, sea creatures and castles. Free glow bracelets are given out at the start of play. Rewards are given to those who answer called out trivia questions correctly. "We like to keep the fun going," said Melissa Starr, operations manager. "It brings everyone together and

gets everyone laughing."

LOCATIONS

• **Monster Mini Golf**

1297 Winter Garden Vineland Rd (in Winter Garden)

• **Putting Edge Fun Center**

-5250 International Drive (inside Festival Bay Mall)

more fun spots

Other mini golf options let you take a vacation within your vacation. Go for the gold at an old mining town straight out of the Wild West at **Bonanza Adventure Golf** or lose yourself in the Polynesian spirit at **Hawaiian Rumble Adventure Golf**.

At Bonanza, you wind around authentic looking buildings and mining cars, through a cave under a large waterfall, over wooden bridges, and along aqueducts. You may feel like you're striking it rich, but be aware that there are a lot of steps and no shade on this mountain – which means it can get very hot. So be sure to take a break at the onsite snack bar for some of the most original smoothie combinations imaginable. (Raspberry-Mango anyone?)

A "shadier" option can be found at the two Hawaiian Rumble locations. While both showcase huge volcanoes,



DEEPER AND DEEPER: At first glance, Putting Edge appears to be a tiny mini-golf course stuck within a shopping mall. But after playing a few holes, players realize there's a whole other back room filled with even more blacklight fun.



calm and pretty landscaping, waterfalls, streams, and courses named Lani and Kahuna, the International Drive location has more masks, tiki torches, and props. However, the volcano at the Apopka-Vineland location spouts fire every 10 minutes.

LOCATIONS

• Bonanza Adventure Golf

7761 West U.S. Highway 192

• Hawaiian Rumble Adventure Golf

8969 International Drive

(next to WonderWorks)

13529 South Apopka-Vineland Rd

many mini choices

Whether you're looking for big places (often with a lot of climbing) or calmer and smaller courses, there's a miniature golf park in Orlando for all tastes. And while most stay open in all types of weather, they'll issue rain checks if lightning or other storms stop your game.

So the next time an available evening opens up, or you just need to take a break, grab the kids and hit the mini links. From pirates to adventurers, and from dinosaurs to glow in the dark aliens, you're sure to find a course that's a hit with the whole family.



TIKI TIME: Hawaiian Rumble Adventure Golf provides golfers with a step out of Florida into a Polynesian putt putt paradise.



MINI-GOLF MINING:

The multi-colored rockwork surrounding Bonanza's course give it a look and feel that's unique from all other Orlando courses.

