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## ***Introduction:*** **Universal Studio Tours - Movies and Fun**

Universal Studios began offering tours in 1964. Today, Universal Studios still offers tours, and they still make movies – but it has also become one of the largest amusement parks in the world. In fact, Universal Studios has mixed movie making with shows and a theme park full of rides to become one of the most popular tourist attractions in the world.

The Studio tour is a one hour guided tour. Those on the tour ride around the studio's 420 acres on a tram, and see many stars dressing rooms, production offices, and often famous Hollywood stars. Where else can you see a western town and a New York City street all in the same hour? The tour includes sets from Back to the Future, Curse of the Mummy's Tomb, Jurassic Park III, and The Grinch. This is more than just your boring tour with a boring monotone tour guide! As the tour progresses, tourists encounter many disasters!

Once you've finished your tour of the studios, you can move on to the theme park. All of the rides have a movie oriented theme, such as Revenge of the Mummy, Back to the Future, Jurassic Park, Terminator 2, and Shrek. There is also entertainment. Waterworld is a theater presentation which features many stunts and special effects. Other shows that include terrific stage effects are Backdraft, Animal Planet Live, and Spider Man Rocks.

If all of this wasn't enough, you can also visit the TV Audience Ticket Booth. Here you will get free tickets that will allow you to be part of the audience for television shows that are being taped during your visit. This is almost like being on TV! When you visit Universal Studios, you will have several days of fun, and you probably still won't see everything that is offered.

Outside of Universal Studios you will find the Universal City Walk. This is Universal Studios very own Downtown. This is three blocks of stores, clubs, and restaurants for you to enjoy. There are no cars or motorized traffic allowed in this area, but there are hundreds, and sometimes thousands of pedestrians milling about enjoying all of the sights and sounds.

Universal Studio Tours is a great place to spend your vacation – or it is perfect as an add on to a Disneyland Vacation. Even if you don't have time for the theme park, the Universal Studios Tour itself is not to be missed!

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## ***Make the Most of Your Universal Studios Tour***

If you will be visiting Universal Studios, you need to be prepared. Arriving at the park unprepared can literally ruin your vacation! Follow these tips to help you get the most out of your Universal Studios Tour adventure.

It will be very hot. Make sure that you dress in cotton clothing that is cool. You should strongly consider bringing a change of clothing, so you can change into dry clothes after the rides that soak you, or if your clothes get too sweaty. If you will be there during the evening hours, bring warmer clothes to change into. Do not wear new shoes! There is a lot of walking involved, and you won't last one hour in brand new shoes. Wear an old pair that are well broken in. Bring an extra pair of shoes to change into if yours get wet.

Make sure that you bring earplugs. There is a lot of noise at Universal Studios, and some of the attractions are deafening. Also bring sunscreen, sunglasses, and hats to help protect you from the sun. Use a backpack or a fanny pack to carry your belongings in – there are also lockers available through guest services if you need a safe dry place to store your things.

Make sure that you take the Universal Studio Tour early in the day. The park will remain open several hours after the tour has closed for the day. Designate a meeting place with everyone in your party, in case you get separated. Make sure that everyone in your party has a map, and that they know how to read it!

Leave small babies and toddlers with a sitter. They will not enjoy Universal Studios, and they will make sure that you don't enjoy it either if you bring them. Consider purchasing VIP passes which will allow you to move to the front of the lines for the attractions. This is a huge time saver, and will keep you from wasting valuable time and getting bored.

Avoid eating inside the park if you can. It is very expensive, and the food is much cheaper right outside the gates in City Walk. Also save your shopping for the end of the day, so you don't have to carry packages around with you. Universal Studios Tours does have a package delivery service, which will allow you to pick up your purchases at the end of the day near the exit, in case you find a souvenir that simply won't wait until closing time.

Most importantly, see and do as much as possible, and have fun! Universal Studios has been entertaining us for years, and entertainment is what Universal Studios Tours is all about!

## ***How To Get the Most Out Of Your Universal Studios Tour Experience***

Universal Studios is a huge place, with lots to see and do. If you want to experience as much as possible in one day, it is important to plan your day. By planning your day, you will be able to get more in than you would if you went in without a viable plan.

Start the day with the Universal Studios Tour. It takes one hour, and you need to be there before the gates open. It is important to be on that very first tour, so you can avoid some of the long lines at the theme park.

Universal Studios is divided into two lots – the upper lot and the lower lot. When you are ready for the theme park attractions, start on one lot or the other, and visit all of the attractions on that lot before moving to the other one. This will cut down a lot of walking time. The upper lot usually opens before the lower lot, so start at the top if possible.

After a day at the theme park, be sure to visit Universal City Walk right outside the gates of the park. The City Walk is three blocks of shops, restaurants, bars, and entertainment. This is a great way to end a perfect day at Universal Studios Tours.



## ***2 More Steps to Maximizing Your Fun at Universal Studios Hollywood***

So, how do you make the most of your Universal Studios Tour? We all work very hard for our vacation time and we want so desperately to fully enjoy that time. Unfortunately for most of us, that means cramming in so much 'fun' in a limited amount of time that our 'fun' becomes more like a mission than a relaxing vacation day. It's not something we can really help. We live our lives fitting as many activities as possible into a very finite amount of time. There are only so many hours in any given day and some of those must be devoted to sleep (yes, even on vacation, we need sleep).

With that in mind, if you approach your Universal Studios Tour as the break from reality that it is (it's a movie studio for crying out loud, no reality there) there is probably hope for your maximized enjoyment of your vacation. At the very least, enjoy your time at Universal Studios Hollywood. If you follow these two steps you can avoid the nasty schedule beast from rearing its ugly head during your day at Universal.

First of all, relax. Remind yourself throughout the day that you are in fact on vacation and that you are determined to enjoy that time as much as humanly possible. You will not allow your parade to be rained on even if it begins to rain (fortunately rain is rare in southern California). When you are at one attraction whether it is a ride or a show, do not look at your watch for any reason whatsoever. Looking at your watch indicates a schedule, which reminds you of work. Don't sweat the small stuff, the worst thing that can happen is you miss a show. Missing a show will not be the end of the world, however by stopping and looking at your watch, you are missing the show that is happening in front of you.

Second, don't allow anger or frustration to rob you of your enjoyment. If you are so frustrated over standing in line that you don't enjoy the ride once you get to experience it, then you have been robbed of your enjoyment. If the frustration will effect your enjoyment, remove yourself from the line and move on to the next show (or purchase a "Front of Line" pass which will allow you to spend less time in line—this is my answer to my hatred of standing in line).

If you remember to enjoy the here and now and not worry about what comes next and either make peace with the idea of standing in long lines or purchase a "Front of Line" pass you should have much fonder memories of your time at Universal Studios Hollywood.

## ***A Little Planning Can Save a Lot of Walking***

Many of us dream for most of our lives about that one family vacation of a lifetime. We can't wait to take our children to this awesome place where movie magic is made each and every day. We look forward to sharing with them things that held us so spellbound as children, you know, back in the day when special effects were new and awesome. Then the day arrives and we find that we spend most of our time walking back and forth and waiting in long lines with cranky children who are bored, hot, and tired of standing in line after long line.

One thing you can do to avoid some of the tired crankiness as well as maximizing your time effectiveness (I understand most people only have one day in which to cram as many attractions as possible and we all want it all), is to have a plan of action before you enter the gates. Don't get me wrong; you don't want to over plan to the point that there is no room for impromptu sightseeing or potty breaks but if you have a general plan of action it helps avoid wasting hours of time going from one area of the park to another and missing several attractions in between that you will be once again heading in search of later on. What you will need to do is get a schedule of events for the day and a map of the park. Chose the attractions that are in one area of the park and plan those for the same general time period, plan morning activities for the lower lot and try to go in order of the next closest attraction that operates within the time line and plan afternoon activities for the upper lot.

If you do a little planning ahead, you will find that you have much more time in which to enjoy the wonderful attractions that Universal Studios has to offer. I hope you enjoy your trip to Universal Studios and your tour of the studio. Keep in mind during all the hours of waiting in line that you are building lifelong memories with your family and have fun!

## ***Don't Bring Enough Supplies for the Calvary***

If you've ever traveled with family, you understand what I mean when I say; you're going to an amusement park, not to Mars. I am a mother of three; believe me I know the need we feel to be prepared for every possible contingency. My every day purse is a beach bag and it's got emergency food, juice boxes, Band-Aids, Benedryl, Advil, water bottles, crackers, and a myriad of other supplies that seem utterly ridiculous to carry around all the time. We feel like we should be prepared should the big earthquake hit and run to save the world with our water bottles and Band-Aids. These things, while nice to have in emergencies, are simply more items that must be carried when you are at an amusement park.

This translates to, mom gets to hold the bag for \$60 and watch everyone else have fun, while reminding baby brother to apply more sunscreen after every ride and making sure big sister is drinking enough water, and little sister hasn't wandered off in search of any number of miscellaneous items that captures her imagination. Not really sounding too fun for mom is it? I know we moms like to watch our families have fun, but I also know we like to participate occasionally too. So, don't pack for an army. Bring only the necessities and try to make sure that whatever you bring can fit in your pockets. Big changes for mom I know but you will understand after a very long day of walking around and being burdened with every child's new find, price, or purchase why it was a good idea not to have a huge bag of your own.

## ***Universal Studios Makes an Offer you May Not Want to Refuse***

One important thing that people often fail to consider planning for during vacations and time at our parks is food. We get so excited and caught up in the thrill of what is going on and all that there is to see and do that we absolutely fail to plan to eat. With children, that simply will not work, for so many reasons, but once they get overly hungry they don't tend to be easily appeased with anything other than food; and you don't want to risk them overeating and becoming sick on the attractions planned for after eating.

One thing that Universal Studios in Hollywood is offering to help combat this is an all you can eat pass. This pass is available at least through December 31 of 2006 and it is quite ingenious. You are allowed one entrée, one side dish, and one dessert at Mel's Diner, Louie's Pizza and Pasta, and Jurassic Café. The cost for this is \$19.95 for adults and \$9.95 for children who are less than 48 inches. For that price you are getting quite a bargain in light of most theme park food expenses. You can also purchase an All You Can Drink pass that provides unlimited fountain drinks for \$4.95. These are both a wonderful way to help families economize their trips in addition to reminding us parents to anticipate and plan for meal times, try to have attractions near the restaurant you chose for before and after (give the kids something to look forward) and remember that it's sometimes good to sit down on solid ground and just be still.

Also remember that it is very important to remain hydrated throughout the day so drink plenty of water. The California sun can be brutal, especially if you aren't accustomed to it. Also bring plenty of sunscreen and apply it to everyone every time you think about it to avoid uncomfortable sunburns or worse, sun sickness. Most importantly, have fun and enjoy your trip!

## ***Allowing Everyone to Have a Special Event Makes Everyone a Special Contributor***

If you are considering Universal Studios for your next vacation there are several things you can do to make your time here more enjoyable for you and your entire family. If you are taking your family, each and every member probably has a specific imagine in mind of how the day is going to turn out for them. I want to begin by saying that Universal Hollywood might not be the wisest course of action for very small children as it has less in the way of entertainment for them as places such as Disney would. This is not to say that they could not really enjoy themselves, just a word of caution that you may wish to take this trip with your children when they are at least school aged.

That being said, for the older children, teens, and big kids alike there is something different that probably appeals to everyone that is taking the trip with you. I know in our family my husband and I can be saying the same thing but argue that we each offer a more valid point. I am not good at visualizing and he says I use too many words (probably a result of my chosen profession I guess). At any rate, it's hard to imagine that everyone attending would expect or even want the same identical experience. This is the true beauty of a theme park such as Universal. However, in order to preserve peace among the family, I seriously recommend allowing each person to choose at least one attraction that he or she feels is a must see and then place all other attractions that are high on the list to a vote and agreeing to fit others in as there is time and agreement. This will save twenty minutes of arguing in the park about what to do next. If you are going to argue about anything, please have the good gumption to argue while standing in line for an attraction rather than doing it after you've gotten off. This is where most people/families waste the most time on a trip such as this—arguing (mom wants to sit a few, kids want to defy gravity, and dad wants to be left alone in peace—at least that's the way it is for us).

At any rate, allowing everyone to get one attraction that they really wanted to see, allows everyone a special memory for the day. Trying out other attractions that you may have not personally chosen allows you to broaden your horizons for the day, and having it all planned out ahead of time, allows you more attractions for the time allotted. Priceless!

## ***Promoting Harmony Among Siblings at Universal***

One of the worst things we do for ourselves when we go on vacation is over planning. It is always a good idea when going to places like Universal Studios to have a plan of action but the best plan of action is two or three must see/must do attractions followed by wandering aimlessly. This doesn't work so well if you are going with children, but you could allow each child to choose one special attraction which effectively makes them part of the planning process and therefore important. It's amazing how little things have such a strong impact on a child's perception of events in the world around him.

I have three children, by allowing each child one special attraction and one attraction for each of us big kids, we have five attractions for the day planned. If we stand in line for each of those five attractions our day will probably be over immediately after the last ride. I may be exaggerating a little bit, but not much. If we instead elect to purchase a 'Front of Line" pass, we cut our line standing time by at least half allowing us to see five more attractions which allows everyone a runner up—more fond memories, less hurt feelings, and much less complaining while standing in line.

Isn't it amazing how little changes in our approach and big changes in our budget can bring such peace, harmony, and good will between siblings?



## ***Park Information***

If you are planning a trip to Universal Studios Tours, you need to know specific information about the park before you arrive. If you have special needs, you may need more information than usual, and you should contact Guest Services and inform them of your special needs prior to your arrival.

You may purchase tickets in advance either online, or over the telephone. Tickets can also be purchased at Ticket Master Outlets and through travel agents. You may also purchase tickets at the gate. General one day admission costs \$55, and those under forty eight inches tall are charged \$45. Children under three are admitted free of charge. VIP Studio Passes are available on a limited basis, and are not available for children under the age of five. The cost for VIP Studio Passes is \$149 per person. Annual tickets are also available, at a discounted rate.

Universal Studios Hollywood is located in Los Angeles, California, at 100 Universal City Plaza. This is easily found right off of Highway 101, which is often called the Hollywood Freeway. The park is about ten minutes from the Los Angeles downtown area.

Only paid parking is available. It costs \$10 for cars and \$11 for recreational vehicles. You can also get preferred parking, which is closer to the entrance for \$17. Free parking is not available on the Universal Studio grounds.

Realistically, it takes a full day to see all of the attractions in the park. However, if you don't have a full day to spend at Universal Studios Tours, you should purchase the VIP pass, which will allow you to move to the front of the line for all rides and attractions. This cuts down wait times in lines significantly, and allows you to see all of the attractions much faster.

Don't allow the rain to ruin your parade! The park remains open even when it rains, but if severe weather is an issue, many shows may be cancelled or relocated. In the event that the park must close due to whether, a rain check will be issued. A Universal Studio rain check will be issued if over 1/8 of an inch of rain falls before 2pm, and it is good for thirty days.

Again, if you have special needs that may need special accommodations, please contact Guest Services by telephone prior to your visit. Some accommodations can take up to two weeks to arrange, so the sooner you contact Universal Studios Tours with your special needs request, the better the staff will be able to serve you.

## ***The Best Time To Visit***

As with all theme parks, there is a good time and a bad time to visit the Universal Studios Tours theme park. You should strive to visit at a time when the park is less crowded to get the most out of the tour and the park.

Weekends and school holidays should be avoided. Most of the visitors at these times are local people who live in the area, and it becomes very crowded, with very long lines. The park is closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas, so don't plan a visit during those times.

Visit the Universal Studios website to find out which movies are in production, or which movies will be in production at the time of your visit. This may play in the decision as to when to visit. If you visit during the time of a movie production, you are likely to see the movie set, and you may even get the opportunity to see the stars in action!

When you do visit, plan to arrive well before the gates open. You should arrive at least thirty minutes in advance. You should buy your tickets in advance for added convenience. This can be done through a travel agent, over the phone, or online. Tickets can even be printed out using your printer.

## ***Blackout Dates***

If you are a regular annual pass holder for Universal Studios Tours, there are certain blackout dates when you cannot visit the park unless you pay for a one day full priced ticket for the blackout date. Not being aware of these dates may cause you problems, so make sure you know when they are!

In 2006, there are no blackout dates during the months of January through June, and no blackout dates in October. Every Saturday and Sunday are blacked out for July and August. Additionally, July 3rd and 4th are blackout dates. September 2nd and 3rd, November 24th and 25th, and December 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, and 31st are all blacked out.

Additionally, the park is closed on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. If you are a regular annual pass holder, either upgrade to a premium or deluxe annual pass, or avoid the Universal Studios Tours on these dates so that you will not have to pay the full one day price – which costs almost as much as a regular annual ticket!

## ***Hotels***

When planning your Universal Studios Tours vacation, you may wish to stay at a hotel that is within walking distance of the park. There are only two hotels within walking distance, and they are both world-class hotels that are highly recommended.

The Universal Sheraton Hotel is located at 333 Universal Hollywood Drive. The hotel has served visitors to Universal Studios since 1969, and it is known as the Hotel of the Stars. The hotel literally sits on the back lot of the studio.

Featuring 436 guest rooms and suites, the hotel often has many famous guests. There is no telling who you might run into! Although it is in walking distance of Universal Studios, the hotel staff believe that everyone should be treated like a star, and therefore, complimentary tram rides to the park are offered.

The guest rooms feature high speed Internet access, air conditioning, an alarm clock, cable television, and a coffee maker. Hotel services include a valet service, a business center and business services, a car rental service, a concierge service, and room service. There are 21 meeting rooms on the property, as well as a lobby lounge and the Baja Beach Club Poolside Lounge.

The Hotel of the Stars is the most popular hotel to stay at, but if there are no rooms available, you should consider the Universal City Hilton Hotel. The Universal City Hilton is located at 555 Universal Hollywood Drive. The Hilton offers guests fine dining in several on site restaurants, and has several lounges on the property as well. The hotel features a health and fitness center, a business center, and deluxe room accommodations. Each guest room at the Universal City Hilton features a view of the Hollywood Hills, including the San Fernando Valley and Universal Studios.

These two hotels are highly recommended by Universal Studios due to their close proximity and the high level of quality guest amenities and service. Because of their popularity, you should book your trip well in advance, and make sure that you make any special requests for additional amenities or services at the time that you make your reservation.

Other hotels are available within driving distance of Universal Studios Tours, but if possible, you should plan to stay at one of these fine hotels. Again, the proximity to the park and level of quality service cannot be topped. You may also be able to get a special rate on Universal Studios tickets at the Concierge's desk of either hotel.

## ***Annual Passes***

If you live near Universal Studios, or in the Los Angeles area, you should consider purchasing annual passes for Universal Studios Tours. Annual passes are reasonably priced, and will most likely save you money on admission throughout the year. Several different levels of annual passes are available.

A regular annual pass for Universal Studios costs \$65. With this pass, you will be granted twelve full months of admission to the park, 15% savings on general admission for up to six of your guests, 10% off of all merchandise, and 10% off the price of all food and beverages purchased inside the park.

You will also be given exclusive offers and invitations to special events that are held throughout the year. Some black-out dates do apply to regular annual pass holders. You can upgrade to a deluxe annual pass for \$75. This pass will entitle you to all of the things that a regular pass does, with one exception. No black-out dates will apply to you.

The best value is the premium annual pass, which costs \$99. This pass will entitle you to twelve months of admission to the park, invitations to special events held throughout the year, exclusive offers, and 15% savings on general admission prices for six of your guests, 10% off the price of merchandise, 10% off the price of food and beverages purchased inside the park, and no black-out dates. Additionally, you will be entitled to free parking during box office hours, and front of the line access at Studio Tour.

If you plan to visit Universal Studios twice in one year, an annual pass is the most logical choice. General admission for Universal Studios Tours for just one day costs \$55. If you visit twice in one year that is a total of \$110! You can get a premium annual pass for just \$99! What this essentially means is that if you purchase an annual pass, you are really only paying for two days at the park, and any additional days at the park are actually free!

As an annual pass ticket holder, you may not be entitled to other admission discounts that are available. However, you may be entitled to special discounts on the annual pass in certain situations. For instance, if you are a member of the Military, you may be eligible for special prices on annual passes. Contact Universal Studios Tours for more information about any special prices or discounts that you may be eligible for.



## ***Discount Tickets for Universal Studios Tours***

When you plan a vacation, your vacation budget is probably in the very front of your mind. Vacations can be quite expensive, and it is important to cut costs wherever you can, without sacrificing your families fun. You can save quite a bit of money with discounted tickets for Universal Studios Tours.

There are many ways to obtain discounted tickets for Universal Studios Tours. Coca-Cola has specially marked cans that will save \$10 on admission for a certain number of people. You can also save money by asking your travel agent for special deals. Many businesses also have coupons for discounted tickets. You will save additional money by purchasing your tickets online, and printing out your tickets on your home printer.

Look for discounts for students and senior citizens, as well as for children under a certain age. Many groups are eligible for group discounts. In many cases, you won't know about the Universal Studios Tours discounts unless you ask. If you attend college, ask about discount tickets in the Registrars office or in the Student's Services office at your school.

## ***Military Discounts for Universal Studios Tours***

Universal Studios Tours is proud of the men and women who serve the United States of America, and to reward them for the great service that they provide, specially priced tickets are offered. These tickets are available for all active duty military personnel, retirees, DOD personnel, members of the National Guard, Reserves, all other military personnel, and all dependants.

If you are unsure whether you qualify for these special military prices, you should contact your Commander, Universal Studios, or Commander, Navy Region, Southwest at 619-767-6000.

In order to benefit from the special military prices, your tickets must be purchased in advance. These specially priced tickets are not available at the gate, online, or over the telephone. Instead, these tickets can only be purchased from MWR ITT/ITR offices located throughout the United States. You must present a military or US Government Identification card when purchasing these specially priced tickets.

If for any reason your local base does not have tickets available for purchase, they will order them for you. This typically takes about five days, so take this into consideration when planning your trip – get your tickets as early as possible. Don't wait too late, or your tickets will not arrive in time for your scheduled leave, and you will have to pay the full price for admission into the park. No exceptions will be made.

The only way you can order your tickets by telephone, and still receive the special military prices is by contacting the Commander, Navy Region, Southwest at 619-767-6000. Your tickets will be mailed to you, and should arrive within seven business days. Overnight service may be available, but there will be an additional fee. Do not call the regular phone number for Universal Studio tickets or you will be charged the regular price. You will be charged the regular full price if you order your tickets online, purchase them through a Ticket Masters Outlet, or order them through a travel agent as well.

The special military rates do not apply to tickets that are sold through the Universal Studios Hollywood Box Office. Again, for more information on these specially priced military tickets for Universal Studios Tours, contact your local base MWR ticket office or Commander, Navy Region, Southwest at 619-767-6000.

Universal Studios welcomes military personnel. If you have served your country, make sure that you take advantage of these very special military prices – they were hard earned, and are well deserved!

## ***Appoint Yourself a VIP for the Day***

If you want to know the absolute best way to make the most of your Universal Studios Tour, sign up for the VIP Experience. For the added price, I think it's a great value for your money. I'm a time Nazi by nature. I hate wasting time more than anything in the world. It drives me absolutely mad to think that I could be doing something else with the time I'm spending standing in line. Obviously, I am not the greatest candidate for theme park rides and attractions. However, with the VIP Experience you get a 6-hour tour of the movie studio, tours of areas that general admission guests aren't allowed to view, and "Front of Line" access to all shows and attractions, and VIP seating at all shows. The "Front of Line" access would have been enough, but one of my favorite television shows is the set in which they are allowing access to, so that's an added benefit for me at the moment.

You must reserve tickets for the VIP Experience in advance and they do not allow children under the age of 5 on these tours. There are other benefits that go along with this specific tour, especially if you're a big shopper. You get a 25 percent discount on most food and merchandise in the park (for some of us, that could make up for the cost of the ticket), you get backstage meet and greets with the stunt actors. If you have young boys, they will think they have the coolest parents in the world for at least the next 30 minutes for this part alone, and you get access to the VIP Lounge.

This may or may not be your thing but for me it's awesome. I don't mind in the least being pampered and treated special on vacation, I certainly don't get that at home. Treat yourself to the royal treatment that Universal has to offer and enjoy the perks of their VIP Experience.

## ***Security at Universal Studios Tours***

If you are concerned about your safety while visiting Universal Studios, you should not be. There are security officers on the grounds, and security offices are located in the upper lot by Nick Stuff and in the lower lot inside the Jurassic Park Visitors Center.

After the 9/11 terrorists attacks, Universal Studios put a heightened security program in place. Today, security precautions are constantly taken for the safety of all visitors and guests. The park stays up-to-date on all security briefings that are issued by local and federal law enforcement agencies, and always takes appropriate measures to ensure everyone's safety and well-being.

To date, there have been no major security issues at Universal Studios. The park has never been threatened by terrorists or nationals. In the event that the park is threatened, again, measures are in place to ensure the safety of everyone. With this in mind, enjoy yourself and all that Universal Studios Tours has to offer – leave the worrying to the people who are already equipped and prepared to deal with such an emergency, should it ever arise.

## ***Special Services***

Universal Studios strives to ensure that everyone who visits Universal Studio Tours has an enjoyable experience. While guest services are available for everyone, there are special guest services available for guests with more specialized needs.

There is a 'Will Call' service located right outside the gates. Here, you can have tickets that were purchased online reprinted if necessary, get ticket reservations, or put your pet in a kennel. Also located outside the gate is the Group Sales Window. Here, you can renew your annual passes, or replace lost annual passes. The Annual Pass Center is also located here.

The Guest Relations booth is where you will find visitor information concerning hotels, campsites, and other interesting things to do in the area. You can also get assistance and guides for guests with disabilities and audio assist units. Travel assistance, lost and found, and the lost children's center are also located in and near the Guest Relations booth.

Guests in wheelchairs should have no problem accessing everything in the park, however, occasionally, some assistance may be required. If this occurs, staff members will be only too happy to assist. If special assistance is needed, please visit the Guest Relations desk, which is near the front entrance of the park. You can also contact Guest Relations in advance of your visit. Accessibility points for wheelchairs are marked with the International signs.

You should also take advantage of the Package Deliver Service at Universal Studios Tours. This service will allow you to buy merchandise, and then pick it up near the exit before you leave. The package pickup is located near Universal Film Company

If you require a sign language interpreting service, one will be made available to you at Universal Studios Tours free of charge, with two weeks notice. Arrangements can also be made for closed captioning, assistive listening devices, and telecommunication devices for the deaf. TTY telephones are located at the Guest Services booth as well, and all pay phones throughout the park have the amplified feature.

Service animals are always welcome at Universal Studios, and will be allowed in the restaurants, gift shops, and the attraction queues. For the safety and well-being of the animal, service animals will not be allowed on some of the rides or inside some of the attractions. Special arrangements can be made for the service animal while it's owner enjoys the attractions, however. Non-service animals must be placed in the complimentary kennel, located right outside the park gates.

Pregnant women should avoid The Studio Tour, Back to the Future, and Jurassic Park. These are not suitable for expectant mothers, and may cause complications in the pregnancy, including early labor. Furthermore, pregnant women will be given special stationary seating for the Shrek 4-D attraction and the Terminator 2: 3D attraction. Speak with a cast member for assistance. You should speak with your doctor before planning a trip to Universal Studios Tours – he or she may advise against such a trip.

Spanish language tours are available every day that the park is open, and tours for other languages can be arranged with advance notice. Again, Universal Studios Tours wants everyone to have a pleasant experience at the park, and they will do everything possible to ensure this. If you have a special need, please call and speak with a cast member at the Guest Services Center, or visit the center upon your arrival to the park.

First Aid is located in the upper lot near Animal Planet Live. There is another first aid station inside the Jurassic Park Visitors Center, which is situated in the lower lot. There are eight designated smoking areas, which are indicated on the park map. Smoking will not be permitted in any other areas of the park..

Again, all of these services are designed to make your visit to Universal Studios Tours more enjoyable. If you have any problems at the park, including problems are situations that are not discussed here you should find a staff member and request assistance. They will do everything within their power to help you rectify your problem, and continue with your Universal Studios Tour.



## ***Height Requirements***

Universal Studios is a great deal of fun – for most people. However there are some who simply will not enjoy a day at Universal Studios Tours – young children specifically. If you are planning a vacation to Universal Studios, you should take the height requirements into consideration – or you could end up having a miserable time.

First, you must be forty-eight inches tall to ride Revenge of the Mummy. You must be forty six inches tall to ride Jurassic Park, and you must be at least forty inches tall to ride Back to the Future. If you or your child do not meet these height requirements, you will not be allowed on the ride. There is a measuring stick that is used in the queue for each of these attractions.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that you can get by if you are just a half inch below the requirements – you can't. These height requirements are in place to ensure your safety, and park staff members are trained to adhere strictly to these rules. Just a tip – high heel shoes won't get you in either. At Universal Studios, they've seen it all!

## ***Line Time is a Premium You Shouldn't Have to Pay at Universal Hollywood***

Want to know another way you can maximize your time on you Universal Studios Tour? Buy your tickets online and print them at home. This will save valuable time standing in line. Plus, by printing them yourself, you save money on shipping and handling fees. In addition to saving time, I really enjoy saving money too, especially when on vacation so the fact that they throw in \$100 worth of coupons just for ordering and printing your own tickets is incentive enough without avoiding the lines later on, and yet, I really hate standing in line.

It seems that so much of our lives are spent waiting in line for one thing or another: the bank, the library, the pharmacy, the grocery store, parent pick up—the lines never seem to end. Who on earth wants to spend their entire vacation standing in line as well? That is why I think you should check out the discount that is being offered to online ticket buyers for the “Front of Line Pass” these passes are restricted by blackout dates but if you’re planning your vacation at a time other than this, it is well worth checking into. For me the convenience is worth the expense. I know not everyone will feel the same way and I used to be like most of you, but time is a luxury that can’t be regained (you can earn more money but you can’t reclaim lost time) and that is a message that becomes painfully obvious, as I get older.

Anyway, my advice to you is this. Spend a little time now, while you aren't on vacation, in order to make the most of your vacation when it comes around. You'll want that time you saved to watch your child's eyes glow and their jaws drop as the bottom falls out of their world and the sky ignites with fire! Or something like that. Have fun!

## ***Universal Studios Tours Hollywood Ticket Outlet***

While visiting Universal Studios Tours, you should pay a visit to the Hollywood Ticket Outlet booth. You can do more than purchase tickets to great shows; you can also request free tickets for many of the shows that are currently being filmed. Note that the shows are limited to the ones that allow studio audiences.

There are other services available at the Hollywood Ticket Outlet booth as well. These include upgraded park tickets, visitor information, and foreign currency exchange. The Hollywood Ticket Outlet is located by the Blues Brothers stage inside the park, and it is open during the same days and hours that the park is open.

Depending on when you visit Universal Studios, and what is going on at that time, you may be pleasantly surprised to find some really great deals – or to find yourself sitting in the audience of your favorite television show! Talk about sneak previews! Even if you don't plan to purchase any tickets, make sure that you stop by the Universal Studios Tours Hollywood Outlet booth to see what is being offered that day.

## ***Behind The Scenes***

If you are really interested in the world of movie making, don't miss the Universal Studios Tour. The tour takes about one hour, and you will visit the sets of many famous movies and television shows. This will not only provide you with a day filled with fun and excitement but you will also get a behind the scenes look at what it really takes to produce the Movies that we all wait anxiously to see. You will see the stars dressing rooms, and you may even run into a star or two along the way, or get to see an outdoors filming session in progress.

The Special Effects Stage, located inside the park, is another attraction you won't want to miss. Here, you will learn how Hollywood creatures are made, how sound effects are produced, and how visual affects are designed and implemented. This is an interactive attraction, and it only takes about thirty minutes to go all the way through it. Even though it doesn't last long, there is a lot of information to be learned here – quickly! The interaction with the visitors makes this one of the most popular attractions at the park.

For the most exclusive and personalized look behind the scenes, you should definitely consider purchasing a VIP Studios Pass. This pass costs under \$150 for one person, and it is worth every penny! This will entitle you to a private tour of Universal Studios, and you will be allowed in areas that standard tour visitors won't see. You will also have the right to move right to the front of the line for all rides and attractions with the VIP pass. VIP passes can be purchased online, by telephone, or at the park – but they are limited to a certain number of VIP passes that are issued per day, so get yours as soon as possible.

Universal Studios is more than an amusement park, it is an interesting and amazing learning experience that you will never forget – no matter what age you are. The next time you watch an action movie, you won't think 'how did they do that?' You will already have some idea as to how those special effects were created! You may even get so much out of your Universal Studios Tour experience that you think of ways that you could have done it better!

## ***Attractions to See***

When you are planning a trip to Universal Studios, there are many attractions to keep you occupied, including the Universal Studios Tour, which takes about one hour. However, there are some attractions that absolutely must not be missed!

All of the rides have a movie theme, and if you've seen the movies, this makes the rides more enjoyable. Start with Backdraft. This isn't actually a ride, but it is a fire show that features lots of stunts and interaction. Other shows that must not be missed include Animal Planet Live, WaterWorld, and Fear Factor Live. With Fear Factor Live, make sure that you know what you are getting into before you agree to participate!

Terminator 2: 3D is the same as the movie Terminator 2 – but it is in 3D, which you probably have not yet seen. The Mummy Returns: Chamber of Doom is like a haunted house that you walk through, which is full of thrills. The Studio Tour will have you on the set of Jaws and Psycho, in a western town, on a New York street, and experiencing an earthquake with King Kong.

## ***Incredible Rides***

If you are looking for fun, thrills, and adventure, Universal Studios is the place to go. There are rides that will thrill you and rides that will scare you senseless. From caves to the air, there is something to please all of the thrill seekers out there.

Start your day with Revenge of the Mummy. This is a psychological thrill ride that is unlike anything you have ever experienced. This is a roller coaster ride in total darkness. Traveling at a very high speed, you will have many terrifying creatures jumping out at you. If your heart is still beating and you think you can handle more, your next stop should be Jurassic Park: The Ride.

Jurassic Park may seem a bit tame after Revenge of the Mummy, but it is still great fun, and there are still many thrills. This ride entails you riding a raft which is slowly being cranked up. Dinosaurs of various breeds appear out of nowhere while you are going up. Suddenly, you and your raft are falling quickly downhill, and the ride ends with a huge splash that leaves you soaked! Make sure you bring a change of clothes, because you will want to move on to Back to the Future.

Back to the Future will have you riding in a car like the one on the movie. The scenes from the movie literally come to life, and many people experience motion sickness...so if you are prone to motion sickness, you may want to skip this one. Other attractions not to miss if you enjoy thrills include Nickelodeon Blast Zone, Van Helsing: Fortress Dracula, the Special Effects Stages, and Shrek 4-D.

If you get scared easily, you may want to avoid these thrill rides and attractions. They are also not recommended for very young children, pregnant women, or people with heart conditions. People with anxiety issues should avoid these attractions as well. There are many tamer rides and attractions that can be enjoyed in the park if the thrill seeking rides aren't suitable for you.

The purpose of going to the park is to have fun. If the thrill rides and attractions scare you to the point where it isn't fun anymore, than they should be avoided. Don't allow others in your party to coerce you into visiting the attractions that scare you too badly. Again, there are many attractions at Universal Studios Tours that are suitable for those who aren't comfortable with the thrill seeking rides – so don't think that you can't have a good time without getting scared senseless!



## ***Jurassic Park the Ride is What a Visit to Universal is All About, Jurassic Sized Thrills***

Jurassic Park the Ride at Universal Studios Hollywood is the epitome of the thrills and suspense that bring us back for more. This is a ride that everyone in the family will want to ride. Unfortunately there is a height restriction of 46 inches.

The ride follows along the path of the first movie in many ways. It's an amusement ride that is peaceful and allows the passengers to watch the dinosaurs in their 'natural' habitat. Then things go wrong. From that point on, the thrills take over the ride. This ride is quite an adrenaline rush and you should be prepared to get wet.

One truly unique thing about this particular ride is that it allows you participate in a program called 'child switch' in which one parent can wait with younger children while the other enjoys the ride, then switch so that both parents/adults in your party get to enjoy the ride.

If you like thrills, drops, and water, this is the ride for you. Be prepared for the water though and be sure to have any belongings you may have with you protected from the water. This is a ride that is meant to be a lot of fun, so sit back, relax, and be prepared to have your pants scared off.

## ***Mummy the Ride Delivers on all the Promised Thrills***

Of all the offerings at Universal Studios Hollywood, the one must see stop (if you don't have small children with you) is the newest attraction. Revenge of the Mummy the Ride offers frights, chills, and thrills in the silence that is broken only by the sounds of the undead creatures and your own screams.

Using sand-filled tracks that work to muffle the sounds of the coaster the designers of this ride have managed to amplify the suspense and intensity that this extremely thrilling ride offers. Your heart will race not only at the ride itself but the creepy crawly creatures of the night that seem to literally come out of the walls.

The creators claim to have made serious use of the 'science of fear' in the making of this ride and they really deliver. Almost every conceivable phobia is addressed during the course of this ride. This is one ride that I absolutely recommend against bringing small children on. But if you are a true adrenaline junkie then this ride should give you a healthy dose of it.

This is not a ride for the faint-hearted. This ride delivers on all the promises that Universal made about it and is definitely on my list of must do's for my time at Universal. Check it out and if you don't have a few chills on this ride, then you might want to check your pulse afterwards.

## ***Nickelodeon Blast Zone***

If you bring younger kids, aged twelve and under, to Universal Studios, they will probably be most interested in the Nickelodeon Blast Zone. Featuring three attractions in one, this is one of the few attractions that really appeal to the younger crowd at Universal Studios Tours, so you can expect them to spend a great deal of time there.

Shaped like a huge orange rocket, the Nickelodeon Blast Zone is a big hit. This is a huge play area basically – and it is unlike any playground that your kids have ever experienced. There are three sections of the playground: The Wild Thornberry's Adventure Temple, Nickelodeon Splash, and The Nick Jr. Backyard.

The Nick Jr. Backyard is the only place in Universal Studios that will be of any interest to toddlers. In fact, it is the only safe place for toddlers. If you bring a toddler with you to Universal Studios Tours, plan to spend the entire day here.

Nickelodeon Splash is a water area. Bring a change of dry clothes, because the kids will get soaked here. They can fill buckets of water in a fun variety of ways, create waterfalls, and stand under waterfalls. There are also many mounted water guns to be used and enjoyed.

The Wild Thornberrys Adventure Temple is an extensive playground. While here, you will have foam balls flying through the air all over the place – the kids are able to shoot and throw them, and since they are made of soft foam, they are safe.

The kids can also meet many characters here, including the Rugrats and Blue's Clues Characters. The attraction is located on the upper lot, and is open everyday that the park is open. If you don't want your child to get wet, avoid this attraction altogether, because with all of the water flying around and being dumped, there is really no way to avoid getting wet. If your child is too young to enjoy the attraction by themselves, you will be getting wet as well.

Overall, this is the only attraction that younger kids will enjoy at Universal Studios Tours. As a parent or guardian, you should expect to spend most of your time here, and you should never leave your child unattended. This is not a place to drop your kids off for the day while you go enjoy other attractions. Instead, use the buddy system with other responsible adults in your party – one should stay with the kids, while the other adults go enjoy the attractions, and relieve each other often so everyone has fun.

## ***Now You Really can Dress like the Stars***

Ever wanted to dress like the stars? Well, the Wardrobe Dept. at Universal Studios Hollywood allows you the opportunity to literally wear what your favorite star is wearing. The real beauty of the clothing offered at the Wardrobe Dept. is the price tag that is attached to them. The prices are popular and the clothes are available in a wide variety of styles. Not only for women, they have a good selection of clothing for men as well and they come in a wide range of styles. There is also the occasional one-of-a-kind item that was custom made for the actor that wore it. And every article of clothing comes with a certificate of authenticity that tells the television show on which it was worn.

While I am far from a fashion connoisseur, even I have had moments watching television when I thought, "oh, I wish I could find something like that." As a matter of fact that happens far more often than I care to admit. If you are a savvy shopper and happen to live in the area, then perhaps you should consider the "Buy a day get 2006 Free" promotion that is currently going on. Of course, this is subject to black out dates and general restrictions but if you're going primarily for the shopping this is something worth considering. Or even better if you're going just to look and get ideas about combinations for clothing items and accessories you can put together on your own by examining what the stars wear.

Anyway, here's your chance to really look like a star and at a price that it not too prohibitive. Even if you don't come out of the store with a new wardrobe, you may be able to get a few snapshots of yourself dressed as your favorite star, or at the very least come out with some new wardrobe ideas.

## ***Sometimes the Surprise Attractions Offer the Most Entertainment***

Two of the lesser known attractions at Universal Studios Hollywood are The Blues Brothers ® and the tribute to “I Love Lucy.” These attractions didn’t make the high thrills, big budget marquis lists of attractions at Universal Studios Hollywood, but they should most definitely be at the very least considered for your time here.

First of all, I Love Lucy is an almost iconic show for television culture in America. It is a show that represents a time of innocence for our country in movies and television that would be rather sad to forget. Lucille Ball is a very important actress in American movies and her madcap character in this particular television show is legendary. I am so happy that Universal chose to make a tribute to her in this way.

And what can you really say about the Blues Brothers ®? They are as well known in different ways. Lucy was known for her comedic madcap humor and the Blues Brothers ® are known for their music. And they do deliver. However, you must go against my normal advice attend on the weekend if you want to catch this performance.

If you’re looking for something a little off the beaten path, these are two attractions that will most definitely contribute to your overall enjoyment of your Universal Studios Tour.

## ***The Special Effects Stages are Absolute Musts for Your Universal Studios Tour***

You can't really go on a Universal Studios Tour without visiting the Special Effects Stages. It is here that you learn how movie magic is really made. It begins with a display of camera techniques and continues on to show you several tricks and tips for making the blockbuster movies that delight audiences around the world.

The end of your tour of these stages may even call you called upon to create special effects of your very own so pay close attention. This is probably one of the most interesting attractions at Universal because you are actually learning about the very thing that draws us to places such as Universal Studios in the first place. I remember as a child watching Star Wars, the first of its kind, and then later watching E.T. these movies captured my attention as well as my imagination and have been an important component of my history.

My love of special effects was sealed with these movies that came out very early in my childhood and yet somehow defined my generation and reshaped the movie industry. Learning about special effects and finding out how they are done, is making the most of your Universal Studios Tour.

## ***Universal Studios City Walk is a Can't be Missed Stop on Your Universal Tour***

If you are planning a trip to Universal Studios in Hollywood, you need to make a point of hitting the City Walk on your way out. You can find almost anything at the City Walk and it has become an important part of the overall Universal experience.

You can find everything from food, to great shopping, to bowling, to NASCAR racing simulations. There's also a Rumba Room (you can learn more about the Rumba Room at [www.rumbaroom.com](http://www.rumbaroom.com)). And if you're in the mood for a Mechanical Bull then you will definitely want to mosey on down to the Saddle Ranch Chop House, while you're there you can try out some of their sumptuous steaks. They also have an outdoor dance floor and big screens for your favorite sports. You can't miss out on the Red Wings just because you're on vacation after all.

And if this isn't enough for you, there's food, wonderful foods of many flavors. From fast food to Wolfgang Puck and everywhere in between (don't forget to stop by The Crepe Café for some yummy crepes) Universal Studios City Walk has much to offer those who are seeking respite from a long hot day in the sun. Just don't forget the shopping. Mom has been carrying babies, bags, and burgers all day long, now is the time when you can let her have some fun!



## ***Universal Studios Back Lot Tram Tour is a Universal Must***

You can't really go to Universal Studios without actually going on a tour of Universal Studios. The tram ride may appear to have long lines but the lines tend to move quickly. My suggestion for this particular ride is that you make it your first thing to do on your day at Universal. This ride takes you around the complex and gives you a good idea of things you may want to see and experience later in the day. Whereas if you wait until the end of the day you may become bummed out by the seeing several things you may have missed.

This ride, unlike other rides and attractions in the park, lasts about an hour and is very thoughtfully and artfully done. Many people list this particular ride as the highlight of their trip to Universal (yet another reason to make this ride your first ride of the day, you won't be worn out, hungry, or nearly as frustrated as you would after the other lines you will be waiting in throughout the day) so it is very well worth the wait.

Some recommend skipping this ride if you have small children. I say you know your children best, if you think this ride will be too intense (and it can be quite intense as it does engage all the senses) then this ride might be something that should be skipped or you can opt to elect one family member to remain with the smaller children while other family members ride. This is a ride that appeals to people from all walks of life. It offers thrills, chills, and excitement. A must see, if at all possible on your Universal Tour.

## ***Hollywood Animal Actors Steal the Show at Universal Hollywood***

While most of the attractions at Universal Studios Hollywood are geared towards adults and older children and teens, there are a few attractions that are family friendly, while remaining exciting and fun even to the older kids and teens on your trip.

Hollywood Animal Actors is one such attraction. Younger children and older children, teens, and parents alike will enjoy the crazy antics of these wacky animals. These shows thrive on audience participation and are always good for laugh after you've spent a few hours in the baking in the hot southern California sun while waiting for a five minute thrill ride. In fact, this show can help you find your lost sense of humor; in fact your sense of humor could become the very object of the show if you aren't careful.

Smaller children love watching the animals and the interaction the older audience members enjoy the participation and the madcap fun of this show. If you're looking for a calming break from the thrills and spills, this is the show for you.

Keep in mind that it is all in good, clean fun and a riot of laughs for everyone. The purpose of a vacation is to have fun, and this show will help you let your hair down and do just that.

## ***Universal Studios Tours and Jay Leno***

If you will be visiting Universal Studios Tours, and you wish to see the Tonight Show with Jay Leno, you may be in luck – if you get to the Hollywood Ticket Outlet booth early enough. Getting to see Jay Leno in person and be a part of the Tonight Show audience may be the perfect end to the perfect day!

Again, make sure that you get to the booth early. Exclusive seating is limited to a first come, first serve basis. Only two priority tickets will be made available for each person, and nobody under the age of sixteen may attend the show. These tickets go fairly fast, and once they are gone, they are gone for good.

The Hollywood Ticket Outlet Booth is located inside the Universal Studios Tours park, near the Blues Brothers stage. If you get there early enough, you could be sitting in the studio audience enjoying Jay Leno's monolog very shortly! Your friends won't believe you, so make sure that you get souvenirs before leaving Universal Studios, and save your ticket stub!

## ***Universal Studios Tours and Television Audiences***

Have you ever dreamed of sitting in the audience of your favorite television shows? Now you can – at the Universal Studios Tours TV Audience Booth. This could be the opportunity of a lifetime, but you need to move fast.

Make your way to the TV Audience Booth inside the park. Find out what shows are filming on that particular day, or for other days when you will be at the park. The tickets are free, but there is limited availability, and not all shows will be filming everyday. You can often find out the filming schedule for shows by calling ahead. With that schedule, you can plan your trip to coincide with the filming of your favorite shows.

What better way to spend part of your Universal Studios Tour vacation? You can see what is going to happen on your favorite television shows well in advance. You can even make a game of it! Don't tell your friends that you were in the audience, and place bets as to what is going to happen later in the series!

## ***Fear Factors Greatly at Universal***

For the ultimate audience participation experience at Universal Studios, you absolutely must go to the Fear Factor Live attraction. In order to participate you would have to sign up well ahead of time and meet certain physical requirements and be willing to absolve the park of any liability. Even if you are not among the brave participants, I am sure you will find the show to be very much like a train wreck.

While certain aspects may frighten or disgust you, you find yourself helpless to look away. For me this is a must skip, because I have such an insane fear of snakes and they often use snakes for one of their challenges. But if confronting fears, or more importantly, watching others confront their fears is something that gets you excited, and we all know that to some degree that thrill is what brings us to places like Universal Studios Hollywood, this may be a show that you will find entertaining.

Whether this is a little too much for your taste or not, this particular attraction is very much in keeping with parks underlying commitment to make people confront and face their fears. In fact the creators of Universal would probably be the first to agree that forcing people to face their fears is the very magic that makes Universal work.

## ***Backdraft is Not for Everyone; But Offers Real Excitement for the Action Addict***

The Backdraft attraction at Universal Studios Hollywood, probably one of the most interesting to see, from the point of view of a lover of movie magic. The show is divided into three parts. The first two parts are both educational and entertaining. The purpose of the first two parts of the show is to educate you about how the movie was actually made. They take the time to explain what happens with the fire and how they made the show.

The final room is a recreation of a warehouse fire. With my nature as an explosion junkie I am all about this particular attraction. I found it be exciting, thrilling, exhilarating, you name it. This is a show that you could possibly take your children to. You know your children best and can best judge how they will react to the explosions and fire and I recommend caution if you feel they may be overly frightened or become hysterical. Ironically younger children tend to fare better in this particular attraction than the older children.

Ultimately it comes down to your personal tastes, likes, and dislikes. If you're an action junkie you will be far more likely to completely and utterly enjoy this attraction. If you aren't into action sequences, you will probably not like this one at all. So only you can decide if this is a must see for you or one to put on your long list of those that you will see if and only if you find the time.

## ***Van Helsing Fails to Pack the Powerful Punch that Universal can Deliver***

One would hope that if you are planning a trip to Universal Studios in Hollywood, that you are at the very least a serious movie fan. I mean you are after all planning a trip to movie magic central. This isn't a bad idea actually. If you're anything like me, there are some movies that you find more appealing than others. Van Helsing was for me one of those movies that I simply adored from the start. I know the story and appreciate the character, but I'm getting away from the topic at hand, which is the Van Helsing: Fortress Dracula at Universal Studios in Hollywood.

If you want to make the most of your trip to Universal Studios Hollywood, I recommend skipping this attraction. Especially if you are a fan of the story or the character, you will find yourself disappointed if you spend your time here. You have no idea how much it really pains me to recommend against this attraction because of my deep love of the story. At any rate, I feel your time would be better spent on other attractions than standing in line for this particular one.

If this is something you absolutely want to see, I say go for it, but if it wasn't on your short list, you may consider it if you have seen all the attractions that made your short list and have time left over, but I wouldn't dare to say that your trip to Universal would be lacking in anything if you skipped this attraction all together.

***Water World at Universal is a True Example of Hollywood's Ability  
Revive the Dead***

In a true display of movie making magic, Universal Studios Hollywood has created a hit from a flop. Water World was rather disappointing as a movie, but the Water World attraction has made up for what the movie lacked in thrilling effects. From outstanding explosions to suspenseful stunts this show delivers where the movie failed.

There is a pre-show put on by the performers in which they encourage audience participation; this is one of the better performances at Universal because of this fact. Getting the audience involved drives the beginning of the story and the interesting plot delivers it.

Everything that seems to be missing in the one is present in the Universal show. This power packed performance keeps the audience thrilled throughout the performance. This show, while more family friendly than many of the attractions still may not be a good idea for smaller children who are frightened by loud noises. If your children are anything like mine, they make noises much louder at each other so it's probably not a problem.

There's nothing like a good sea battle to get the juices flowing on a piping hot southern California afternoon. I think this attraction will greatly enhance your visit to Universal if you have the time to check it out.



## ***Nickelodeon Blast Zone is a Blast of Refreshing Coolness in the Southern California Sun***

If family fun is the order of the day for your Universal Studios tour, then the Nickelodeon Blast Zone should be a can't miss attraction for you and your family. Ideal for the younger children in your family, there is even lowbrow fun for older kids, big kids (the grown up kind), and teens in this area.

The Wild Thornberry's Adventure Temple and Nickelodeon Splash are the key elements of Blast Zone. Just remember to either bring a change of clothes or wear something that is splash friendly and hopefully will dry quickly. It's called the Blast Zone for a reason as the Nickelodeon Splash provides all around water fun for everyone.

It's a great place to cool off from the hot afternoon Southern California sunshine and I recommend this for an afternoon activity rather than somewhere to go earlier in the day for many reasons. 1) If you save it for the afternoon, it gives something for the younger kids to look forward to all day (don't make it the last thing, just some time after lunch—they will only be patient so long). 2) The afternoon is when people are starting to get tired, cranky, and hot—it's a good time to cool down with a little splish splash fun. And 3) Even in summer the Southern California mornings and evenings can get quite cool quite quickly, you don't want to be wet when the cool down begins.

Remember this trip is about fun quality time with your family. Your children will have twice as much fun being silly, if you are being silly with them. Have fun and be silly, that's what it's all about!

## ***Terminator 2:3D Is a Thrill-packed Adventure Worthy of Universal***

Terminator 2:3D is making waves at all three Universal Studios. Arnold Schwarzenegger is back in the role that made him famous, only this time he is immortalized in 3-D film. Not only did Schwarzenegger return but Linda Hamilton and Edward Furlong return also.

If you want an experience that will have you alternately ducking in your seat and standing up to cheer, then this is the show for you. The combination of big screen effects with live actors on stage make for quite an exciting show. The combination of motion, sounds, and lights offer a stunningly convincing effect. Audience members become unwitting participants in the show, which merges fiction and reality like none I have seen before.

If you like thrills, spills, and chills then this is the show for you. I have to admit that I am an action junky, I rate movies by the explosions involved. The bigger and better the explosion the more likely I am to enjoy the movie. That being said, it goes without saying that the T 2:3D experience was a favorite for me. This may not be appropriate however, if you have small children with you as the action, lights, motion, and sound effects can be quite intense and frightening to small children.

***If you're Looking for a Happy Ending for your Universal Studios Tour,  
- Try Shrek 4-D***

Shrek 4-D is quite possibly the most popular attraction at Universal Studios Hollywood at the moment. It offers adventure, thrills, chills, and a happy ending that will appeal to everyone in the family. Yes, even the skeptical teenagers will find themselves enjoying this attraction, even if it's completely against their will.

I think that is perhaps the best part of all about the entire Shrek enterprise. You grow quite fond of someone who really pretends not to care. Much like many teens I know and knew (though it seems so long ago), Shrek is all the more loveable for his insecurities. And this show is probably the highlight of Universal Studios Hollywood for anyone under the age of 12. If it didn't make your short list of must see attractions, then perhaps you should reconsider, especially if you are bringing children with you on this trip.

For the kid in all of us, the Shrek 4D experience is a can't miss attraction at Universal Studios in Hollywood. If you love fairy tales, happy endings and just desserts, then this is definitely going to be a highlight for your Universal memories.