

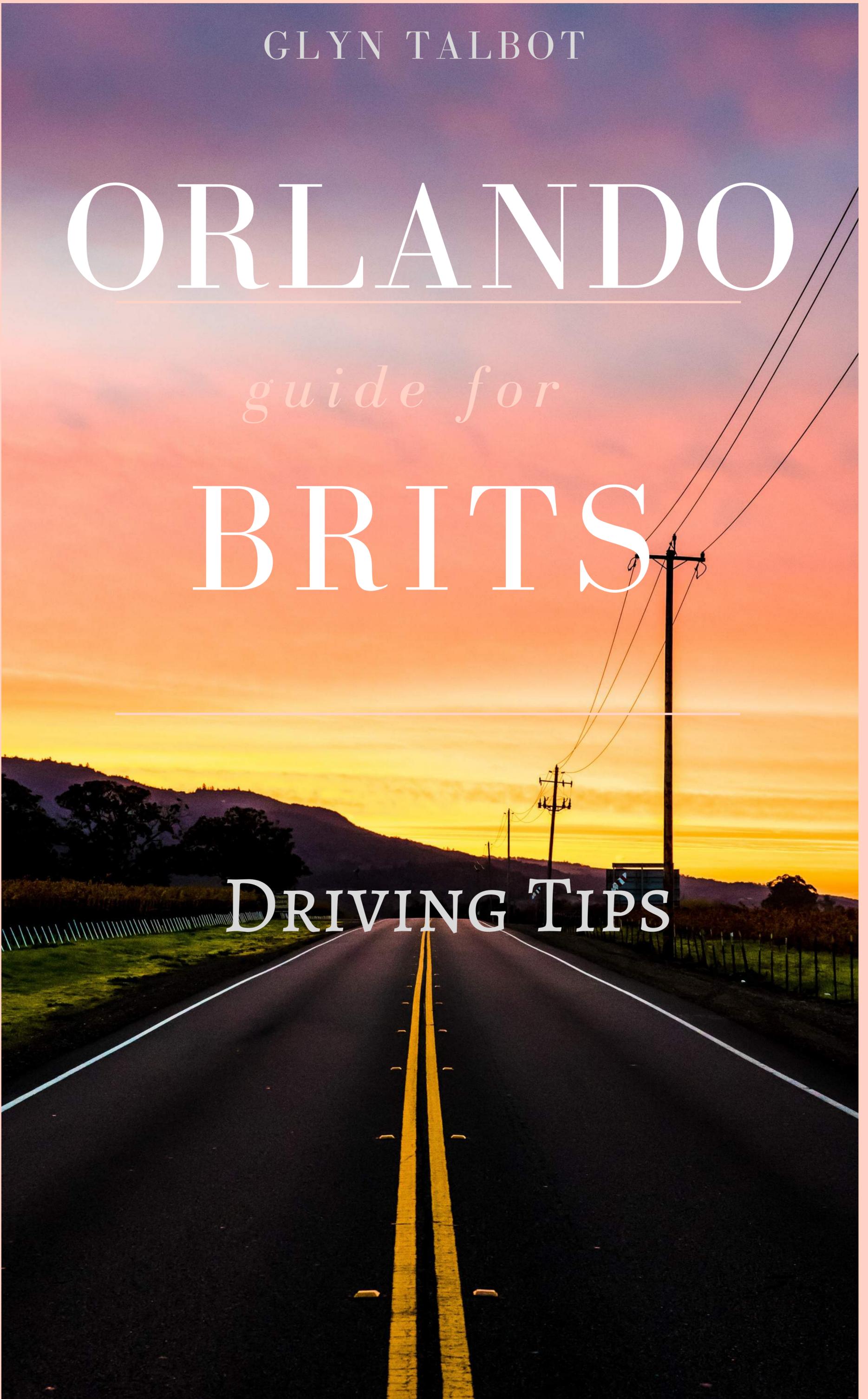
GLYN TALBOT

ORLANDO

guide for

BRITTS

DRIVING TIPS



People ask me on a daily basis
“Do I need a car in Florida.”
And “Is it possible to get around the Kissimmee area without one?”.

The answer is yes and yes. Of course, you can get around without a car. It's Florida, you're not going back in time! You can get around Britain using public transport, and the same goes for America. But who goes without a vehicle, and why would you?

Florida is massive, America is massive, and getting around is the most important thing to make your holiday go smoothly, allow you to see what you want when you want to, and give you a bigger degree of freedom. In my many visits, I've done both, and driving is definitely the best way to see Florida.

Whether for a few days or a few months, to see all your preferred attractions and get the most of the area, you're best getting a car.

People don't walk in Florida, everyone uses a car. Sometimes, you may find that you can't get to shops, restaurants and other local services without a car, as there is either no footpath or the bus won't go anywhere near it.

Here is a guide to give you the very best tips and hints on how to drive safely in Florida. It's not daunting, it's actually very safe, and a lot easier than you may think. The traffic system seems to be built to be safe and smooth, there are no roundabouts on main routes, and red lights don't always mean stop!

However, there are a few things you should know to make your experience safer. So, here is your guide to help you stay safe and get the best out of your time on the Floridian roads

What Happens When I Arrive?

Well, as you step off the plane and head through immigration towards the car hire concourse, you'll notice that all the people that got off the plane with you are doing the same. You want to clear immigration, get your car and be on your way....but so does everyone else.

My tip, when you're getting your cases, if you can, let the driver in your party go directly to the car hire desk to start the ball rolling and get your car. It may save you a lot of time.

Most of the car rental companies are on the main concourse together.

Whether you're with Alamo, Budget, Hertz, they're all there.

Some companies are based off site (a short distance from the airport terminal) but all will provide a courtesy shuttle to take you to and fro every few minutes, and most are only five minutes away.

Some of the rental desks are staffed by friendly faces who want to make your first impression of Florida as good as possible....some are staffed by people who want to take advantage of you, after a stressful 8 hour flight, and get you to sign for insurance and extras that you just don't need!

My tip, and a tip from lots of others, is to check and double check your agreement before you get there. Make sure you have all the insurance you're comfortable with, and check you're not "doubling up" on insurance, and that you're getting just what you need. Remember, your personal insurance may cover you for the extras the car companies offer you.

Choose your car

Most companies offer small to large cars, but they'll all be great, will all have air con, and will be well looked after. Chances are you've chosen your car already, and it will be everything you need, but if you're not happy about something, then mention it to the agents. Also, give it the once over and check for any damage, so you don't get blamed for it later.

Please remember that drinking and driving is not OK in Florida, and you can be arrested and sent to jail the same as in the UK. Flights may provide complimentary beverages, and you may have that "I'm on my holidays" attitude, but remember that when you land you'll be driving, so don't overdo it!

Ok, so you've got your car, and you're about to leave the airport. As you leave you'll be stopped at a Security Booth, where an agent will check your documents before you're

on your way. Any nagging doubts? ASK NOW before you leave...

You are now driving out of the airport, and remember, you won't be driving anywhere without your licence.

Keep it with you at all times. I always take a photo of the rental agreement, and keep the original safe in the car, that way, if you need help or have any queries, all your information is at hand

Remember, you're driving the vehicle now on the left side of the car, and you'll be driving on the right-hand side of the road!

When you leave the airport, and we're concentrating on Orlando International in this Guide, you'll be sent on the ring road. You can drive round and round this road all day, so if you miss a turn, don't panic, just carry on round and take it next time.

The road itself is wide, and it's impossible to drive on the wrong side, as you're filtered left and into the correct lane.

Now, most visitors will head for the Greater Kissimmee area, and the main area that contains all the attractions, so you'll be heading for the Interstate 4 (I4). There will be toll roads as you leave, so make sure you have spare coins with you to either pay the toll agents or use the automated machines. If you have no change then ask at the rental desk. If you arrive at a booth and you have no change, and it's automated, the toll booth will record your visit and send the hire company a bill, so if you have an incident where this happens, mention it when you return your car, as most companies have a system in place so you can pay for your toll (with a small admin fee) rather than getting a fine.

Driving is smooth in Florida, and with the exception of the usual road works happening here and there, it's usually stress-free. Roads are wide and directions are posted everywhere, and traffic jams aren't that bad when you think of the number of visitors in the area.

However, the Interstate can be very busy and if you're visiting Orlando for the first time, especially at rush hour (which is when the park visitors are arriving from 8 am, and then leaving from 4 pm) and have just stepped off a long flight, it can be difficult to find your way.

If the traffic is clear, it should only take you around 40 minutes to get from the airport to the main area around the parks.

Regulations and Safe Driving

To rent a car in Orlando you'll need to be at least 21 years of age at the time of rental. You can rent from that age on, but you may find that some companies will charge extra if you're under 25.

You can use your normal UK licence, but if you have the old style, you may be asked for further photo ID. You do not need an international driving permit to drive in Florida. As mentioned before, please keep your documentation with you when you're driving around.

Speeding is taken seriously and tickets are regularly issued to motorists who get caught breaking the limit. I've lost count of the number of tourists I've seen being ticketed for speeding on the I4. Speed limits are posted everywhere, and I'd advise you stick to them. There are many types of Police around, State Troopers, local Sherriff,

County Police, but they're all Police, they all carry guns, and will all give you a ticket!

The speed limits in and around Orlando vary according to local conditions, so the best advice is to pay attention to road signs and adjust your speed accordingly. It's pretty much 55mph to 65mph on the Interstate, 55mph on main carriageways, and 30mph in residential areas. Don't be reckless, don't speed around schools or try to race school busses – you'll get a ticket!

Another tip, don't drive too slowly on freeways either, as minimum speed limits will also be in place.

Parking

It's always best to find an official "parking lot" when there. Most if not all buildings and attractions have ample parking, and you'll be safe and your car will be secure. That said, please don't leave valuables on show, and common sense applies as it would everywhere. If you have to park on the street, you should always park facing the same way as the flow of traffic. If you park facing the opposite way, you may end up getting a ticket!

At the theme parks in Orlando, you will have to pay for parking, and this can vary from \$10 to \$25 for the day.

There are ticket bundles that sometimes allow you free parking, so may be worth looking into if you'll be visiting the parks daily. Some attractions, such as Disney Springs and some water parks offer free parking. (at the moment!)

Tips for driving in Florida

Obviously, drive on the right!

This may be a strange one, but when driving around, always drive to the right if you can: What I mean by that is, if you have a three lane highway, always favour the right hand side as you would the left in the UK. Remember, in Florida, your exit from a road may be on the left as well as the right, so people will tend to drive on either side of you approaching these junctions.

HOWEVER! Undertaking is acceptable. When you're on the highway in Florida, you may see people driving past you in the 'slow' lane. Undertaking might be classed as dangerous in the UK, but it's a part of driving in Florida. Keep your concentration, use your mirrors, check left and right, and make sure the road is clear before you change lanes.

Turning Right on a Red Light

If you reach a junction and the lights are red, you should always come to a stop. But, if you're planning to turn right, you can usually turn on a red light if safe to do so, even if the light remains red. Always make sure it's safe to turn before pulling out though, and look out both to your left, and vehicles coming straight at you from the opposite junction turning right. Sounds daunting, but trust me, it's easy.

Occasionally, there will be a sign as you approach the junction stating "No turn on red light". This means exactly what it says on the tin, So don't. Ticket!!

You can turn left, right, or go straight on at a flashing amber light, again, if it's safe to do so. These are usually found around fire stations, schools etc.

You must always stop at a stop sign. That means stop. Wheels stop. Even if there's nothing coming and your road ahead is clear. Stop!

Petrol Stations

They are everywhere, and I mean pretty much at every junction and near every attraction. It is the norm to pay for your petrol (or Gas as they say) in advance. If you don't use the full amount that you've paid, just pop back inside for your refund. You can arrive at pre-pay pumps, just like at home, but some don't like UK credit and debit cards. Again, don't worry, it's as straight forward as that. Typically, an SUV will cost about \$50 to fill, and a medium car around half that, and at the time of writing this, petrol is around \$2.80 a gallon. Cheaper than water! You may also find that you can spend hours in a petrol station, as they are mini supermarkets! Top up on snacks, coffee, cool water, or use the restroom, most have all the facilities of a Motorway service station back home!

Satellite Navigation System (Sat-Nav)

Most companies give you the option of hiring a sat-nav. Some even give it to you free, or you have a vehicle with one fitted.

They are great to help you get around, and are kept up to date with traffic alerts, diversions and new roads.

Some apps on your phone will also give you great sat-nav facilities, but please be careful you don't use hundreds of pounds worth of data using your phone whilst abroad! Again, ask when you initially rent your vehicle about sat-nav options.

You will be given an old fashioned map, but you may like to make your experience as trouble free as possible, and sat-nav may help with that.

Discount Florida Car Hire

& Sat Nav Rental



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