



Rock Springs Run



Winter Garden



UNEXPECTED

# Orlando

BY MIRIAM PORTER

You know sunny Orlando for its exceptional theme parks and exciting attractions but there is another side to this Central Florida city. Don't miss out on trendy neighbourhoods packed with hidden gems, art installations, unique dining experiences and even a few natural wonders.

## STOP AND SMELL THE FLOWERS

You don't have to go far to immerse yourself in an urban botanical oasis. The 20-hectare **Harry P. Leu Gardens** is an Orlando treasure and a peaceful spot to rekindle your love for plants and flowers. Bring your camera to capture the many collections including woody-stemmed bamboo, an entire banana compilation, a spectacular citrus grove, fruit trees, pretty pink camellias, and herbs and vegetables to inspire your next meal.

## GLASS HOUSE

There is no stone throwing from this gorgeous **Glass House**. Located in the Lake Nona neighbourhood, this life-size art installation is a glistening hidden gem. Imagine the sun shining down upon a kaleidoscope house made of reflective panes of stained glass. New York artist Tom Fruin, whose work has appeared across Europe, used reclaimed materials to create his rainbow masterpiece.

## MURAL, MURAL ON THE WALL

Lace up your walking shoes for an excursion to Orlando's **Mills 50 District**. This funky urban neighbourhood is made up of culturally diverse and creative shops, galleries, venues and restaurants, all within a walkable community. Admire brightly coloured and professionally illustrated murals as they relate to Orlando living. Murals include flying birds, jogging people, comical characters, amusing animals, symbols of peace, and hearts and rainbows with "Love wins" messages. Artwork even decorates the neighbourhood's storm drains, utility boxes and dumpsters.

## TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Bring your appetite to **Market On South** in Orlando's **Milk District** and dine on delightful plant-based goodies. This shared market space serves up specialties made with local produce. Our pick: The Dirty South Scramble from **Dixie Dharma**, a dish made with fresh greens, squash, tofu, veggies and faro grains. Save room for colourful vegan cupcakes and cookies from **Valhalla Bakery**. With a full tummy, shop for sundry provisions and artisan crafts including cruelty-free soaps, candles, jewelry and distinctive clothing.

## PEDAL THROUGH TOWN

Rent a bike and cycle along Orlando's longest paved bicycle trail in **Winter Garden**. Not far from downtown Orlando, this charming historic town is situated near beautiful Lake Apopka, an old citrus settlement. **West Orange Trail Bikes & Blades** offers hourly or daily bike rentals so you can explore the impressive 32 kilometre trail at your leisure. Trails are open from sunrise to sunset and will take you past lush fields and beneath forest canopies. Keep an eye out for roaming wildlife.

## FLOAT YOUR BOAT

**Rock Springs Run** at **Kelly Park** is a natural lazy river and an under-the-radar paradise just a car trip away from city life. Admire crystal clear water as you leisurely make your way downstream past Amazon-like beauty on a kayak, paddleboard or floating tube. Search for wildlife along the riverbank among rustic pine trees beneath a sunny sky. If you dare, camp overnight along Rock Springs Run, where primitive and remote campsites are accessible only by canoe.