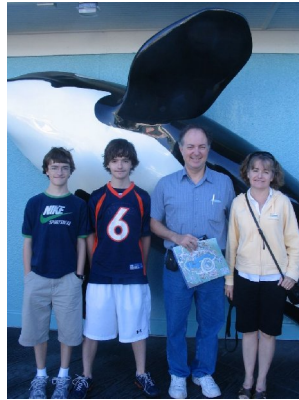




## SeaWorld Orlando Review

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By

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With contributions by

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In our many trips to the Orlando area we have spent most of our time at Disney World with occasional visits to Universal Studios. In October 2008 we decided to try something different – a two day SeaWorld Orlando experience. We enjoyed our time at SeaWorld very much and found it to be a fun alternative to the other theme parks in the area. In this report we'll tell you our opinions of the different attractions at SeaWorld.

### **The Shows**

SeaWorld features several amazing and unique shows featuring SeaWorld cast members interacting with various mammals of the sea.

#### ***Believe – Shamu Stadium***

The most famous of the SeaWorld shows features several Orca killer whales doing acrobatic stunts in a large stadium. I had seen Orcas in the wild in Alaska but this show gave me a



chance to view these incredible mammals up close. I marveled at how well trained the Orca whales were as they performed many stunts in the 30 minute show. Particularly impressive were the acts where the whales swam with their trainers and propelled the humans out of the water. The high energy show was well coordinated with lively music. There were fun elements, too, such as when the whales splashed water on those sitting in the front rows.

Anne says:

“Unlike Andrew (see below) I thought the story of the Shamu show – ‘Believe’ – to be very sweet and touching. The show begins with a video of a young boy making a wood carving of the tail flukes of a whale that he makes into a necklace. This young boy finally encounters the thing he most wants in this world – to swim with an orca. The story then becomes live action when the boy is now an adult and is able to interact with these amazing killer whales.

It is a very large stadium and I recommend sitting as close to the middle as possible. Although the action can be seen from any seat, there are parts when the whales slide out of the water and they are in the center of the stadium and being in the middle was a good location for pictures.”

Josh says:

“I liked this show and I’m glad I saw it. There are a few killer whales that do tricks like jumping out of the water. The front rows are not a good choice unless you like to be soaked!”

Andrew says:

“I thought the story was a little cheesy “ If you believe in jumping killer whales anything can happen!!” But Shamu was pretty incredible. I just don’t know how they trained him to do all of that. Did they just go up to him one day and say, ‘Ok, I’ll give you fish if you do some insane aerial stunts?’”

Grade: A

### ***Blue Horizons – Whale and Dolphin Theatre***

I was surprised to discover Blue Horizons was even better than the Shamu show. This was one of the most intricate theme park shows I have ever seen! The performance featured amazing choreography of dolphin/whale tricks coordinated to upbeat music and the SeaWorld aerial acrobats and divers. I was amazed at how the non-stop show displayed one amazing effect after another during the 30 minute performance.



Anne says:

“This show was definitely my favorite. When we knew we would be back to SeaWorld for a second day on this trip, I planned our morning around seeing this show again. I felt a variety of emotions from joy, excitement, relief and more, at seeing the amazing tricks of the dolphins and their trainers, the divers, acrobats and beautiful birds – spectacular!”

Josh says:

“This show was very creative and I liked how they combined dolphins, small whales, and birds into one show. The animals do some amazing tricks and there are also people that dive into the water and ride on the dolphins. In some ways I liked this even more than the Shamu show.”

Andrew says:

“I thought the story in was kind of corny but the whales and dolphins were amazing. Personally I liked that show better than the Shamu show.”

Grade: A+

### ***Clyde and Seymore Take Pirate Island***



This fun show featured Sea Lions, an otter, and a walrus interacting with SeaWorld actors. The Clyde and Seymore Sea Lions were well trained to bark on command at different parts of the performance. Unlike Believe and Blue Horizons this show had a lighter comedic tone. A Dad with his family sitting next to me laughed through the whole performance and said at the end “I liked this better than Shamu!” The young kids in the audience seemed to like this show better than Shamu, too.

Anne says:

“This was definitely a change of pace from the other shows. It was very funny and the humor was intended for young and old alike. It was scripted but almost like improv because there were parts when things didn’t seem to go as planned but the cast used this to ad-lib and make the show even funnier. Be sure to arrive early as there is a mime who entertains the crowd as they wait for the show – his contribution made the wait seem like nothing.”

Grade B

### ***Other Shows***

SeaWorld featured several other shows that we did not attend:

- A'lure ... The Call of the Ocean featuring acrobatic artistry and dance
- Shamu Rocks – a different show as Shamu leaps, splashes, and soars to different Rock tunes
- Pets Ahoy! – Cats, dogs, birds, and even a pig perform high action feats

We were impressed with the quality of the three shows we did attend and hope to see some of these shows on our next visit.

## Rides

### ***Kraken***

Mom and Dad declined to experience this speedy roller coaster featuring upside down loops, so we'll let Andrew and Josh give their impressions:

Josh says:

"My favorite ride at SeaWorld was the Kraken. It is a huge roller coaster that does tons of loops and corkscrews. I even got to sit in the front row once. This was definitely my favorite ride of the trip – even better than the rides at Disney World!"



Andrew says:

"Kracken was also my favorite. We went on this ride 5 times!"

Grade A

### ***Journey to Atlantis***

Josh says:

"We sat in the front seats and we got soaked completely! In some ways it was better than Splash Mountain at Disney World because there was more than one big drop. I also liked at one part it was like a roller coaster."

Andrew says:

"I really liked the drops – there is more than one drop, and when it turns into a roller coaster (it goes sideways). There wasn't much of a story. I didn't like the creepy elf that laughs. But I've never seen a flume ride that turns into a roller coaster during the ride – very original."

### ***Sky Tower***

While the boys were going on the thrill rides Mom and Dad experienced the more sedate Sky Tower ride. We rode this right after the park opened on the second day of our visit – a good time as we saw longer lines for this attraction later in the afternoon. The ride cost an additional \$3/person. I thought the extra charge was worth it as we were treated to some amazing views of the park and the surrounding area high on the tower. The ride slowly rotates as it goes up and down the tower.

Anne says:

“The view was spectacular. Although the ride up and back down went too fast (not the speed of the ride, the time it took to go up and back down). I would have liked to have stayed at the top for a while to enjoy the view. I agree that it was well worth the money and since there were only a few of us on the ride we were spread out and had a whole window to ourselves.”

Grade B+

### **Sea creature exhibits**

SeaWorld featured a number of walkup exhibits where you could get up close to different creatures who live in or near the sea. The ones we visited:

**Shark Encounter** – The most impressive part of this exhibit was walking through a large underwater tube with dozens of sharks swimming all around you. Check out the Shark’s jaw skeleton and other interesting shark exhibits. Grade A.

**Penguin Encounter** – A good place to visit on a hot day – this inside refrigerated building displayed a large variety of penguins. Closest path to the exhibit window is a moving sidewalk, so if you want to spend time looking at the penguins you have to stand on a higher platform. The most penguins I have ever seen in one exhibit! Grade B+

**Dolphin Cove** – This is an interesting exhibit where you can see dolphins close up, both above water and from a special underwater viewing area. Guests can place their hand in the water and with luck a dolphin will come your way. You can also feed the dolphins at specified times each day for an additional fee. Grade A.



**Pacific Point Reserve** – is a sea lion and harbor seal exhibit. Seeing the sea lions bark with their large mouths is an interesting sight. We were able to watch the sea lions and seals during feeding time – very cool! Grade B+

**Manatee Rescue** – I was fascinated to see these large sea mammals closeup from an underwater viewing area. The Manatees were munching on heads of lettuce. There is an interesting video that provides information about the Manatee and the rescue efforts that is very informative. Grade A-

**Wild Arctic** – An exhibit displaying Polar bears and walrus. This SeaWorld display was not as good as I expected. Our zoo back home in Denver has a much better Polar Bear viewing area. Prior to seeing the animal exhibits you can ride a simulated helicopter journey to the Arctic (similar to Star Tours in Disney’s Hollywood Studios). There is a non-motion version for those who prefer to skip the action. Grade C+.

**Alligators** – Another somewhat disappointing exhibit. The alligators here were smaller than what I have seen at other theme parks. If you want to see gators – go to Gator World! Grade C.

Stingray Lagoon – interesting exhibit where you can touch stingrays. Stingrays are plentiful (up to 200 stingrays) and we saw many people, old and young, interacting with these docile animals. Grade B+

Turtle Point – includes many endangered and threatened species of sea turtles. You can get an up-close look at many large and small varieties of rescued sea turtles. Grade B

SeaWorld also features Clydesdale Hamlet, where you can take a picture with the famous Anheuser-Busch Clydesdales, Shamu's Happy Harbor (a kids play area with special rides for children), and more. Next door is SeaWorld's new water park Aquatica. We didn't get to all of the attractions – there was more than enough to see and do to keep us busy during our two day visit!

## **Dining**

We had one fast food lunch at Mango Joe's Café. We thought the food was overpriced and just average, though better than the fast food we had at Universal on our last trip. On our second day we took a break and had lunch outside the park. Fast food grade: C+

## **Tickets**

In the Fall of 2008 SeaWorld had a good promotion where you could get a 2<sup>nd</sup> day free with a 1 day park pass. We thought there was plenty to see at the park for one day so we were glad to return to visit the attractions we missed on our 2<sup>nd</sup> day.

## **Summary**

We were surprised at how much fun we had at SeaWorld – we liked this park even better than our visit to Universal Studios on a trip earlier in the year! We recommend SeaWorld as a good place to visit for a day or two as an alternative to nearby Disney World.

Anne says:

“When you first arrive at SeaWorld be sure to get a map/Show Schedule. We found the map extremely helpful as it is a large park. On the flip side of the map there is a Show Schedule. Most of the Shows are offered 3 or 4 times a day. We found it helpful to use the schedule to plan the shows we wanted to see in advance. The seating fills up fast and you will get the best seats by planning ahead.

I would definitely visit SeaWorld again on a future trip.”

Josh says:

“My second favorite part of our vacation (next to our Disney Cruise) was our visit to SeaWorld. It was my first time going there and the rides and shows were great.”

Andrew says:

“SeaWorld was awesome and a lot better than I expected!”



**Overall Grade: A**

*Do you want to visit SeaWorld on your next Orlando vacation? We can help! Contact us at [info@familytravelgurus.com](mailto:info@familytravelgurus.com)*

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