

# Grandparents Guide to Gryffindor

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*"You might belong in Gryffindor,  
Where dwell the brave at heart,  
Their daring, nerve and chivalry  
Set Gryffindors apart."*

Your grandchildren are visiting, and they know you live near the realm of Harry Potter at Universal Orlando Resort. Even if you are daring and brave at heart, you still need to know a few things before you go.

To anyone under the age of 15, Harry Potter has always existed. And everyone else knows that the adolescent wizard has made British author J.K. Rowling a very wealthy woman since her first Harry Potter book appeared in 1997. Your grandchildren want to see you, of course, but visiting the "Wizarding World of Harry Potter™," which opened last October in Universal's Islands of Adventure, is most likely on their little agendas, too.

Although visiting a theme park in the summer is not your idea of a vacation, you may be surprised that a day in Potter's world isn't so bad. In fact, seeing the delight on your little muggles' faces as they enter Potter's Hogsmeade Village might even make up for the high cost of admission and the long lines you endured to get there.

I recently took my niece, who devours Harry Potter books and films as fast as they appear, to the 20-acre attraction. As we waited to get inside Hogsmeade Village (yes, you wait again at the arched entryway after you walk through most of the Islands of Adventure

to reach it), she stood silently with a mesmerized look on her face. Her only comment: "It's so beautiful." I thought I saw tears welling up in her eyes as we jockeyed for the best picture-taking position of the postcard-perfect village. And then we were off for a magical day.

#### **BEFORE LEAVING HOME**

Put bottled water in backpacks or totes so you can stay hydrated. Unlike some other parks, Universal will let you carry your own water and small snacks inside. No glass is allowed.

Don't forget sunscreen, sunglasses and hats. Insist that your wizard-wannabes keep slathering sunscreen on all day, too.

Buy your tickets online so you can get the Florida resident discounts. If your grandchildren are under the age of 18, they do not have to show an ID; however, all Florida ticket holders over 18 must show proof of Florida residency when arriving at the park.

Read the descriptions of the shops, eateries and rides online before you go at [www.universalorlando.com](http://www.universalorlando.com) so you will know why you are standing in lines. Even Honeydukes sweetshop had people waiting outside for the legendary chocolate frogs.

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If only I had Hermione's Time-turner pendant, I would return in time to learn more about the attraction before going. Knowing the following ahead of time would have been money and time savers:

- Buy a one-park pass if you are going for one day only. The Harry Potter attraction is located on the Islands of Adventure, which is completely separate from Universal Studios, the movie and TV-based theme park next door. You need the more expensive two-park pass if you plan to visit both. Seeing both parks in one day is extremely difficult for two reasons: long lines for the rides and limited amounts of stamina, both yours and the kids. Don't let your little wizards bewitch you into buying a two-park ticket unless you plan to stay overnight.
- Be at the Islands of Adventure gates when they open at 9a.m. because

only a certain number of people are allowed inside Hogsmeade Village at a time. Once the limit is reached, guests stand outside the hallowed gates until other people exit. We were lucky — our wait time was less than an hour but if we had arrived any later, we may not have gotten in at all.

- Share the first Butterbeer, a non-alcoholic drink of choice among young wizards, to make sure everyone likes it. The beverage is very sweet, like a cream soda. The park also offers Butterbeer as a frozen concoction, which I recommend because the regular version gets hot quickly. The park's other signature drink, Pumpkin Juice, is similar to apple cider mixed with pumpkin flavoring.
- Head first to the “Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey™” attraction inside Hogwarts Castle because it's the pinnacle of all



things Harry Potter. Riders must be 48 inches tall, and they will need to stow purses and backpacks in a free, nearby locker. However, keep sunglasses and small cameras with you. You are going to wait in the sun for a long time (90 minutes for us) and you can take photos inside the castle, which we did not know. Just make sure those items are tucked securely in a pocket when the ride begins.

- Plan to meet at The Owl Post, where benches are available, if your grandchildren are old enough to ride alone.

After a successful day of navigating the Wizarding World of Harry Potter™, your little muggles will be enchanted by grandparents who are as knowledgeable and wise as Hogwarts Headmaster Albus Dumbledore.



### ***Harry Potter Trivia for Grandma & Grandpa***

**Gryffindor:** one of the four houses of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

**Muggles:** non-magical people

**Hermione:** a Gryffindor student and one of Harry's best friends.

**Albus Dumbledore:** a wise old man and headmaster at Hogwarts.

**Time-turner:** an hourglass pendant used for short-term travel back in time.

**Butterbeer:** a real drink in London in 1588.

**Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows - Part II,** the final Harry Potter film, will be released July 15.

