Why Choose Jacksonville, Fla.? Why not?!

A list of the top features that make our destination perfect for you

Only in Jax! What You Won't Find Anywhere Else. Jacksonville is the largest city in the United States with hundreds of unique attractions and venues to please every budget and every taste. We have 21-miles of white-sandy beaches, the longest stretch of the St. Johns River runs thru our city, we have the Intracoastal Waterway where the Ocean and the River meet, we are home to the largest urban park system in the nation with over 100,000 acres, we have Florida's youngest population giving our city a booming nightlife and dining scene, local bars with live music to upscale lounges with elegant cuisine, we have Florida's best Symphony, and that is just the beginning. So what else can you find only in Jax? Here are just a few features…

Explore the Undiscovered: The abundant park land and ecological preserves in Jacksonville provide an unforgettable opportunity to escape city life and relax in nature's playground. Jacksonville proudly boats the largest urban park system in the country with more than 100,000 acres including 10 state parks, five national facilities and dozens of gardens and arboretums. So come hike, kayak, bike, camp, fish and explore our green areas, you can even go horseback riding on the beach or do yoga while kayaking on the Intracoastal. If seeing our amazing parks from land is not enough, then take a helicopter tour of the Atlantic coast or skydive and get incredible views of Jacksonville Beach and Downtown Jax. Another way to have a unique adventure in Jacksonville is taking an eco cruise with Jax Water Tours or a dolphin limousine with Crazy Fish Jax and coming face to face with dolphins and manatees in the wild. Another adventure to have in Jacksonville is a River Cruise down the St. Johns River; it runs thru Florida and gives visitors a chance to discover unique locations in our area filled with Southern charm.

365 Days of Beach Life: 21-miles of white-sandy uncrowded beaches await your visit in Jacksonville. Our beaches are open year-round, and the best part is that while the rest of the nation cools off our weather remains flip-flop perfect! You can relax under the sun or get more active, take surfing or kiteboarding lessons, rent kayaks and paddleboards, fish at the pier or rent a fishing charter boat. Our beaches are uncrowded, you will find lots of free parking and be able to dine and enjoy unique and local restaurants just feet from the Ocean, like Crazy Fish, Nippers, Singleton's Seafood Shack, Marker 32, Azurea Restaurant and new addition to the beach scene, Sakana Restaurant & Blue Bar. Tours of the Intracoastal Waterway are the latest attraction at the beaches; go on a sunset cruise or an eco-tour where you can see dolphins and manatees in the wild and interact. A unique attraction that is only available in Jax!

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1,220 Holes of Golf: Unlike many other regions in the nation, it never gets too cold to skip golf in Jacksonville. With a moderate temperature year round and an average of 300 days of sunshine annually, Jacksonville and the beaches are a great destination for a golf vacation. There are over 70 public and private golf courses in our area, including at the Beaches the Windsor Park course, Jax Beach Golf Club, Selva Marina and Queens Harbour; in the Southside/Baymeadows area Deercreek; and on the Westside Bent Creek Country Club. Each May, the PGA Tour makes a stop in Ponte Vedra for THE PLAYERS Championship. World Golf Village, a 30 minute ride from downtown Jacksonville, celebrates the history and sport of golf with the World Golf Hall of Fame. Courses throughout the area were designed by the likes of Tom Fazio, Pete Dye, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player and Mark McCumber.

Dancing in the Streets: Jacksonville hosts some of the Southeast's most visited and exciting events aimed at showcasing local, national and international talent in budget-friendly, even free venues. Movie making in Jacksonville has long been a part of the city's framework; we are after all the first Hollywood with our movie-making history dating back to the 20's. Relying on this history, the Jacksonville Film Festival, held annually in October, works to serve as a destination for the independent film community while paving the way for a new generation of local and national talent. The newest addition to Jacksonville's festival lineup is One Spark, a 5-day event in downtown Jacksonville aimed at attracting innovators, entrepreneurs and artist to the city to find the next best thing. The Jacksonville Jazz Festival, a free festival held annually over Memorial Day weekend, provides an outlet for local and world-renowned musicians like Chris Botti, Spyro Gyra and Patti LaBelle, performing over the course of three days on several stages in Downtown Jacksonville. During the festival Downtown becomes an art market with streets filled with art vendors and music in every corner. Also in Downtown Jacksonville's Metropolitan Park, the annual World of Nations Celebration invites visitors to experience the culture, cuisine and music of over 30 different countries. Over at the Beaches, the annual Springing the Blues Festival, one of the largest blues festivals in the nation, is a free three-day oceanfront event featuring a number of renowned blues performers as well as numerous vendors and activities geared for the entire family. The Great Atlantic Seafood & Music Festival, also in Jacksonville Beach, is another great spot to taste delicious seafood, browse the crafts market and dance to jazz, blues and beach music for free. Jacksonville Beach is also the perfect backdrop for the Jacksonville Sea and Sky Spectacular, a 2-day air show featuring the world-famous Blue Angels along with other military and civilian flight teams. The Blue Angels were funded at Naval Air Station Jacksonville and they always put on a great free show for their hometown.

Hola, Visitors! Jacksonville is rich with Hispanic history and heritage, a must-see for every Hispanic American. Some will argue, but our First Coast is actually the location of the nation's first Thanksgiving, dating back to 1565 and the first Spanish Conquistadors. Since the beginning, Jacksonville has laid out a welcome mat to people of many diverse backgrounds; the ethnic groups have shaped this city for the last five centuries. From the native Timucuan Indians to the French Huguenots to the Spanish Conquistador to the African slaves, they all have their place in Jacksonville's history. In Jacksonville, the Spanish arrived 500 years ago, taking over French settlements in the area now known as the Fort Caroline National Monument. Just a 30 minute ride from Jacksonville is the nation's oldest city, St. Augustine. It was founded in 1565 by Spanish explorer Pedro Menendez. Nowadays the Hispanic community continues to have a presence in the area, 3% of

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the St. Augustine's population is Hispanic or Latino. In Jacksonville that number is much larger; almost 8% of our city's residents are Hispanics.

Connect to Our African Roots: It is in Jacksonville that native sons James Weldon Johnson and John Rosamond Johnson composed the "Black National Hymn" called "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing". Explore stops along Florida's Black Heritage Trail, including the Catharine Street Fire Station, now home to the Jacksonville Fire Museum and the Clara White Mission. The Clara White Mission was founded by a former slave whose compassion for humanity moved her to action; it has been helping the less fortunate for over 100 years. Take in a live performance at the Ritz Theatre & Museum in Jacksonville's historic African American community of La Villa. During La Villa's height of activity in the 1920s-1960s, it was known as the "Harlem of the South." Nowadays, on any given weekend, you can see nationally acclaimed African American performers at the Ritz wowing sold-out crowds. The Ritz is also home to a museum on black history in Jacksonville. Another historic location of immense importance to our African American history is the Kingsley Plantation, Jacksonville's oldest residential home and Florida's last still-standing plantation home. Wander through the remarkably preserved slave quarters, barn, plantation house, kitchen house and interpretive garden all located on the waterfront. A short ride away, at Amelia Island, you'll find American Beach - Florida's first African American resort community.

The Doctor is Calling: Jacksonville is "America's Health Center." Medical professionals and patients are drawn to Jacksonville by an extraordinary network of high-profile healthcare facilities. Few American cities of any size are home to so many facilities, among them Baptist Health, Brooks Rehabilitation, Mayo Clinic, Memorial Hospital, Nemours Children's Clinic, St. Luke's Hospital, St. Vincent's Medical Center, Shands Jacksonville, University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute and Wolfson Children's Hospital. Few offer so many top programs, from cancer treatment, cardiac health and advanced rehabilitation therapies to dialysis, pediatrics, bariatric surgery, family medicine, key medical research projects and much more. Jacksonville offers special rates and deals for out of town patients and helps relatives plan activities around the medical treatments.

Sketch That! Jacksonville has once again been selected as one of the top 25 big cities for art by American Style Magazine. With great museums, galleries, stage and musical performances, national touring acts and public arts projects, this is no surprise. Downtown Jacksonville is home to 11 new art galleries, all of which opened over the last 2-years, thanks to an initiative started by Downtown Jacksonville advocacy groups and local artists. The initiative, Off the Grid, allows local artists to create temporary galleries in unused storefronts open due to the economic downturn in the urban district. The new galleries, along with mainstay art institutions like the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) Jacksonville, create a thriving arts destination in the heart of Downtown Jacksonville.

Deals, deals, deals: Jacksonville's attractions really want visitors to stop by, so great deals and offers are available all-year-round. From $2 days at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens to a tour of downtown Jacksonville with lunch for just $15, the offers are designed to get visitors in town and get them to discover

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our beautiful destination. Most hotels in the area have special rate packages combined with local attraction admission deals to get you in town.

10 Things to do in Jacksonville without Opening Your Wallet: Jacksonville is a very affordable destination, from low hotel rates to free parking at the beaches; our destination offers visitors the experience of a lifetime without having to pay for it for life. Here are 10 things to do FREE of charge:

1) Listen to world renowned Jazz performers at the Jacksonville Jazz Fest.
2) Enjoy a day by the river with music, food and local crafts at the Riverside Arts Market.
3) Do Yoga, bike, browse through local vendors at the Community First Saturdays in downtown Jacksonville.
4) Go for a hike and explore Jacksonville's green areas at the Jacksonville Arboretum.
5) Visit dozens of local galleries during ArtWalk every first Wednesday of the month.
6) Spend the day at Jacksonville Beach, basking in the sun.
7) Visit Kingsley Plantation, the oldest Plantation house in Florida.
8) Take a tour of the Budweiser Brewery and enjoy a free beer tasting.
9) Free Tuesdays at the Cummer Museum of Arts and Gardens. One of the most visited museums in the Southeast.
10) Ride the Jacksonville Skyway. It connects the Southbank with the Northbank in downtown Jacksonville giving visitors great views and a chance to explore downtown Jacksonville.

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