

ConventionSouth

NORTHEAST FLORIDA

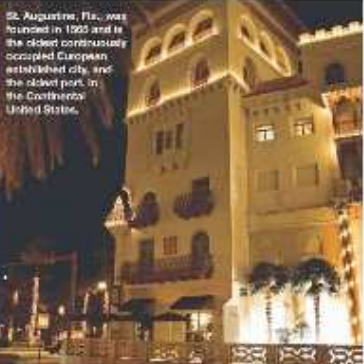
INSIDER'S GUIDE By Ashley Wright

Northeast Florida

A 'Totally Unique' Florida Experience

ALASKA
ARIZONA
FLORIDA
GEORGIA
KENTUCKY
LOUISIANA
MICHIGAN
NORTH CAROLINA
OKLAHOMA
SOUTH CAROLINA
TENNESSEE
TEXAS
VIRGINIA
WEST VIRGINIA

GETTING THERE
Whether Northeast Florida is comprised of the cities of Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa, Miami or any other major city, it's a great location for your Florida event. Jacksonville is just an hour's drive from Orlando, and Tampa is just an hour's drive from Miami. Orlando is just an hour's drive from Tampa, and Tampa is just an hour's drive from Miami. Jacksonville is just an hour's drive from Orlando, and Tampa is just an hour's drive from Miami. Orlando is just an hour's drive from Tampa, and Tampa is just an hour's drive from Miami.



St. Augustine, Fla., was founded in 1565 and is the oldest continuously occupied European established city, and the oldest port, in the Continental United States.

From enjoying moderate year-round temperatures to exploring the nation's oldest

city, attendees to Northeast Florida will find the area is packed with unique cultural and outdoor adventures, according to destination officials. The best of Northeast Florida for a totally unique Florida experience that's sure to please the most discerning traveler," said Lyndsey Rossmann, senior director of corporate communications for Sun Jacksonville.

Jacksonville
Jacksonville's beaches and waterways, world-class golf, cultural attractions, and diverse dining and nightlife options, make the city an exciting

one for those interested in meeting here," Rossmann said. "The city is also a value destination that is attractive to all planners looking to stick to their bottom line."

Jacksonville International Airport has undergone a complete transformation over the last several years, Rossmann said, adding that the renovations will continue into 2010 with a focus on the walkway areas and the addition of a VIP club.

Also coming to the area is an upscale entertainment plaza within the St. Johns Town Center, which will feature dining, live music venues, bars and more, according to Rossmann.

The downtown waterfront area of Jacksonville is home to a number of meeting facilities, Rossmann said, including the Prime II, USBank III Convention Center, which offers 275,000 square feet of meeting space and is less than a mile from more than 1,000 hotel rooms. "Here, teams can run an event, events can run like clockwork, and conventions, galas, shows and grand galas have replaced the bustle of a great railroad terminal," said Kim Evans, senior sales manager.

Also downtown is the Zivic-Davis Center for the Performing Arts, which features 20,000 square feet of space. There are three main theaters and a number of meeting and lobby areas for breakfast, receptions and parties, said Jiles Pappas, national booking manager.

The 252-room Crowne Plaza Jacksonville Riverfront offers 12,000 square feet of meeting space and recently installed flat-screen TVs in its guest rooms, said James Darby, director of sales, adding, "our downtown location, large walk-out balconies, overhead heated pool and spacious pool deck with cabana areas—which is perfect for events—really make us the jewel of the riverfront."

The Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront offers 965 guest rooms and 130,000 square feet of meeting space, said Carter van Edie Thorne, who was recently appointed as the director of sales and marketing, adding that all meeting space was recently re-carpeted.

"The Omni Jacksonville Hotel is where Southern charm meets urban sophistication," said Dave D'Salvo, director of sales and marketing. The 554-room hotel offers a total of 14,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Holiday Inn Jacksonville Airport is now the Crowne Plaza Jacksonville Airport. According to hotel officials, the 317-room property with 4,000 square feet of meeting space completed a full renovation prior to the re-branding.

The 156-room Holiday Inn Jacksonville South Conference Center has changed ownership and

KEY INFO

- **Sales Tax:** 7 percent in Jacksonville and Amelia Island; 6 percent in St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra Beach.
- **Hotel Tax:** 6 percent in Jacksonville; 6 percent in Amelia Island; 3 percent in St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra Beach.
- **Top Traveler:** Golf (2009 ranked Northeast Florida No. 1 in the state for an "Overall Golf Vacation Experience" in 2009).

www.conventionsouth.com

completed a major renovation in 2007, said Mary Key, director of catering. "At present, the hotel is in the final stages of rebranding." The property offers 7,000 square feet of meeting space.

Jacksonville's attractions are home to the Casa Marina Hotel and Restaurant. "One of Florida's Historic Hotels of America, the Casa Marina has enjoyed a rich history of dazzling parties and celebrity guests," said Bodo Bakoly, reservations manager. The 23-room hotel offers an entire third floor that can be reserved for small meetings.

"Having only been opened since late 2008, One Ocean provides a refreshing new atmosphere for meeting attendees," and Silvana Mergale, divisional vice president of Ritz-Carlton's luxury division. The 195-room resort offers 10,000 square feet of meeting space.

Amelia Island
"Amelia Island has upscale room ballrooms at luxury resorts offering all the latest amenities, quiet and quiet meeting rooms at historic bed and breakfast, inn, and traditional, no-nonsense conference space at brand hotels," said Gil Langley, president/CEO of the Amelia Island CVB.

New to the island is the 144-room Amelia Continuity Terrace that opened in February, according to Langley.

The 446-room Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island completed a \$22 million ballroom expansion that brings 11,000 square feet of additional meeting space to the property's 24,000 square feet of space, said General Manager Katherine Moulton. Featuring more than 49,000 square feet of function space and 627 guest rooms, the Amelia Island Plantation accommodates meetings for up to 1,100 guests, said Paul Duke, director of sales.

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches
"World-class resorts, more than 160,000 square feet of meeting space and 5,200 guest rooms with a unique dose of history make the destination an ideal location for small- to mid-sized meetings and conventions," said Barbara Golden, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and the Beaches Visitor and Convention Bureau communications manager.

The CVB is under new leadership with the appointment of Ronald Goldman as executive director. "We are extremely pleased that Richard will be bringing his wealth of experience and proven track record of success to our Visitors and Convention Bureau," said CVB Board Chairman Charles Olin.



Downtown, Jacksonville, Fla.

Two new venues have also been added to the destination. Recently, the Artie Shaw Orchestra inaugurated the 400-seat Ponte Vedra Concert Hall while the Southern Popcorn Music and Heritage Festival became the first major event to be held at the 54.5-acre Alpine Groves Park in northwest St. Johns County.

Located in historic downtown St. Augustine, the 138-room Casa Monica Hotel has been named one of the best hotels in Marriott International's Anniversary Collection, said Anthony Luzzana, general manager. The hotel offers 12,000 square feet of meeting space and two ballrooms.

The Days Inn Historic Downtown (St. Augustine) recently added a downtown brand-room, said Gina Wilcoxon, director of sales. Altogether, the hotel offers 1,842 square feet of meeting space and 119 guest rooms. "We have more meeting space than anyone else in our price range," Wilcoxon said.

In Ponte Vedra Beach is the Sawgrass Marriott with 55,000 square feet of meeting space and 508 guest rooms. "We have set new standards of excellence for corporate events at our convention center—the largest of its kind between Atlanta and Orlando," said Jeff Meyers, general manager. The resort also offers the PGA Tour's THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass.

The Ponte Vedra Inn and Club is a Five-Diamond inn with 250 guest rooms and 17,000 square feet of meeting space. "We renovated the 20-room Ocean House, one of Ponte Vedra's most beautiful guest houses, in February," said Tony Fitzgibbon, director of group sales.

Debuting this month is a new executive tower, one of the 66-room Lodge and Club in Ponte Vedra Beach, hotel officials said.

FOLLOW UP

St. Augustine
1000-240-4444
www.visitstaugustine.com/meetings

Amelia Island CVB
800-3-AMELIA
www.amieliainland.com

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitor & Convention Bureau
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