

Meet Jacksonville

Part Hollywood, part history, and all fun, this Florida town is an ashes-to-riches story.

BY DEVAN STUART

A NEW NFL FRANCHISE. The nation's largest urban park system. An eye-popping skyline of modern skyscrapers. Jacksonville might seem like an overnight success, but the rise of this urban powerhouse was a century in the making.

After a catastrophe in the early 20th century nearly wiped the city from the map, Jacksonville made like a phoenix—not the city but the bird that rose from the ashes—to become a hub of architectural richness, Hollywood glamour, business savvy, military prowess, and enlightened government in the new South.

A CENTURY AGO, a blaze dubbed the “Great Fire of 1901” made for a literal rising-from-the-ashes story. With its entire downtown corridor destroyed in the span of one afternoon, Jacksonville became an interest to architects and builders across the country. Top architects, including New York’s famed Henry John Klutho, headed to Jacksonville and began rebuilding within weeks—upwards of 13,000 buildings plus piers, docks, shipyards, and terminals by 1912.

“Investors, builders, and architects came from all over to get a piece of the action rebuilding Jacksonville,” says historian and author Wayne Wood. “With that influx came new architectural styles, modern construction techniques, and lots of money. By 1913, Jacksonville’s glistening, modern skyline was the envy of the South.”

Today, its skyline pays homage to the past with architectural gems like the post-fire, Klutho-designed St. James Building, now home to City Hall; a smattering of historic buildings-turned-upscale condominiums; and the St. John’s Episcopal Cathedral, a massive 1903–1906 neo-Gothic structure adorned with stone gargoyles. Among them stand towering modern skyscrapers, such as the Modis Building. Once downtown’s tallest, the Modis is perhaps its most recognizable thanks to bluish-green glass windows that mirror the sky.

At River’s Edge
Development on the St. Johns River has brought crowds back to downtown Jacksonville.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE JONES

On The Town

Hit these neighborhood hotspots:

Downtown

A smattering of bars and nightclubs, from the average bloke's London Bridge English Pub and Eatery to the Jacksonville Landing's South Beach-styled Twisted Martini; the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra; and half a dozen museums and galleries devoted to art, history, and science.

San Marco

Italian-inspired plaza featuring boutique shops, upscale eateries, and trendy nightspots. The San Marco Theatre and Theatre Jacksonville stage plays and offer first-run films in two of Jacksonville's favorite historic structures.

Five Points

The edgier side of the otherwise upper-crust Riverside offering an array of kitschy fringe shops and bars, such as Midnight Sun, which sells handmade gifts such as jewelry and clothing, and Starlite Café, known for its Cajun salmon.

Beaches

Enjoy a day in the sun followed by a night of carousing at dozens of beachfront bars, restaurants, and festival venues. Try longtime favorite Al's Pizza in a renovated mechanic's garage.

On a clear day, passing clouds reflected in the glass create the illusion of disappearing walls. Evening brings a sparkling cityscape crowned by four illuminated triangular panels atop the Bank of America Tower. Connecting the veins of downtown traffic are five of the town's iconic seven bridges, each of which features a vibrant glow at nighttime.

A modern skyline typically means one thing: thriving industry. The bankers arrived as early as 1877 (Barnett National Bank), followed by the film industry in the early 1900s. Take two!



The Big Test Try the 17th hole at TPC Sawgrass' Players Stadium Course.

DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE'S renaissance helped attract the nation's first filmmakers. Fed up with frigid temperatures that damaged film stock and dismayed starlets, silent filmmakers saw Jacksonville as a modern town with an array of locations: high-rise buildings, grand mansions, and low-rent row houses; pristine beaches; and picturesque farmland alongside jungle-like wooded areas. "Everything but mountains," they said. Best of all, Northeast Florida's year-round mild temperatures made for year-round production. The town hosted the likes of Lionel and Ethel Barrymore, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, and Oliver Hardy, a Georgia boy who came to Jacksonville in response to a classified ad seeking a "fat boy."

A century later, tourists, snowbirds, and the occasional modern-day filmmaker still flock to Jacksonville for the same reasons. Northern dwellers winter in vacation homes

along the beaches and into neighboring St. Johns County's Ponte Vedra Beach, where they can play the area's numerous world-class golf courses. Since 1999, more than 50,000 acres of Jacksonville's environmentally sensitive lands, some of which once doubled as movie jungles, have become part of Preservation Project Jacksonville, a regional effort that protects the area's natural treasures while providing access to them.

By 1917 most of the movie companies left due to the election of a straight-laced anti-film industry mayor and the emergence of

Hollywood as *the* place to make movies.

But as the filmmakers left, the bankers gained strength: Jacksonville would become a major banking and insurance center, boasting big names in the industries including Barnett National Bank, Atlantic National Bank, Florida National Bank, and the Afro-American Insurance Co., the nation's first black-owned insurance company founded in 1901 as the Afro-American Industrial and Benevolent Association. State legislation that favored the insurance industry later would attract insurance giants Prudential, Gulf Life, Independent Life, and American Heritage Life.

Today banking and insurance remain a strong presence. And Jacksonville is also becoming a hotspot for back-office and manufacturing operations, while remaining a player in the financial services and health industries. German-owned Deutsche Bank

recently chose Jacksonville for a 1,000-employee office, slated to open on the southside in late 2011. Tokyo's Pilot Pen Corp. announced in September it will move its Trumbull, Connecticut, headquarters to Jacksonville, bringing \$7.5 million in capital investments. And Belgium-based Ion Beam Applications, a world leader in the research, development, and installation of proton therapy systems for cancer treatment, will base its American headquarters near Jacksonville's University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute, one of five in the United States.

But these industries pale in comparison to an even larger employer: Uncle Sam.

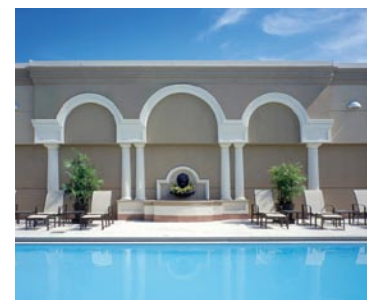
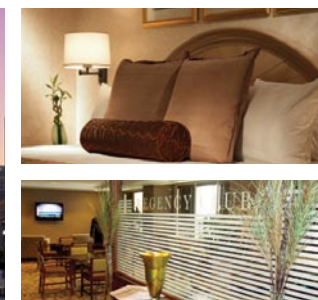
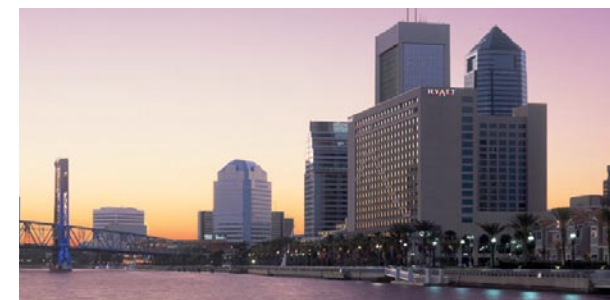
A DEEP-WATER PORT and strong military presence anchor Jacksonville's economic development. Between 1940 and 1942, Jacksonville became a military town, earning commissions for three U.S. Navy bases and an Army training base. Naval Air Station Jacksonville is the nation's third largest naval installation and home to the Naval Aviation Depot, the Navy's premier jet engine facility. Naval Station Mayport, situated along the Atlantic Ocean, is the continental U.S.'s third largest naval facility. And Camp Blanding, spanning nearly 73,000 square acres in neighboring Clay County, is a primary National Guard, Army, and Army Reserves training spot.

Today the military remains a major employer and economic contributor. For example, Cecil Commerce Center, the former NAS Cecil Field, is home to numerous aviation and logistics operations. Alenia North America plans a \$100 million final assembly and delivery center for the C-27J Spartan cargo plane, and Bridgestone/Firestone North American Tire LLC has completed its \$44 million distribution center.

A growing Jacksonville made a bold choice in the 1960s when the city and Duval County consolidated governments, one of the most pivotal moments in city history. Part of a nationwide wave of governmental reform, the consolidation streamlined government, improved schools, and reduced corruption and pollution. Consolidated cities across the United States model themselves after Jacksonville-Duval.

Post-consolidation Jacksonville brought the 1980s' "Billion Dollar Decade," so-named for the infusion of capital poured into the redevelopment of Jacksonville's downtown core. For example, the city converted an aging, boarded-up train station on the outskirts of downtown into a bustling convention center. The 1.2-mile Southbank Riverwalk opened, offering scenic parks, restaurants, and retail outlets along the St. Johns River. Sunny days attract dozens of walkers and runners to enjoy a waterfront workout. Families stroll over to the Jacksonville Maritime Museum and the Museum of Science

Business meets Pleasure at Downtown Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront



There's never been a better time to escape to Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront. Located along the North Riverwalk right in the middle of all the action. You can take your pick of concerts, Broadway shows, plays, and kids activities from venues such as The Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena, The Florida Theatre, The Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts, Ritz Theatre, Museum of Science & History, and Kids Kampus. With sporting events at the Jacksonville Municipal Stadium and the Baseball Grounds, along with exciting entertainment at the Jacksonville Landing, there is something for everyone! All venues are within walking distance to the Hyatt. The hotel features a rooftop heated pool and whirlpool, a 24-hour Hyatt Stay Fit state-of-the-art fitness center; renovated Regency Club (concierge level); Express Check-In Kiosk and Express Check-Out; Hyatt Fast Board; Hertz Rental; complimentary wireless internet access in lobby and public areas. The hotel also boasts 110,000 square feet of flexible meeting space and the city's largest ballroom (28,000 square feet in size) 30 individual meeting rooms; and hospitality suites with outdoors terraces overlooking the St. Johns River. Five restaurants: Trellises, Jaxx Sports Bar, Currents Lounge, Plaza III Steakhouse, and Einstein Bros. Bagels. Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront provides the perfect destination for that long overdue weekend getaway. Feel the Hyatt Touch.

For more information, call 904-588-1234
visit us at www.jacksonville.hyatt.com

225 East Coastline Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32202





The Casa Marina has opened its Oceanfront Penthouse and Grand Salon Dining Room for select, daytime meetings with the convenience of wireless internet.

- Private Boardroom Meeting Space with a Panoramic View of the Ocean
- Grand Salon Dining Room offers our Chef's Signature Menus for Luncheons & Private Events/Dinners

Twenty-Three Ocean View Rooms and Parlor Suites

Corporate Rate Available (Sun.-Thurs.)
Competitive Weekend Rates Available

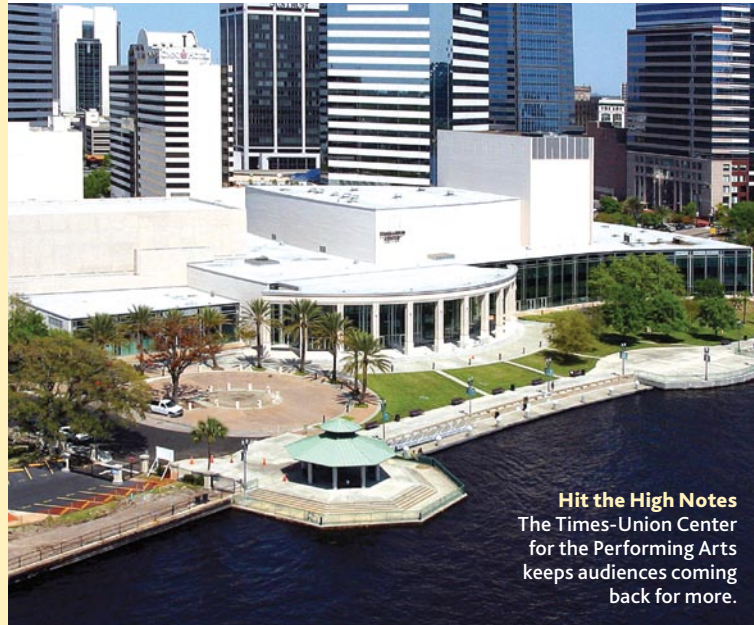


Contact Director of Catering
Beverly Davoli
(904) 270-0025
691 First Street North
Jacksonville, Florida 32250
bdavoli@casamarinahotel.com

HISTORIC HOTELS
of America

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

MEET JACKSONVILLE



and History before enjoying lunch or dinner with a view at River City Brewing Company. Upscale eateries Ruth's Chris Steak House, Morton's of Chicago, and the Charthouse are just a block off the walkway near several hotels, such as the Wyndham Jacksonville Riverwalk.

Most of all, the gravy-train '80s set the stage for even bigger, defensive linebacker-sized things to come.

OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS, Jacksonville has continued to make major strides forward, including landing the NFL's 30th pro football franchise, the Jaguars, in 1993. Newspaper headlines begged, "Jackson who?" But you can bet they stopped asking in 2005, when Jacksonville hosted Super Bowl XXXIX. On game days, hundreds of boaters dock at the nearby Metropolitan Park to enjoy some gridiron action.

During the 1990s, the River City Renaissance focused on urban renewal in the LaVilla district, then a crime-ridden strip of aging row houses and a dilapidated theatre that in decades prior had hosted some of the nation's top black entertainers. And the new Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts gives Jacksonville bragging rights to one of the nation's top performance halls, acoustically speaking.

In 2000, voters accepted the Better Jacksonville Plan, a \$2.5 billion investment in the city's quality of life. In the years since, the River City has landed many new projects: the \$130 million Veterans Memorial Arena, the \$34 million Baseball Grounds of Jacksonville, an equestrian center, and numerous new or renovated public libraries including the \$95 million main library downtown—Florida's largest. Now, well-heeled patrons stroll the downtown walkways well into the evenings, dining at upscale eateries, dancing at hip nightclubs, and mingling at regular events like the First Wednesday Art Walk. A century following its darkest hour, downtown Jacksonville continues its rise.

Devan Stuart is a Florida-based writer and five-time Florida Press Association Award winner. She has also written for People magazine and the Chicago Sun-Times.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILL YATES / CYPRIX



#17, TPC Sawgrass, Home of THE PLAYERS Championship



YOU CAN **PLAY** AMAZING GOLF HERE. YOU CAN **WATCH** AMAZING GOLF HERE. OR YOU CAN DO BOTH.

Visit TPC.COM/2009PLAYERS or call 1-800-766-8058 for golf reservations, 2009 PLAYERS Championship packages and information about our nationwide TPC Network of destination, resort and private clubs.

TPC SAWGRASS	
Golf — 2 Rounds/2 Nights	2009 THE PLAYERS Championship
Starting at: \$705* 1 round on PLAYERS Stadium Course 1 round on Dye's Valley Course 2 nights accommodations	Starting at: \$615* Weekly grounds ticket to THE PLAYERS 3 nights accommodations Tickets to the World Golf Hall of Fame
*To receive this special offer, reference offer code SWA09.	
*Per person. Based upon double occupancy.	

TPC.COM/2009PLAYERS | 1-800-766-8058