JAX

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U.S. SERIES
THE FIRST COAST

Greetings from JACKSONVILLE

48 hours, solo, at your own pace

POCKET EDITION · 2027

Welcome to Jacksonville

Jacksonville is the largest city by land area in the continental United States — 874 square miles, the result of a 1968 city-county consolidation — and it wears that sprawl in an unusual way: a genuine river city, a genuine beach town, and a handful of walkable historic neighborhoods, all loosely connected rather than stacked on top of each other.

The St. Johns River is the spine of the whole trip. It's one of the few major rivers in the country that flows north, cutting the city into a Downtown/Southbank core and a set of riverside neighborhoods that each have their own, distinct personality.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Day One covers the river — Downtown, the Southbank Riverwalk, and dinner in San Marco. Day Two moves into Riverside and Avondale's historic streets before an afternoon at Jacksonville Beach. A car or rideshare is genuinely necessary between them.

ESSENTIAL QUICK FACTS

CURRENCY
US Dollar (contactless widely)

GETTING AROUND
Rideshare · free Skyway

TIME ZONE
Eastern (UTC-5 / UTC-4 summer)

EMERGENCY
911 · Non-emergency 904-630-0500

TIPPING
18–20% restaurants & bars

SALES TAX
7.5% Duval County

01 DAY ONE

Downtown · The Riverwalk · San Marco

Day One stays close to the St. Johns River — Downtown's museums in the morning, the Southbank Riverwalk at midday, and dinner across the river in San Marco's walkable square.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville

MOCA Jacksonville, downtown on Hemming Park — a genuinely well-regarded regional contemporary art museum inside a converted 1931 department store building.

11:00 AM

The Southbank Riverwalk

A 1.2-mile boardwalk along the river's south side with the best skyline views in the city, connecting to Friendship Fountain and the Museum of Science & History.

12:30 PM

Friendship Fountain

One of the largest fountains in the country when it opened in 1965 — still a genuine downtown gathering spot at the Southbank's edge.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM – 6:30 PM

1:00 PM

Lunch — Black Sheep Restaurant

In Riverside's Five Points, with a rooftop bar overlooking the neighborhood — full bar seating makes it an easy solo lunch.

3:00 PM

Skyway to San Marco

The free automated Skyway crosses the river toward San Marco Square — a compact, walkable grid of Mediterranean Revival storefronts.

"A river city, a beach town, and a handful of walkable historic squares — loosely connected rather than stacked on top of each other."

EVENING · 6:30 PM – LATE

6:30 PM

San Marco Square

A walkable evening loop of independent boutiques and restaurants, anchored by the 1938 San Marco Theatre.

7:30 PM

Dinner — Bellwether

A polished, ambitious kitchen downtown with full bar seating and a genuinely serious wine list — an easy solo dinner reservation at the bar.

02 DAY TWO

Riverside · Avondale · Jacksonville Beach

Day Two slows into Jacksonville's most walkable historic streets before an afternoon at the beach — the two halves of the city's personality in a single day.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Riverside & Five Points

One of the largest National Register historic districts in Florida — early-1900s homes, independent shops, and Jacksonville's most walkable neighborhood core.

10:30 AM

Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens

On the St. Johns riverfront — formal Italian and English gardens alongside a genuinely strong American and European art collection.

12:00 PM

King Street, Avondale

A quieter, more upscale extension of Riverside's shopping strip — boutiques and cafes under a canopy of oak trees.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM – 7:00 PM

1:00 PM

Lunch — Community Loaves or Maple Street Biscuit Company

Riverside's bakery-cafe scene is genuinely strong — counter service makes either an easy solo lunch stop.

2:30 PM

Drive to Jacksonville Beach (25–30 min)

A genuinely different register from Downtown — a classic Florida beach town with its own boardwalk and pier.

3:00 PM

Jacksonville Beach & Pier

A wide, uncrowded stretch of sand with a fishing pier at its center — one of the least crowded major beach towns in the state.

EVENING · 6:00 PM – LATE

6:00 PM

Dinner on Beach Boulevard

A dense strip of casual seafood and bar-seating restaurants a short walk from the pier — an easy last-night solo meal.

03 RIVER CITY

The real geography, and when to go

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know Jacksonville is the largest city by land area in the continental United States — bigger than New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago combined?

In 1968, the city of Jacksonville consolidated with Duval County, creating a single 874-square-mile municipal footprint. It's why the city can feel less like one downtown and more like a constellation of distinct neighborhoods — Riverside, San Marco, the beaches — each with its own walkable core, connected mostly by car.

A SHORT HISTORY

The St. Johns River is just as unusual — one of the few major rivers in the United States that flows north, running some 310 miles from central Florida's marshes up to Jacksonville and out into the Atlantic. It's the reason the city's neighborhoods sit where they do, and the reason the Skyway and the Southbank Riverwalk both exist at all.

BEST TIME TO GO

Fall and spring bring the most comfortable weather for both the Riverwalk and the beach; the Jacksonville Jazz Festival, held downtown each May, is one of the largest free jazz festivals in the country and worth timing a visit around.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- The Main Street and Acosta Bridges lit up at night along the Riverwalk — genuinely one of the better free evening views in the state.
- The free, automated Skyway monorail — a small-scale, easy way to cross the river without a car.
- Live oaks draped in Spanish moss along King Street in Avondale — a quieter, older version of Florida than the beach towns nearby.

"Bigger than New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago combined — and it feels like a constellation of neighborhoods rather than one downtown."

04 WHERE TO EAT

Bar seats across the river

Riverside's bakery-cafe scene and downtown's bar culture both make solo dining genuinely easy here. Prices are per person, excluding drinks.

BREAKFAST & LUNCH

Maple Street Biscuit Company
RIVERSIDE · $8–14
Counter-service Southern biscuits — a genuinely easy solo breakfast, no table needed.

Community Loaves
RIVERSIDE · $8–14
A well-regarded neighborhood bakery-cafe with counter seating for a quick solo lunch.

DINNER

Black Sheep Restaurant
FIVE POINTS, RIVERSIDE · $$$

A rooftop bar overlooking the neighborhood — full bar seating for an easy solo dinner.

Bellwether
DOWNTOWN · $$$

A polished, ambitious kitchen with a serious wine list and full bar seating downtown.

BEACH NIGHT

Beach Boulevard Seafood Row
JACKSONVILLE BEACH · $$

A dense strip of casual seafood spots a short walk from the pier — easy bar seating throughout.

05 GETTING AROUND

Navigating Jacksonville

This is a driving city by geography — 874 square miles doesn't cover on foot. Each neighborhood is walkable in itself; getting between them takes a car or rideshare.

Rideshare	**$10–25**	The most practical way to move between Downtown, Riverside, San Marco, and the beaches.
Skyway	**Free**	Automated monorail linking Downtown to the Southbank across the river.
Riverwalk	**Free**	Walkable on both riverbanks — the Southbank side has the best skyline views.
JAX Airport	**$35–45**	Jacksonville International, about 20 minutes north of Downtown.

Doing the beaches and Downtown in one day? Budget 25–30 minutes each way — it's a genuine drive, not a quick hop.

06 BACKUP PLANS

Jacksonville on a rainy afternoon

Coastal storms move fast and clear quickly — these stay open and dry whatever the sky is doing.

DOWNTOWN
MOCA Jacksonville

SOUTHBANK
Museum of Science & History

RIVERSIDE
Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens

SAN MARCO
San Marco Theatre

07 NEIGHBORHOODS

Know your neighborhoods

THE HISTORIC CORE

Riverside & Avondale

One of Florida's largest historic districts — Five Points' shops, King Street's oak canopy, and the Cummer Museum on the river.

THE WALKABLE SQUARE

San Marco

Mediterranean Revival storefronts around a compact square, anchored by the 1938 San Marco Theatre.

THE DAYTIME CORE

Downtown / Southbank

MOCA, the Riverwalk, Friendship Fountain, and the Skyway crossing — busiest by day.

THE BEACH TOWN

Jacksonville Beach

A separate, genuinely different register — boardwalk, pier, and a wide, uncrowded stretch of sand.

08 GOOD TO KNOW

What nobody tells you

— A car or rideshare is genuinely necessary — this is the largest city by land area in the continental U.S., and neighborhoods don't connect on foot.

— Downtown and the beaches are two different trips in the same city — budget real drive time between them rather than treating it as a quick detour.

— The free Skyway is a fun, easy way to cross the river without a car, though it doesn't reach Riverside or San Marco directly.

— Jacksonville Jazz Festival, held downtown each May, is one of the largest free jazz festivals in the country — book lodging ahead if visiting during it.

— Hurricane season runs June through November — check the forecast before booking a summer trip, especially if the beach is on the itinerary.

09 SOLO TRAVELER SAFETY

Is Jacksonville safe?

Safe in the areas covered by this guide, with standard city awareness. Riverside, San Marco, Downtown's Southbank, and Jacksonville Beach are all well-trafficked and comfortable for solo travelers by day and evening.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY AT A GLANCE

Riverside / Five Points	●●●●○
San Marco	●●●●●
Downtown / Southbank	●●●●○
Jacksonville Beach	●●●●●
Avondale (King St)	●●●●●

COMMON SCAMS

No major tourist-specific scams stand out in the areas this guide covers — standard rideshare and street-vendor caution applies. Confirm parking rates before leaving a car downtown, as posted signage varies block to block.

HEALTH & MEDICAL

Dial 911 for emergencies. UF Health Jacksonville and Baptist Health downtown are the area's major hospitals. Tap water is safe. Rip currents at Jacksonville Beach, not crime, are the most common real risk — swim near a staffed lifeguard tower.

SOLO WOMEN TRAVELERS

San Marco Square and Riverside's Five Points stay busy and comfortable into the evening; downtown quiets down after office hours outside event nights, so stick to the Southbank Riverwalk or rideshare after dark.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Police / Fire / Medical	911
JSO Non-Emergency	904-630-0500
Florida Poison Control	1-800-222-1222

10 PLANNING CALENDAR

Jacksonville, month by month

Exact dates shift annually — confirm before booking.

January MILD & QUIET

- Comfortable temperatures, thin crowds — a good time for the Riverwalk.

February FAIR WEATHER

- Mild and dry — one of the most comfortable months for walking neighborhoods.

March SPRING ARRIVES

- Warming up, still comfortable for the beach and Riverwalk alike.

April BLOSSOM SEASON

- Azaleas bloom throughout Riverside's historic streets.

May JAZZ FEST

- Jacksonville Jazz Festival — one of the largest free jazz festivals in the country, downtown.

June STORMS BEGIN

- Hurricane season opens (through November); daily afternoon thunderstorms.

July PEAK HEAT

- Very hot and humid — plan midday indoors (MOCA, Cummer Museum).

August QUIET & HOT

- Lower hotel rates, continued hurricane risk — watch the forecast.

September STORM WATCH

- Peak hurricane season — travel insurance recommended, especially near the beach.

October SEASON RETURNS

- Mild temperatures and low humidity return — a strong month for the Riverwalk and beach alike.

November FAIR WEATHER

- Comfortable and dry, ahead of the winter snowbird season.

December HOLIDAY LIGHTS

- Downtown's Riverwalk and San Marco Square both light up for the season.

JAX

Every Stop, Mapped

Scan the code to open the free interactive Jacksonville map — every stop in this guide, filterable by day, food, and transport.

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