



## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN JACKSONVILLE IN 2018-19

Jacksonville is known as The River City by the Sea, and with good reason. Water is at the heart of everything that makes Jacksonville truly special. And while the city is home to 1,100 miles of navigable water – including 22 miles of beaches – this Florida gem is fast becoming one of the must-visit spots on the east coast because of its diverse neighborhoods, a food scene that is attracting the attention of the likes of *Food & Wine*, and a maker culture that touches everything from food and craft beer and spirits to the worlds of art and culture.

Combine that with an exciting sports scene and the largest urban parks system in the world that offers experiences like surfing, stand up paddle boarding and kayaking, and you have a year-round destination that offers something for just about any type of traveler. Plus, Jacksonville is less than three hours from Toronto via Air Canada's daily non-stop flights, which means visitors can have breakfast at home and lunch by the beach!

Following are five of the top story ideas to explore in 2019. If you would like to arrange a visit to Jacksonville, please contact Roland Alonzi at [ralonzi@daltongency.com](mailto:ralonzi@daltongency.com) or (404) 876-2875.

**Maker Culture.** Jacksonville's 'makers' scene is having an impact on everything – from restaurants and craft breweries to coffee houses and artisanal bakeries. The growth of Jacksonville's maker culture is due to the fact that the city is home to Florida's youngest – and hippest – population. Jacksonville's unique neighborhoods are also helping to cultivate an entrepreneurial atmosphere that is conducive to bold creativity and ideas. For instance, the Springfield neighborhood, which was once Jacksonville's wealthiest neighborhoods, is now where young, hip professionals are choosing to live and work. The neighborhood has two new breweries, three new restaurants and an artisan bakery (1748 Bakehouse) by Kurt and Allison D'Auruzio. That word 'artisan' is overused, but this bake house, influenced by the slow food movement, will focus on the sweet and savory – their specialties are galletes (or hand pies).

**A Craft Boom.** Jacksonville's craft brewery and distillery communities are growing rapidly. The number of craft breweries has grown from just one in 2008 to 14 today, with a third of them licensed in 2017 alone. Another five are planned to open in the next 18 months. Congaree and Penn, an organic rice farm (and Florida's only rice farm), is now brewing and distilling mead, brandy and hard cider thanks to the planting of Muscadine grapes and Mayhaw trees a couple of years ago. Bee hives set up around the orchard aid pollination, and the honey is used to sweeten the cider. This year, they introduced their own olive oil, which joins a stock of dry goods including organic white rice, brown rice and both white and purple-rice grits, and other Southern-inspired products such as pecan oil and Creole tomato jelly.

**Art and Culture Haven.** Jacksonville has quietly become a hub for arts and culture. In addition to its robust Art in Public Places initiative, ArtRepublic has brought some of the best muralists in the world to the city and given them a chance to use Jacksonville's Downtown as a blank canvas for creating amazing pieces of art. This past November, ArtRepublic brought eight new murals to Downtown Jacksonville. Earlier this year, local artist Jason Tetlak broke the Guinness World Record for the largest 3D mural in the world: The Beastie Boys' No Sleep Till Brooklyn. Jacksonville's CoRK Arts District features 80,000 square feet of repurposed industrial buildings for the artist community. In fact, Jacksonville is continually acquiring vacant manufacturing and industrial buildings and converting them into studio space and co-ops for the growing artist community in Jacksonville.

**Surf Culture.** Jacksonville is one of the top surfing locales on the East Coast. Locals know that some of the best surfing can be found in Jacksonville from December through March, when the waves are high and the breaks are plentiful. And spring time marks some of the best surfing competitions, such as The Wave Masters, an amateur surfing competition that has been held every May in Jax since 1983. But Jacksonville is not just for the accomplished wave riders. Summers are ideal for beginners to test out their skills. Jacksonville's beach break has a soft, sandy bottom, allows for tough tumbles to be taken without risk of bumping into rocks or reefs. Jacksonville's long stretches of sandy beaches allow for plenty of space for new surfers to find their footing. There are scores of surf schools where you can learn how to surf. One of them, Saltwater Cowgirls, have been empowering young women for the past decade with their all-female surfing camps. Surfer the Bar, the official Surfer Magazine bar, is located at Jacksonville Beach – the only such location in the continental U.S.

**Old Meets New.** More than 1,000 hotel rooms will open in Downtown Jacksonville in the next 12-24 months with five new properties already underway. A long planned and exciting project to convert three historic buildings (The Laura Street Trio) into a 131-room hotel has begun. This \$90 million adaptive reuse program incorporates three of Florida's earliest skyscrapers: The Florida Life Building, The Bisbee Building and the Old Florida National Bank. The three buildings were constructed in the wake of the Great Fire of 1901 are architecturally significant. Architects from New York and Chicago came to Jacksonville to build new buildings after the devastating fire since it was seen as a blank canvas for development. A little further down the line, there's an exciting project called The District that is planned to include a 200-room hotel, a 125-slip marina, 200,000 square feet of retail, all on four acres of land that will include three riverfront parks, a boardwalk, a kayak launch and a bulkhead.

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