



Are you looking for that all-around perfect destination for your next trip? One with history, beaches, museums, shopping, lighthouses and so much more? Head to the northeast coast of Florida to the excellent St. Augustine and find everything you want to do in a tiny town. St. Augustine is the oldest

town in the United States, founded in 1565, with a population of less than 16,000. With more than 50 attractions in the area and a walkable downtown, it isn't a surprise that the visitor population can soar during the summer. No matter where your interest lies, there will always be something magical for you to do on your trip to St. Augustine. Let's head to Florida and take a look.



CATHEDRAL BASILICA OF ST. AUGUSTINE

10 After settling in in St. Augustine, take a break and get to know the local winery and distillery. San Sebastian Winery is just a short walk from downtown and offers free tours and tastings of its premium wines. Once you've found your favorite, head upstairs to the wine bar to relax and enjoy music. If spirits are your preference, head around the corner to tour the St. Augustine Distillery. You'll find mouthwatering whiskey, gin, vodka and rum that make some incredible cocktails here.



9 There are many stunning churches in St. Augustine to visit, but you may not often have the chance to tour a Basilica—a cathedral given the Pope's seal. The historical significance of the oldest parish in the country is apparent as they have a statue of St. Augustine of Hippo, the city's namesake, on the church's exterior. The awe-inspiring interior has been painted with beautiful murals and has enormous stained-glass windows and sculptures that resonate with the members of this Catholic parish.

8 There is a place that has something for every family member. You may not find any history on St. Augustine here, but plenty of fun abounds for your family members. Start the adventure with the 14 themed galleries of strange and interesting artifacts, then learn to use ghost-hunting equipment in their Haunted Castle paranormal investigation. Finally, head outside and test your skill on their bayside 18-hole mini-golf course. Whew, what an adventure!



7 Who, I mean who, doesn't love good chocolate? This small, unassuming chocolate shop has a fantastic tour where you can view a short video, witness the chocolatiers create mouthwatering creations and watch the production line as all the goodies get packed into boxes. It's a fascinating process to watch, and you'll learn everything you ever wanted to know about chocolate and candy making. You won't care that you must wear a hairnet during the tour once you get your free sample of artisan sugar goodness.



ST. GEORGE STREET SHOPPING AND DINING



TOURS



ST. AUGUSTINE LIGHTHOUSE & MARITIME MUSEUM



LIGHTNER MUSEUM



ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH AND PIER



CASTILLO DE SAN MARCOS NATIONAL MONUMENT

6 Start your shopping and dining adventure on the pedestrian-only St. George Street at the Old City Gates. Soak in the gates' history as the single, original entrance into St. Augustine and the protection they provided, then continue down the cobblestone road into the bustling area. You'll find all kinds of unusual shopping, historic buildings, galleries and delicious restaurants in this nationally recognized historic district. Be sure to wander off St. George Street to continue the historical adventure and enjoy even more enchanting shops and restaurants that will tickle your tastebuds and wallet.

5 There are any number of tours that you can take in St. Augustine. You'll see brightly colored trolley trains all around town, tours on golf carts, horse-drawn carriage tours and, of course, plenty of ghost tours. Being one of the most haunted places in the United States, these are a ton of fun. My favorite way to learn about St. Augustine is with a historical tour and then exploring the town on foot. There are all kinds of historic buildings, museums and informational plaques to read that will have you learning so much about the area. Be sure to walk across the stunning Bridge of Lions that connects St. Augustine to Anastasia Island.

4 Amazing views await you atop the St. Augustine Lighthouse just over the bridge from St. Augustine on Anastasia Island. The lighthouse is still active and glows brightly each night. You'll spend plenty of time here climbing the 219 spiral metal steps that lead to a stunning view, then head over to one of four historic buildings that house a variety of exhibits, view the building progress on a wooden boat and learn everything you can in the Maritime Education Center. It's a perfect place for kids and adults alike.

3 The former Gilded Age resort, Hotel Alcazar, is the stunning backdrop for the Lightner Museum, where you'll view an incredible art collection and marvel at the Spanish Renaissance Revival structure. Start your visit with lunch at Cafe Alcazar in the former hotel's lovely swimming pool, then continue to explore the grand interior that houses art, history and design. The incredible collections are unique and include various engaging art pieces, musical instruments and even Tiffany lamps.

2 No trip to the Florida coast is complete without a day at the beach. Extending three miles south from Anastasia State Park is a beautiful oceanfront beach with a stunning fishing pier, a playground, and plenty of places to relax and enjoy the view. You can drive the beach, stroll with your dog, rent a beach bike, ride the day away or swim in the ocean surf. I returned at sunset after grabbing a taco and a can of wine at a nearby stand, sat on the beach and was awed by the stunning colors of the sunset.

1 The oldest masonry fort in the continental United States sits on Matanzas Bay, in the heart of downtown St. Augustine. The massive structure has survived all these years due to its construction of local coquina stones that absorbed the blow of cannonballs. It has also seen its share of countries that have owned it. The fort and the St. Augustine Historic District are part of the National Park Service and have an incredible history. Step into the past and learn as you engage with the volunteers dressed for the time and remember to plug your ears while viewing an astonishing cannon demonstration from the top of the fort. Wander throughout on a self-guided tour while stopping to listen in on one of many formal presentations, explore the exhibits and enjoy the 20-acre grounds along the bay.