



last look at the first coast

“We, here on the First Coast, have much to celebrate. And celebrate we do—in every season of the year.”

Now that you’ve glimpsed life in Jacksonville and the surrounding area, you can see why we are proud to call Florida’s First Coast home. Blessed with glorious weather, beautiful beaches, a dynamic contemporary culture and an illustrious history, the First Coast is a true Southern treasure.

Here, in Northeast Florida, the future is bright. Local leaders work diligently to make the region an attractive place to build and grow business, with a focus on drawing a highly skilled, diverse workforce. At the same time, leaders in the community recognize the need to maintain the high quality of life we all enjoy.

A mecca for sporting events, cultural activities and the very best in entertainment, the First Coast attracts thousands of new residents each year, who come for the potential they see and stay for the reality they experience.

With a wide array of options, from urban epicenters to rural farming communities, newcomers find the exact lifestyle they are looking for. In essence, newcomers find the perfect place to live, work and play.

We, here on the First Coast, have much to celebrate. And celebrate we do—in every season of the year. From the Opening of the Beaches Parade in spring to the holiday classic Nights of Lights celebration in winter, you’ll find plenty of festive gatherings where people come together and enjoy good food, lavish entertainment and pure fun.

Come join the party!

BAKER COUNTY

{Glen St. Mary, Macclenny}

■ Olustee Battle Re-enactment

February

In remembrance of Florida’s largest Civil War battle, fought February 20, 1864, this event attracts hundreds of re-enactors and spectators each year. The re-enactment takes place at the Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park. The weekend includes guest speakers and a Civil War-era parade. For more information, visit www.battleofolustee.org.

■ Olustee Civil War Expo

September

Visitors experience a day in the life of both soldiers and civilians during the Civil War. The event features re-enactors, music from the 19th century, storytelling and exhibits. In addition, the expo includes demonstrations of weapons and tactics used in the war as well as daily life in the 1860s. For more information, visit www.battleofolustee.org.

CLAY COUNTY

{Fleming Island, Green Cove Springs, Keystone Heights, Middleburg, Orange Park, Penney Farms}

■ Northeast Florida Scottish Games & Festival

February

Each year, hundreds of visitors gather at this event to enjoy “a wee bit o’ Scotland.” The festival includes Scottish fare, music, demonstrations and traditional Highland games. Events such as pub crawls and the Kilted Golf Tournament lead up to the festival. For more information, visit <http://neflgames.com>.



■ Carrie Clarke Day

March

Within the past several years, this event has developed into a day-long festival honoring one of Orange Park's pioneers—Carrie Clarke. Participants go back in time to life during the late 1800s with re-enactments featuring Mrs. Clark and her husband, William. Festival-goers will also enjoy guided tours of the historic Clarke House, exhibits and live entertainment. For more information, visit <http://ophistory.org>.

■ Railroad and History Festival

March

A Green Cove Springs tradition, this festival focuses on the history and influence of railroads in Clay County. Festival highlights include tours of an old train depot, the historic courthouse and jail, and the Clay County Historical Society's Museum. Live entertainment, crafts and re-enactments are also featured. For more information, visit <http://claycountyhistoricalsociety.org>.

DUVAL COUNTY

{Atlantic Beach, Baldwin, Jacksonville,
Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach}

■ Opening of the Beaches

April

Come celebrate this long-time tradition as the beach community kicks off the summer season. Each year, Jacksonville Beach holds the Beaches Opening Parade featuring pirates, pooches and floats galore. The festivities also include an annual sandcastle competition. For more information, visit www.jacksonvillebeach.org.

■ Jacksonville Jazz Festival

May

A weekend of non-stop entertainment in Downtown Jacksonville, the jazz festival features multiple venues with performances by amateur and renowned jazz artists. Other festival activities include the Wine Down/Brew Town Tasting Experience, the Jacksonville Jazz Piano Competition and Generation Next Youth Talent Competition, as well as art displays, educational activities and more. For more information, visit www.makeascenedowntown.com.

■ World of Nations Celebration

May

Visit countries all over the world without leaving the First Coast at this annual celebration of diversity. Held in Metropolitan Park each year, the celebration features exotic cuisine as well as exhibits of the artistry and customs from lands far and near. For more information, visit www.makeascenedowntown.com.

■ Jacksonville Light Parade

Saturday after Thanksgiving

A tradition for thousands of First Coast residents and their guests, the annual Jacksonville Light Parade ushers in the holiday season. Sightseers align the North and South riverbanks to watch boats adorned in lights and decorations sail down the St. Johns River. Following the boat parade is a beautiful fireworks display. For more information, visit www.makeascenedowntown.com.

Left: Carrie Clarke Day – Historical Society of Orange Park
Center: St. Augustine Nights of Lights – FloridasHistoricCoast.com



NASSAU COUNTY

{Amelia Island, Bryceville, Callahan,
Fernandina Beach, Hilliard, Yulee}

■ Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

March

This annual event showcases rare, classic cars, informative seminars, awards and a silent auction. Held at the Ritz-Carlton in Amelia Island and the Golf Club of Amelia Island at Summer Beach, proceeds from the event benefit local charitable organizations, including Community Hospice of Northeast Florida. For more information, visit www.ameliaconcours.org.

■ Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival

First Weekend in May

This weekend-long event celebrates the tradition of blessing the shrimp fleet in Fernandina Beach as well as Amelia Island's unique history. The festival includes the annual Pirate Parade, Blessing of the Fleet, a boat decoration contest, live entertainment, arts, crafts and tons of shrimp. For more information, visit www.shrimpfestival.com.

■ Callahan Annual Christmas Parade and Arts & Crafts Show

First Saturday in December

This annual yuletide parade features a different theme each year for local schools, businesses and churches to create floats around. Spectators can also enjoy an all-day arts and crafts exhibit before and after the parade, in addition to the annual decorating contest for businesses. For more information, visit <http://greaternassaucounty.com>.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY

{Hastings, Julington Creek, Ponte Vedra Beach,
St. Augustine, St. Augustine Beach}

■ EPIC Celebration of Spring Flower & Garden Expo

April

Celebrate spring's arrival with two days of flowers and fun. Nurseries, artisans, growers and crafters offer helpful information for gardeners of all levels of experience. Master Gardener arboretum tours and a variety of plants and flowers are also featured. For more information, visit www.gardenclubofstaugustine.org.

■ St. Augustine's 450th Birthday Commemoration

September

St. Augustine is planning a celebration so big, it will take years to complete. Each year, from 2012 to 2015, the city will host activities to celebrate 450 years as the oldest continually occupied European settlement in the U.S. Beginning March 19, 2012, the city will host a Viva St. Augustine! Kick-Off Party. The weeklong party will feature fun activities including an exhibition in the newly remodeled St. Augustine Expo Center, a free concert and festival at the Promenade, and a visit from former president, Bill Clinton. For more information, visit www.staugustine-450.com.

■ Nights of Lights

November through January

This holiday tradition lights up the historic area of St. Augustine with over two million twinkling, white lights. The two-month-long celebration includes special events such as parades, bed and breakfast tours, art walks and holiday concerts. Visitors can also tour the Nights of Lights displays aboard the Holly Jolly Holiday Trolley and Santa's Big Red Christmas Train. For more information, visit www.floridashistoriccoast.com/nights.

Left: Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance – JAX Chamber

Center: World of Nations – JAX Chamber

Right: Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival – Amelia Island Convention & Visitors Bureau