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DIVERSITY DESIGNATION

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE JACKSONVILLE REGION IS HARD TO BEAT...



With all the amenities of a Florida location, Jacksonville companies report that it is easy to recruit employees to the area. And trailing spouses are in luck because *Forbes* ranked Jacksonville in the **“Top 10 Best U.S. Cities to Find a Job.”**

With a cost of living that is below the national average, Northeast Florida’s population has been growing twice as fast as the rest of the nation. That’s why our region is one of the few places in the United States that is experiencing a growing population of young professionals. And we offer a diverse environment, which explains why *Black Enterprise* magazine named Jacksonville in the top 10 **“Best Cities for African Americans to Work, Live and Play.”**

Jacksonville also ranked in the top 10 of *Mobility* magazine’s **“Best Cities for Relocating Families.”** The region offers some of the most affordable housing prices in Florida. There is a variety of **housing** options, depending on your preferred location and style of home.

Northeast Florida is known for its **outdoor recreation** opportunities, featuring 90 miles of beaches along the Atlantic Ocean and the majestic St. Johns River for boating, fishing and kayaking. *National Geographic Adventure*



magazine ranked Jacksonville as one of the **“Top Six Beach Towns”** in the United States. Jacksonville also boasts more than 131 square miles of city, state and national parks — constituting the largest urban park system in the nation.

AmericanStyle magazine ranked Jacksonville as one of its **“Top 25 Arts Destinations.”** **Arts and culture** lovers will appreciate the Museum of Contemporary Art, The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens and Museum of Science and History, as well as the spectacular Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. The area is also home to several performing arts venues and the world-renowned Jacksonville Symphony.



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Sports enthusiasts can cheer for the NFL Jacksonville Jaguars and Jacksonville Suns AA baseball team. The area also boasts more than 80 golf courses, including the famed Players Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass and the World Golf Hall of Fame.

And there are lots of other great reasons why our region is such an attractive place to live. Our region boasts a world-class **health care** system, and is home to the Mayo Clinic and several other distinguished area hospitals and medical research facilities. Families are able to choose from a variety of top-ranked **K – 12 schools** and excellent **colleges and universities** for their children. And there are an endless number of **shopping, dining and nightlife** options to entertain residents year-round in our wonderful climate.

OUTDOOR RECREATION



Jacksonville ranked fourth in *Forbes* magazine's "**America's Best Cities for the Outdoors.**" Any discussion of Jacksonville lifestyles starts with the outdoors. The seven-county area is truly an outdoor enthusiast's paradise.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

The ocean graces the entire eastern boundary of the seven-county area, with more than 60 miles of shoreline from the Georgia border to the southern end of **Flagler** County. The St. Johns River and its tributaries, as well as the Intracoastal Waterway, provide hundreds of additional miles of waterfront living and waterborne activities to enjoy. Add to that the beautiful year-round weather, and Jacksonville easily measures up to any outdoor recreation area in the nation.

Northeast Florida is an angler's dream, and there are a number of spots to cast your line. If it's deep-sea fishing you seek, charters are available at Fernandina, Mayport and St. Augustine, as well as from some marinas along the Intracoastal Waterway and the St. Johns River. And the area is home to the Greater Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament, the largest of its kind in the country.



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The longest river in Florida — the St. Johns River — stretches north right through the downtown urban center, making fishing a popular sport. You can put your boat in at one of the growing number of boat ramps located at area parks throughout the city. The annual **Mug Race**, the world’s longest river sailboat race, starts in Palatka and ends 42 miles later in Jacksonville.

SPORTS



Jacksonville is an absolute sports mecca, with college and professional teams to satisfy a diversity of passions. The NFL’s **Jacksonville Jaguars** are a Sunday staple in Northeast Florida, drawing tens of thousands to the downtown riverfront and Jacksonville Municipal Stadium, site of Super Bowl XXXIX. College sporting events also take center stage, including the annual Konica Minolta Gator Bowl, ACC Championship baseball, and one of college football’s biggest rivalries, the **The Florida-Georgia Football Classic**. Summertime brings baseball, and the minor league **Jacksonville Suns** games are a hot spot for young professionals and families.

families.



Northeast Florida is home to the PGA TOUR headquarters and the **World Golf Hall of Fame**. Golfers can sharpen their games at one of more than 70 courses in the region or follow the best at **THE PLAYERS Championship**, held annually at TPC Sawgrass. Ponte Vedra is also the headquarters of the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) and plays host to one of the top professional women’s tennis tournaments, The MPS Group Championships. Recently ranked one of the fittest cities in the United States, Jacksonville is home to an active community of runners who compete in local races, including the annual National Marathon to Fight Breast Cancer and the **Gate River Run 15K**.

Adventure greets every outdoorsman who calls Jacksonville home. Our moderate year-round climate and access to the Atlantic Ocean and the St. Johns River continually afford

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residents the opportunity to experience the outdoors for exercise and recreation. Miles of beach skirt Jacksonville to the east, providing ample opportunities for surfing, beach volleyball, swimming and relaxing.

ARTS AND CULTURE

“A world class symphony, nationally recognized museums, neighborhood community theaters and a wealth of professional artists combine to make cultural experiences that are both inspiring and accessible. At every level, from neighborhood venues to vibrant downtown attractions, people are invited to become a part of Jacksonville’s creative community.”

- Robert Arleigh White, executive director of the **Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville**

VISUAL ARTS



Jacksonville offers access to world-class museum collections. **The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens** is home to one of the most important Old Masters collections in the Southeast, featuring more than 5,000 pieces. **Jacksonville’s Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)** is the largest contemporary art museum in the Southeast. The museum’s five spacious galleries display changing exhibitions by important national and regional artists and the museum’s permanent collection of paintings, sculptures and photographs created since 1945.

And we’ve taken art to the streets. The monthly **First Wednesday Art Walk** offers a free, self-guided tour of downtown galleries and museums, featuring original work from local, national and international artists and live music performances.

Performing Arts

The performing arts scene is alive and thriving in Jacksonville. The **Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts** is a state-of-the-art facility, complete with three distinct halls to



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accommodate a variety of performance arts. The **FSCJ Artist Series** brings quality entertainment to the facility, including traveling Broadway shows like this year's featured performance of "Wicked."



Founded in 1949, the **Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra** continues to affirm its place as one of the leading performing arts organizations in the Southeast and a vital part of cultural life in Northeast Florida. Widely recognized for its high artistic quality, the JSO ranks among the nation's top 40 orchestras. As one of a handful of

American orchestras with its own dedicated concert hall, the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra performs the majority of its programs in the acoustically superb Robert E. Jacoby Symphony Hall at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts, the only true orchestra concert hall in Florida.

The **Ritz Theatre & LaVilla Museum** celebrates the rich legacy of the African-American community that thrived in LaVilla for more than 100 years. The theatre and museum are revered as the premier cultural institution in Jacksonville showcasing art, music, drama, poetry and African-American history. The stories and legends of LaVilla, known as the "Harlem of the South," live on within the walls of the refurbished museum and theatre. **The Florida Theatre** is a 1923 landmark building in the heart of downtown Jacksonville. It has hosted the who's who of music, dating back to Elvis Presley's first concert on an indoor stage in 1956.

The **Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Arena** also welcomes big-name artists throughout the year, including Bruce Springsteen, Elton John and The Eagles. The arena is also home to major sporting events, including the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament.

CULTURE

The **Museum of Science and History (MOSH)** focuses on the knowledge of physical science, history, astronomy and natural science through exciting and educational exhibits, events and programs.



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A true family adventure spot, the **Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens** is home to more than 1,000 exotic animals. Added in the last several years was the largest jaguar collection in the United States, a fantastic giraffe exhibit and a brand-new Asian botanical garden, complete with Komodo dragons.

HOUSING

Northeast Florida's miles of uncrowned and unspoiled land provide a wide variety of distinct residential neighborhoods with housing options to suit any style. From luxury condo high-rises in metropolitan Jacksonville, to grand historic homes, to custom-built new communities in every style imaginable, there is a place for you to feel at home.

Jacksonville was ranked in the top 10 of *Mobility* magazine's "**Best Cities for Relocating Families.**" Our region offers the most affordable housing prices in the state. The median house price is only \$186,800, and the average apartment leases for \$774 per month. And a brand-new, 2,400-square-foot luxury home averages only \$225,876. There are a variety of housing options, depending on your preferred location and style of home.



DOWNTOWN LIVING

New luxury and market-rate projects include upscale apartments, condos, lofts, garden homes and town homes, and historic building conversions are adding depth to downtown.

HISTORIC LIVING

Traditional and charming, the city's first suburbs included Riverside, Avondale, San Marco, San Jose, Springfield and Ortega. Housing options range from grand mansions to newly refurbished bungalows. The Riverside and Avondale communities make up the nation's largest historic district, with 6,000 structures. St. Augustine, the oldest American city, also boasts a variety of historic living options.

SUBURBAN LIVING



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Drive in any direction from the city and you'll find new construction and homes on the market. Choose an upscale, gated community, a contemporary new home or an existing home in established areas throughout the region, including the Northside, Arlington, Mandarin, Fruit Cove, Westside, Yulee and Fleming Island, among many others. Each offers its own appeal and housing options to fit almost any budget.

COASTAL LIVING

With 90 miles of mostly undeveloped coastline extending from Amelia Island southward to St. Augustine, Northeast Florida's coastal communities of Fernandina, Mayport, Atlantic Beach, Neptune Beach, Jacksonville Beach, Ponte Vedra Beach, St. Augustine Beach and Palm Coast offer a low-key, outdoors lifestyle.

RURAL LIVING

Off the beaten path but accessible to services, amenities and entertainment, Northeast Florida's rural spots offer a country atmosphere with room to move. Many rural communities offer large lots for agricultural pursuits, to raise horses or just keep as undeveloped acreage. Macclenny, Green Cove Springs, Palatka and Callahan all offer rural housing options within close proximity to Jacksonville.

ENTERTAINMENT

Northeast Florida residents enjoy everything you'd expect to find in a major metropolitan area.

SHOPPING



Jacksonville offers shopping excursions for any taste. Those looking for the perfect bargain need look no further than one of the many outlet centers in Northeast Florida. Vintage items and antiques in the eclectic Five Points and upscale chic and trendy boutiques in San Marco and Avondale complement the latest in must-have retail at The Avenues Mall, River City Marketplace, Orange Park Mall, Regency Square Mall and the newest hot spot, the St. Johns Town Center.



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Dining & Nightlife



With our proximity to the ocean, one would think fresh seafood is our best seller. And it is, but Jacksonville offers so much more. From Southern-fried chicken to sushi, steak or barbecue, Jacksonville has a restaurant to satisfy every taste and every budget. When the day's work or touring is done and you have enjoyed a

delicious, it's time to be entertained. Whether you want live theatre, feel like dancing or would like to visit one of our local watering holes, great nightlife can always be found in Jacksonville.

FESTIVALS

Northeast Florida's event calendar is packed year-round with events celebrating holidays, history and a diversity of cultures. Music lovers will not want to miss the **Jacksonville Jazz Festival**, one of our most well-known annual events. One of the largest jazz events in the world, this three-day celebration has featured such wide-ranging jazz and blues influences as Dizzy Gillespie, Buddy Guy, Harry Connick, Jr., Grover Washington, Jr., Robert Cray Band, Kenny G, Manhattan Transfer and Spyro Gyra.



Grab your passport and experience the sights, sounds and tastes of different nations at the **World of Nations Celebration** or Fiesta Playera in the summertime. For those with an appetite for seafood, the Shrimp Festival of Fernandina Beach is a must-see.

Jacksonville was also once known as the "Hollywood" of silent films. The city continues to celebrate its film industry with an annual **Film Festival**, including both independent and big-budget movie premieres.



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EDUCATION (K-12)



Northeast Florida is home to more than 380 public, private and parochial schools, many of them nationally ranked for their academic achievement. Each year more than 225,000 students attend award-winning schools ranging in size from the 20th largest school system in the nation with 124,000 students to small-town education

systems with as few as 4,900 students. *Newsweek* ranked public schools Stanton College Preparatory School and Paxon School for Advanced Studies in the top 10 in its annual ranking of "America's Best High Schools." Seven other area schools also made the list. More than 20,000 students are enrolled in Duval County's Magnet Program, which offers enhanced curriculum at more than 70 schools. A part of the enhanced curriculum is the Career Academies program. The First Coast's Career Academies are unique "schools-within-schools" in high schools across Northeast Florida. Career Academies differ from traditional academic and vocational education because they prepare high school students for both college and careers.

Academics provide broad information about a field such as health care, finance, engineering, media, or natural resources. They weave the themes into academic curricula that qualify students for admission to four-year colleges or universities. Studies have found that students in career academies perform better in high school and are more likely to continue into post secondary education, compared to similar students in the same schools.



More than 100 private schools and a thriving home schooling network add to the educational opportunities, offering Northeast Florida families the best choices for the area's youngest residents.

Click below for additional information about area public schools:

- Baker - www.baker.k12.fl.us
- Clay - www.clay.k12.fl.us
- Duval - www.duvalschools.org
- Flagler - www.flaglerschools.org
- Nassau - www.nassau.k12.fl.us



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- Putnam - www.putnamschools.org
- St. Johns - www.st.johns.k12.fl.us

HEALTH CARE



Northeast Florida is home to several hospitals that are ranked in the nation's top 100 and is one of only three locations in the nation for the renowned Mayo Clinic.

Also based in Jacksonville is the University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute (www.floridaproton.org), one of only five proton therapy cancer treatment centers located in the United States.

Click here for additional information:

- Baptist Health - www.baptisthealth.com
- Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital - www.brookshealth.org
- Flagler Hospital - www.flaglerhospital.org
- Mayo Clinic - www.mayoclinic.org/jacksonville
- Memorial Hospital - www.memorialhospitaljax.com
- Orange Park Medical Center - www.opmedical.com
- Shands Jacksonville Medical Center - www.jax.shands.org
- St. Vincent's HealthCare - www.jaxhealth.com
- Wolfson Children's Hospital - www.wolfsonchildrens.org



WEATHER

Certainly any discussion of Jacksonville lifestyles starts with the outdoors. The seven-county area is truly a water enthusiast's paradise. The ocean graces the entire eastern boundary of the seven-county area, with more than 60 miles of shoreline from the Georgia border to the southern end of Flagler County. The St. Johns River and its tributaries and the Intracoastal Waterway provide hundreds of



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additional miles of waterfront living and waterborne activities to enjoy. Add to that the beautiful year-round weather, and Jacksonville easily measures up to any outdoor recreation area in the nation.

Hurricanes

Of course, mention the state of Florida, and the potential for hurricanes is always a possibility. What do hurricanes mean for Jacksonville? The city is not hurricane-proof but it has the lowest probability of a land-falling hurricane anywhere on the East Coast or the Gulf Coast of the United States. Jacksonville's unique geographic location as the westernmost city on the Eastern Seaboard plays a part in the formula of the recurvature effect. As storms curve north and east, they have a very high tendency to stay offshore.

Tucked away in the westernmost point of the eastern seaboard, Jacksonville has historically been "protected" from a direct hit by a hurricane. In the past century, no hurricane Category 3 or higher has made landfall on the First Coast. Only Hurricane Dora in 1964, which barely reached Category 2, made landfall in Jacksonville.



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