450 Years Young

If you visit St. Augustine in December, even without leaving the boat, you'll see why the historic city made *National Geographic*'s list of the Top 10 Places to See Holiday Lights. From mid-November to the end of January, millions of white twinkling lights illuminate the nation's oldest city, which just recently celebrated its 450th anniversary in grand style. With multiple marinas and mooring fields within walking distance of the historic district, you'll be able to easily take in the old brick streets and Spanish architecture and enjoy St. Augustine's eclectic mix of restaurants, art galleries and live music.

Coming from the south on the ICW, you'll get a view of Fort Matanzas (Spanish for slaughter) built between 1740 and 1742 as a lookout for the Spanish to protect St. Augustine—the Spanish killed more than 200 Frenchmen in 1565 giving the area its name. The National Park Service has a ferry that will take people to the fort, along with trails and a boardwalk through the Florida hammock. Coming from the north on the ICW, you'll join the offshore sailors after they've come through the St. Augustine Inlet. Coming in from off shore, Vilano Beach is to starboard, Anastasia Island and the St. Augustine Lighthouse are to port, and the "World's Tallest Cross" is off the bow. A friend, groggy after a few days and nights at sea on his maiden voyage into St. Augustine, saw the illuminated cross in the distance and mistakenly thought that it was the mast of a huge catamaran. In reality, it's 208 feet high, is built of 70 tons of stainless steel plates, and rests on solid ground at the Mission Nombre de Dios.

JEAN TAYLOR ACLIN

Stretch your sea legs on old-fashioned cobblestone streets and take a trip back in time through the historic buildings of the coastal Florida town that also happens to be the nation's oldest city.

By Ann DeMuth

Nearby is a tribute to Ponce de León's famous Fountain of Youth.

You can almost imagine cannons firing as you pass the Castillo de San Marcos, the oldest masonry fort in the continental U.S. Construction began in 1672 using blocks of coquina—stone made of little shells—from a quarry on Anastasia Island. You can tour the fort with a Ranger or on your own, learn from the exhibits and re-enactments, or just stretch your sea legs on the 20 acres surrounding the fort. Beyond the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument is the regal Bridge of Lions, which joins the historic downtown of St. Augustine to Anastasia Island. The double-leaf bascule bridge is named after the two stone lions carved of marble by Italian sculptor Romanelli in the 1920s that stand guard by the bridge's west entrance. Just recently, in honor of St. Augustine's 450th anniversary, two similar lions carved from granite were donated and stand guard near the east entrance.

Just to the south of the Bridge of Lions is the St. Augustine Municipal Marina in the heart of downtown. In addition to long-term and monthly dockage, the marina also offers hourly, daily and weekly transient dockage, as well as moorings, which grace both the north and south sides of the bridge. (Pump-out, laundry, dinghy dock, restrooms, and showers are included in the fee along with a launch service running every two hours from 10AM to 6PM.) Joining the Municipal Marina are well over a dozen marinas within walking and biking distance of historic downtown.

If you don't feel like walking or biking or have a lot of provisioning to do, check out the Port of Call Saint Augustine Cruisers' Shuttle (*portofcallsa.com*; 904-429-5045). They'll fill your propane tanks while you shop and take you to a library, a liquor store, a fruit and vegetable stand, a grocery store, Home Depot, Target, West Marine, and St. Augustine's own Sailors' Exchange (a bazaar of new and used boating equipment). Old Town Trolley Tours (*trolleytours.com/st-augustine*; 844-388-6452) narrates the sights and its beach bus stops at St. Augustine Beach, the Alligator Farm, and the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum. The Sunshine Bus Company (*sunshinebus.net*; 904-209-3716) also services the beaches and around town.

Plan to be in town on the first Friday of the month or the last Saturday to take in the eclectic art scene running year-round from 5-9PM. More than 20 galleries participate in the First Friday Art Walks, with many offering drinks and treats along with the local art. Uptown Saturday Night is on the last Saturday of the month and takes place on San Marco Avenue between the Mission of Nombre de Dios and Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum. Many of the eclectic shops, galleries and antique shops also offer complimentary refreshments.

St. Augustine has a wealth of live music. Time your trip to a big name act at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre (*staugamphitheatre.com*), or check out the extremely talented local groups around town. If you're at River's Edge Marina, sidle over to Hurricane Patty's for live music and happy hour specials on drinks, crawfish,

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Previous page: Formerly the Alcazar Hotel commissioned by Henry Flagler, the Lightner Museum is resplendant on the Nights of Lights. The inside dazzles as well, with antiquities from America's Gilded Age.

Clockwise from left: The fortress walls of Castillo de San Marcos, the oldest masonry fort in the continental U.S., are close to the water's edge and easily seen by boaters. St. Augustine's finer things in life include a San Sebastian wine tasting. Take a step back in time in the colonial district and observe life as it was 450 years ago. The St. Augustine Municipal Marina is located downtown for easy access to shops, sights and eateries. Celebrants in period clothing gather at GTM Reserve's Ponce de Leon 30°8´ Historical Site.

mussels, oysters, shrimp, and wings. If you're staying at Hidden Harbor Marina, you're just across from the San Sebastian Winery, and the music from the upper decks wafts over. The St. Augustine Municipal Marina is across from A1A Ale Works and their craft brew, live music and happy hour specials.

If you want a few more suggestions, though, don't miss out on Carmello's for fabulous pizza or the Back 40 for a spectacular happy hour—order the tacos and choose from jerk chicken, avocado and red pepper, shrimp, and fish. Heading to Sailors' Exchange for boat parts? Visit the Present Moment Café next door for raw/vegan food that will impress even die-hard carnivores. Need a haircut? Price's Barbershop on Granada Street has the old feel of a real barbershop. Afterward treat yourself to handcrafted chocolates and ice cream at Claude's Chocolates, or go further down the street to the Corazon Cinema and Cafe for a really great lunch while you catch a movie. Coming from one of the multiple marinas and boatyards on the San Sabastian River, adjacent to Riberia Street? Treat yourself to a tour of the St. Augustine Distillery Company and lunch or dinner at the Ice Plant Bar.

If you're in town between mid-May and mid-October combine music and dining by the pier at St. Augustine Beach. Every Wednesday evening from 7 to 9 there's a free concert, and beforehand, starting at 6, a local restaurant hosts $10 dinners on site. There are also free concerts Thursday evenings downtown at the Plaza de la Constitución from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Before you cast off, provision at the year-round farmers' markets. The Wednesday Market is at the County Pier Park, 350 A1A Beach Blvd. in St. Augustine Beach, from 8AM to 12:30PM,

and the Old City Farmers' Market is every Saturday at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre from 8:30AM-12:30PM.

Every season in St. Augustine offers something special and the old city is full of hidden treasures. Explore the gorgeous courtyard tucked away at the Lightner Museum, check out the Tiffany Stained Glass windows in the dining area at Flagler College, or just wander about the historic streets searching for treasures—you'll find plenty. The Nation's Oldest City has been collecting them for the past 450 years.

CRUISER RESOURCES

MARINAS

St. Augustine Municipal Marina (and moorings)
111-E Avenida Menendez • (904) 825-1026
staugustinegovernment.com/visitors/municipal-marina.cfm

The Conch House Marina Resort
57 Comares Ave. • (904) 824-4347 • *conch-house.com/marina*

Hidden Harbor Marina
10 Prawn St. • (904) 829-0750 • *hiddenharbor.biz*

River's Edge Marina
65 Lewis Blvd • (904) 827-0520 • *29riversedgemarina.com*

EATERIES

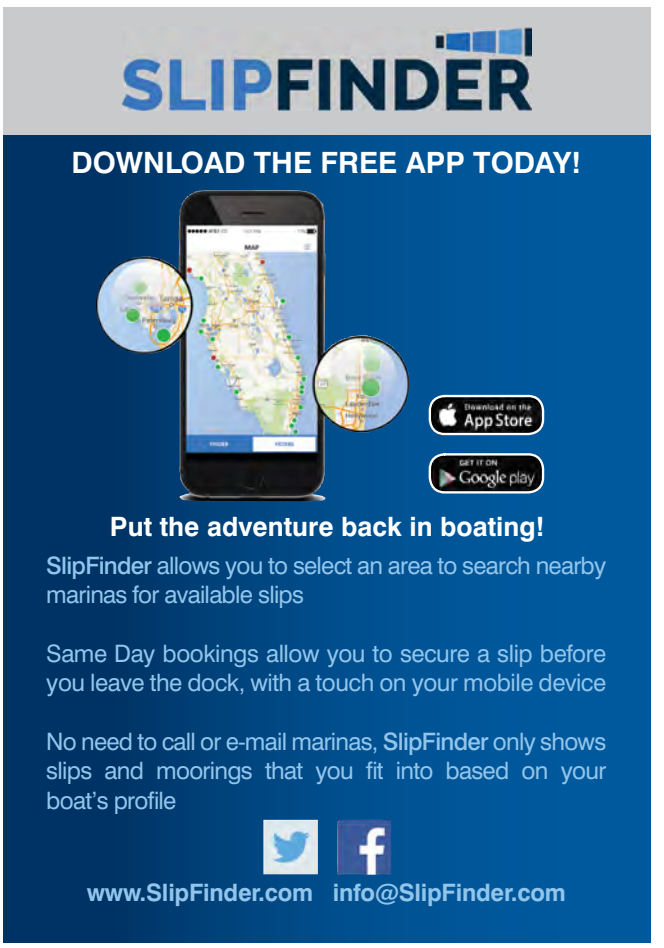
A1A Ale Works
1 King Street • 829-2977 • *a1aaleworks.com*

The Back 40 Urban Cafe
40 S Dixie Hwy • (904) 824-0227 • *back40cafe.com*

Carmelo's Pizzeria
146 King St. • (904) 494-6658 • *carmelosmarketplace.com*

The Corazon Cinema and Cafe
36 Granada St. • (904) 679-5736 • *corazoncinemaandcafe.com*

Hurricane Patty's
69 Lewis Blvd. • (904) 827-1822 • *hurricane-pattys.com*

The Present Moment Café
224 W King St. • (904) 827-4499 • *thepresentmomentcafe.com*

The Ice Plant
110 Riberia St. • (904) 829-6553 • *iceplantbar.com*