OMNI JACKSONVILLE HOTEL

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48 HOURS IN JACKSONVILLE



Though Florida is known for its picture-perfect sandy beaches, manatees floating through streams in the everglades and one very large Disney theme park resort, Jacksonville isn't often a part of the conversation. In recent years, the sprawling city, which is situated in the northeastern part of the state near the Atlantic coastline, has been making a bid to change that. Art galleries, breweries, museums and musical venues abound, offering a glimpse into an evolving hipster culture.

Make the most of it and explore before the crowds begin to flock. Using Omni Jacksonville Hotel (/hotels/jacksonville) as a home base, and this two-day itinerary as a guide, you'll be in the perfect place to find out just what this charming city, affectionately called "Jax" by locals, has in store.

DAY ONE

Morning

Get an early morning walk in before you eat. As you head across the St. Johns River via either the Main Street Bridge or the Acosta Bridge, you'll find yourself enjoying the fresh air while quickly acclimating to the city's



beautiful skyline.

Once across, you'll be in San Marco, a trendy neighborhood to the south of Omni. Pay a visit to Metro Diner (http://https://metrodiner.com/locations/floridmarco/), known for its appearance on "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives," to dine on the eatery's signature Breakfast Pie. The alternating layers of eggs, cheese, potatoes and vegetables can be cooked with bacon or sausage tossed in as well.

For something a little quicker, make a trip to Good Dough

(https://www.gooddoughdoughnuts.com/), an artisan doughnut company serving up sweet and savory treats made from scratch. Choose between options like butterscotch bacon, Tahini chocolate and basil lemonade as well as avocado "dough-oast" and a fried chicken "doughwhich."

For the rest of the morning, take a walk along the Southbank Riverwalk to the Museum of Science and History (http://themosh.org/), or MOSH. In addition to a planetarium, there are permanent exhibits on motion, local marine and wild life, energy and electricity, the state's history and native plants.

Afternoon

While on the other side of the river, stick around for lunch. One option is casual Italian joint V Pizza (http://www.vpizza.com/). The eatery offers lunch specials that encompass pizzas, panini and calzones. There are a variety of specialty pizzas, but you're also able to customize the toppings to fit your appetite.

Another option is to enjoy some barbecue at The Bearded Pig (http://www.thebeardedpigbbq.com/), a casual spot where you can start off with rib tenders, jalapeno poppers or smoked barbecue wings before transitioning to quarter- or half-pound meats like brisket, pulled pork or chicken. They also offer plenty of barbecue-friendly sides like mac and cheese, potato salad and coleslaw.



After you've eaten, head back north over the St. John's River and visit the Anheuser-Busch Jacksonville (http://www.budweisertours.com/locations/jacflorida.html) brewery for the Budweiser Brewery Experience. There are several tours to choose from as well as a Beer School, where visitors can identify beer types, learn pouring techniques and discover good food pairings.

Evening

Stick around Omni Jacksonville Hotel to enjoy an authentic Florida seafood dinner. The modern Juliette's Bistro (https://www.omnihotels.com/hotels/jacksonvbistro) offers locally sourced dishes like pecan-crusted salmon, pan roasted scallops, shrimp and grits or Florida bouillabaisse.

Less than 5 blocks from the hotel, you'll find Cowford Chophouse (http://cowfordchophouse.com/), another elegant dinner option. Elevate your experience by dining on the rooftop of the historic building or settle in to the unique interior to enjoy the 28 day dry aged Tomahawk (38oz.) Steak, Halibut and Duck Fat Corn bread. Save room to try the desserts. The Black Out chocolate cake and Cinnamon Roll Crème Brulee are sure to please.

Just around the corner from the restaurant sits the Florida Theatre (http://floridatheatre.com/), home of Elvis Presley's first indoor performance in the 1950s. Today, the atmospheric theater serves as a performing arts and entertainment venue where visitors can view live music, dance performances, movie screenings and even high-end magic shows.

If you're in the mood for some flashback fun, head to the Riverside neighborhood to finish out the night at Keg and Coin (https://www.facebook.com/KegnCoin/). This bar is known for its old-school arcade games, including pinball, Pac-Man and House of the Dead, but visitors can also play Foosball or darts while enjoying an impressive selection of beers.

DAY TWO

Morning

Head back to the Riverside area the next morning for a delicious Southern breakfast. One option is the Southern Roots Filling Station

(https://www.southernrootsjax.com/), a company that prides itself on its honest and ethical business practices. Grab a coffee drink like a cortado or the Black Panther to pair with a granola bar, coconut chia pudding or the "blisscuit," complete with a tofu egg, avocado and a garlic biscuit.

If you're looking for something heartier, try the Cool Moose Café (http://www.coolmoosecafe.net/). In addition to traditional breakfasts, they offer a meat lover's quesadilla, a Costa Ricaninspired dish, a spicy Andouille sausage omelet and homemade corn beef hash.

If you time your trip right, you can stop by the Saturday morning Riverside Arts Market (http://ram.riversideavondale.org/), where local artists and artisans come together to share goods like fresh local produce, candied nuts, cookie dough, paintings, jewelry, tea, salsa, jams, soaps, candles, glass art and more. There is also live music throughout the event.

Just south of where the market is held, the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens (http://www.cummermuseum.org/), which holds more than 5,000 artifacts dating back to 2100 B.C. The permanent collection includes illustrations by well-known author Norman Rockwell, baroque paintings by Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens, nearly 200 Japanese woodblock prints and much more.



Afternoon

Venture back downtown to Bellwether for lunch. This elevated southern classics served in understated setting, offers a unique array of cuisine, from Chicken and Dumplings, Fried Shrimp and Grits and Korean Fried



Broccoli and a Beet Burger.

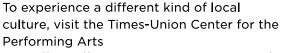
Continue east and you'll find Intuition Ale Works (http://www.intuitionaleworks.com/), which can be an alternative lunch option or a laidback spot to grab a post-meal beer. The casual menu features bratwurst, a brisket sandwich, a shrimp po'boy, a burger and more, as well as snacks like fried pickles, poutine and pork rind nachos. While the draft list is ever changing, it includes nearly 20 different brews at a time.

After you refuel, make a trip to TIAA Bank Field (https://www.everbankfield.com/), home of the Jacksonville Jaguars, for a guided, behind-the-scenes stadium tour. Sports fans will love learning about the unique venue, which is connected to an open-air amphitheater as well as an indoor practice facility.

Later in the day, explore the river by boat. The city has water taxis that can take you on science and history tours courtesy of the Museum of Science and History, or escort you back toward the hotel.

Evening

Once back at Omni Jacksonville Hotel, unwind a bit before dinner at the property's heated rooftop pool. With views of the downtown area and the river below, it's the perfect place to cool off when it's hot, either in the water or by sipping a cocktail or two on the sundeck.



(http://http://www.timesunioncenter.com/) to catch a concert by the Jacksonville Symphony, whose season spans 38 weeks of the year and often includes guest appearances by renowned artists.



IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME...

While a visit to the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (http://www.jacksonvillezoo.org/) would be fun either way—it has more than 2,000 animals—sign up for the Zookeeper for a Day program. From birds and reptiles to larger mammals, you'll experience the zoo from inside their cages while helping to fulfill the everyday duties of a zookeeper.



Less than an hour from the city center, but still in the city limits, the Kingsley Plantation (https://www.nps.gov/timu/learn/historyculture is another great place to visit before the end of your trip. Take a tour of the more than 20 slave cabins as well as the oldest surviving plantation house in the state of Florida.

The Omni Jacksonville Hotel team contributed to this article.

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