

TRAVEL CONNECTION

Ye Olde Florida - St. Augustine & North Beach Camping Resort

By Joy Leake

Like most people, when I go on vacation, I want a complete change of scenery. I don't want to sit in traffic looking at the same strip malls and chain restaurants found back home. For a delightful change of pace, America's oldest city, St. Augustine, Florida is a great destination. Its streets are lined with unique shops featuring local artists, historic attractions, and restaurants. It is also rich in historical architecture and Spanish-American heritage. I recently visited St. Augustine with my family in our RV and found the perfect campground, North Beach Camping Resort, on Highway A1A just north of the city. The property is situated so that the sun rises over the Atlantic along its frontal boundary and sets over the inter-coastal waterway at its rear boundary. The in-roads are packed with crushed coquina (shell) which muffles the sounds of footsteps and vehicles. Each site is private and well shaded with native palms and live oaks. At night the frogs gather in the small ponds throughout

the property to serenade visitors with their mating songs. It is the perfect natural setting for a relaxing vacation.

If you choose to do a little sight seeing, you must visit the old fort, Castillo de San Marco, built in 1672 and located on San Marco Avenue. However, we decided to view it from across the street at the Mill Top Tavern. The dining deck on the upper floor, nestled among live oaks, feels like you're in a tree house. The menu is typical tavern fare (burgers, sandwiches, wings, etc.). But, the spectacular views along with the

live local entertainment (after 9PM) makes it a memorable experience.

Our next stop was Flagler College (previously known as the Ponce de Leon Hotel -- playground of the rich and famous) built in 1888 by the late Henry Flagler. The student guides identify the craftsmanship of those commissioned by Flagler to work on the building. The contractors' list is a virtual who's who of the 19th century with names like Edison and Tiffany. As a matter of fact, many of the Tiffany stained glass windows still adorn the perimeter of the student dining hall. There are many other notable artists' works displayed throughout the building as well.

For a relaxing and interesting get-away, St. Augustine is a city rich in natural beauty, architecture, heritage, and history. Once only enjoyed by the privileged few, its man-made and natural scenery is a treasure available for all to experience.

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