

From Urban Riverside Routes to Hardpacked White Sand Beaches, Jacksonville is a Runner's Dream



Jacksonville, Feb 25, 2019 (IssueWire.com) - [Jacksonville](#) is a runner's paradise, boasting the country's largest urban parks system and 22 miles of white sand beaches.

Jacksonville also hosts 90 running races each year, including the recently completed Donna Marathon, the only marathon in the world where 100 percent of the proceeds goes towards breast cancer research.

The upcoming [Gate River Run](#), the largest 15K in the nation, takes place on March 9, and is expected to attract 25,000 competitive and recreational runners. Jacksonville makes it fun, so you'll often see spectators handing out mimosas to the participants. The race starts and ends at TIAA Bank Field, home of the NFL's Jaguars, and the final stretch is over the Hart Bridge, which is referred to as "The Green Monster" thanks to its color and the daunting physical challenge it presents.

These amazing attributes combine to make Jacksonville one of the best destinations for runners. In fact, visitors to Jacksonville can often find some of the best running routes right outside of their hotel rooms.

Here are five runs in Jacksonville that you should make on your next visit.

Downtown Jacksonville. The North and South Banks of Downtown Jacksonville are connected by two bridges – Main St. Bridge and the Acosta Bridge – that offer stunning views of the St. Johns River and beyond. Both bridges have pedestrian and bike lanes and the loop is almost two miles. If you plan your run just right, you can stop off for a decadent treat at Good Dough, which is famous for its small-batch doughnuts that are handmade from scratch throughout the day.

Jacksonville Beaches. Jacksonville's three beach communities – Jacksonville Beach, Atlantic Beach, and Neptune Beach – are very popular with runners, mainly because of the amazing views and the wide, level beaches that have hard packed sand during low tide. Neptune Beach is a small beach town offering a quick, scenic 4k running route. Time an early morning run to end with coffee and breakfast at Southern Grounds Coffee Co. Locals love the avocado toast and the stone ground grits, which are topped by a poached egg, cheddar and bacon crumbles.

S-Line Urban Greenway. Locals love this old railway that has been transformed into a wide, paved trail shared by runners, walkers, and bikers alike. Located on the edge of downtown Jacksonville, this 5k run begins in the Durkeeville area and winds through Historic Springfield, a neighborhood with one of the largest collections of Victorian homes in the Southeast. If you take your run after work, you can reward yourself with a craft brew at Hyperion Brewing, Jacksonville's first nanobrewery.

Kathryn Abbey Hanna State Park. This 450-acre oceanfront state park is known for its amazing surf breaks, but it's also home to six miles of running trails and 10 miles of off-road trails, which meander through an oak and palm forest and 447 acres of the mature coastal hammock– a rarity on Florida's highly developed Atlantic coast. End a weekend run with brunch at some of the great seafood restaurants in the area, like Safe Harbor Seafood Market & Restaurant.

University of North Florida. UNF, as locals call it, offers 12 miles of National Recreational Trails, which are designated by the Department of the Interior. The quarter-mile boardwalk overlooking a lush cypress marsh gives way to two trails that will get you a little closer to nature. The 1.5-mile Blueberry Trail traverses pine woods, creeks, and a lake, while the 2.5-mile Goldenrod Trail meanders through a cypress swamp and wooded areas. Stop at the nearby M Shack and try the CrossFit Burger: two beef patties, lettuce, bacon, sautéed mushrooms, peppers, onions, tomato, and a sunny side egg – no bun.

ABOUT VISIT JACKSONVILLE

Visit Jacksonville is a Destination Marketing Organization accredited by Destinations International and contracted by the Duval County Tourist Development Council (TDC) since 1996 to champion the growth of leisure and business tourism in Jacksonville.

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